627 No. Mentor Ave. # 201
Pasadena, CA 91106
October 31, 1989

Mr. Stan B. Adair
5425 Rambler Way
Sacramento, CA 95841

Dear Stan,

Thank you so much for your letter of early September, telling about your upcoming book. It was forwarded to me from Europe by the person who is living in our house.

I was not able to get right to the request, because I had with me most of the material on computer diskette, but did not have access to a computer that I could use to print it out and work on it. However, as of the beginning of last week I have a new computer that I obtained for the Bible Institute, and it is capable of getting the job done. Then I worked on it quite a bit to get it into the form that I am enclosing. I hope the slight delay does not cause a problem for you.

I appreciated your asking for my material on ethical issues for the Gospel magician, and am very happy to provide it. Actually there have been a couple of things I have written. One was a booklet, which I originally made a couple dozen copies of for distribution among the Christian magicians in Europe. This was directed at the Christian magician, designed to stimulate his thinking and to give him some answers and ask some penetrating questions with reference to using magic in ministry. Thanks for the check -

I shared that booklet with the U.S. F.C.M. leadership, and they wanted to use it within the Fellowship. It was printed up as a shirt-pocket-size booklet, under the original title ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN MAGICIANS. As I talked with Eddie Davis in the first stages, he expressed the desire for a shorter tract that could be given to enquirers who challenge the whole idea of linking the Gospel and magic.

I took some of the material from ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS and reworked it, putting it in more abbreviated form and directed towards a different audience, and made up the pamphlet SHOULD A CHRISTIAN DO MAGIC? Because our brothers in Europe prefer the word CONJURING, I included that word in the title, SHOULD A CHRISTIAN DO MAGIC OR CONJURING? I am enclosing a copy of that pamphlet, which was designed to be reprinted by the local Christian magician. He can then give out copies as he needs.

In considering your book, I first printed out each of the manuscripts separately, and then I decided to put them together. I also put in some of the Scripture references that I found relevant, as well as a biographical sketch of myself, in case you would want that information.

I think that the enclosed material is a little long, but you are free to edit as needed. I have combined the tract and the booklet. There is a little bit of repetition, but since the two portions are written for different audiences, it is a different approach. It would be possible to cut down a little on the words if necessary. Look it over, and see what you think. You don't need to use everything I am sending you; I know it is easier to cut down the material if it is there, than it is to invent it if it is not there. So please feel free to use the knife as you need to.

My family and I are on a one year Home Ministry Assignment (it used to be called "furlough" but the new name reflects a little more what missionaries do when they are in America--it's not a year-long vacation!) I am finishing up my Doctor of Ministry degree at Fuller Seminary, and we are speaking and representing the mission in various churches and schools and homes. I am enclosing our most recent picture prayer card of the family.

I was interested in your comments about retiring from performing. I have mixed feelings about that. I understand and applaud your position. But it is also a bit saddening that you should give up performing. A couple of my good friends are Phil Foxwell and Warren Filkin. I can see Warren slowing down, and I really wish I had had an opportunity to know him and see him perform in his earlier days. He was at Wheaton at the F.C.M. conference this summer, and everyone considers him a veteran of Gospel magic, though he is performing less and less.

As my own ministry progresses, I am spending more time training others, and providing materials for them. I find that very rewarding, and I imagine that you too have found a lot of fulfillment in passing on your legacy to others.

I must close now, but I trust I will hear from you in response to this material. God bless your endeavor with the book.

In Christ's service,

Robert H. Hill

Mr. Stan B. Adair
5425 Rambler Way
Sacramento, CA 95841

Dear Stan,

After mailing the letter along with the manuscript for the chapter on your book, I re-read your letter and saw that I had failed to send you a separate permission for use of the article. So I am enclosing that herewith.

God bless you, dear brother.

Sincerely in Christ's service,

Bob Hill

Robert H. Hill

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR "GOSPEL MAGICIANS"

Copyright @ 1990 by Robert H. Hill

This chapter deals with some issues that a Christian magician must consider in his performing ministry. The first part of the chapter, Should a Christian do Magic or Conjuring, represents an answer to the observer who has ethical or Biblical reservations about what the magician is doing. Following that is a treatment at greater length of some of the questions the magician should ask himself about what he is doing.

These essays have appeared in the form of a pamphlet and a booklet, published in cooperation with the Fellowship of Christian Magicians, and have helped a number of Christian artists think through some very fundamental issues connected with their medium, as well as helping a number of laymen come to an appreciation for the Biblical acceptability of this kind of presentation.

Should a Christian do Magic or Conjuring?

Doesn't the Bible forbid magic, fortune-telling and ventriloquism?

Is it right for a Christian be involved in sleight of hand and illusion--aren't they dishonest (deceptive)?

Let's look at some of the issues that are involved in the answers to these issues.

A Problem of Vocabulary

First, let's get our terms defined. When the Bible (especially certain translations) uses the term "magic" (e.g. Exodus 22:18) or "sorcery" (Deuteronomy 18:11 et al.) or "ventriloquism" (e.g. Isaiah 8:19), it is clearly dealing with man's involvement in the supernatural, often with the colaboration of evil spirits. The context of the Biblical prohibitions makes it clear that God does not want man to dabble in games with the devil. Today's manifestations of these forbidden activities are such things as ouija boards, tarot cards, the occult and horoscopes. The Christian has no business playing with these, as they open the door to demonic influence.

Let it be underscored that no true Christian magician or ventriloquist is in any way involved in the supernatural.

A problem rises from the fact that some of the words have two meanings. "Magic" has the meaning of witchcraft or sorcery, but it also means sleight of hand and illusion, the surprising and fascinating modern entertainment medium. Obviously the Bible is talking about the first of these meanings and not the second.

Etymologically, the word "ventriloquism" means "belly-talking." As used in the Old Testament, the word refers to fortune telling by means of reading the entrails of slain animals, or demon possession, wherein an evil spirit spoke through a human mouthpiece. Modern ventriloquists create the **illusion** that their voices come from another source, using this to entertain. Spectators unable to explain the skill misnamed this illusion "belly-talking." Again, the Biblical prohibition is against one meaning of this word, but not against the animation of puppets as is done the modern entertainment medium.

The first thing to make sure of when dealing with the Biblical prohibitions is that we understand what the Bible is in fact saying, and not to misapply the truth because of a confusion of vocabulary.

Confusing the Natural with the Supernatural

One could raise the objection that it is wrong for a Christian to do any performance that could easily be misinterpreted as sinful by someone who doesn't know. Doesn't the Bible warn us to "avoid all appearance of evil"? (I Thessalonians 5:22) Couldn't innocent parlor magic or ventriloquism easily be confused with forbidden activity?

In fact, a better translation of I Thessalonians 5:22 is "avoid every **form** of evil" or "avoid every **kind** of evil." In dealing with right and wrong, one must always be careful of appearances, but it is not the appearance that makes something right or wrong. The emphasis on appearance is the essence of hypocricy. If the issue were that Christians are to refrain from doing anything that looks like sin or could be misinterpreted by someone who does not know, then we would never be able to do **anything** with confidence. According to this thinking, Jesus was correctly rebuked for eating with publicans, for forgiving prostitutes, and for touching lepers. Certainly these actions confused many people, but the Son of God knew His mission and performed His ministry in spite of possible objections.

The Gospel magician could easily be confused with the secular entertainer, or worse, with the occultist, just as the Christian singer could be identified with the acid-dropping Satanist, or the preacher could be linked with the immoral talk-show host. Or we could insist that it is wrong for the

Christian to read any magazine or paperback book, because immoral people publish sinful books or magazines. Do we believe that because of the sin of some broadcasters, there is no value in the ministry of broadcasting? Part of the issue is whether a godly performer should stop a ministry he knows to be right, just because of the possibility that someone else could misjudge the motives or the methods.

Some Christians are very superstitious, and assume that anything they cannot themselves understand **must** be supernatural. Hence they see negative effects as being produced by demons, and every positive event must be a miracle of God. There is however a great room for neutral events which can be used for evil or for good.

Ministry by means of "Deception"?

Another objection is that it is not right for the Christian to use trickery in presenting the truth. No matter how you slice it, magic involves deceipt (illusion). Of course some "Gospel magicians" try to get around this objection by never saying their hand is empty when it isn't, but saying "my hand looks empty." This skirts the issue, since the intent is for the audience to believe that the hand was empty (or that the bunny materialized from thin air, or that the red scarf actually turned white, etc.) The deceipt was there, regardless of whether the performer told a lie with his words or with his actions.

Here we must deal with the nature of truth. At any given time a proclamation of truth only presents a part of reality. I carry a photograph of my wife that everyone claims is a very candid likeness, yet it deceives in certain ways. For one thing, my wife is not black and white and gray; for

another she is more than two inches tall, and is not flat. But the image abstracted by this photograph captures her expression and personality very accurately. It is an honest--though partial--representation of the truth. The issue is whether the Gospel magician conveys the impressions that he is doing supernatural things, or whether he honestly acknowledges its trickery.

After all is said and done, most people acknowledge that magical entertainers do not actually have supernatural powers. If the total performance is an accurate representation of Biblical truth, the audience will be impressed with the message, and not dazzled by the probability of humans doing superhuman feats.

A Biblical Basis for Gospel Magic

It's fine to say that doing Gospel magic is not **wrong,** but is it **right?** What is the Biblical justification for using magic to present scriptural or spiritual truths?

The first part of the argument comes from Jesus' own use of parables--visual aids. Matthew 13:34 indicates that in Jesus' teaching, He **always** used object lessons. Sleight of hand and illusion provide a way of presenting some very powerful spiritual messages in a visual way. When a dirty handkerchief--representing sin--is transformed into an egg, it makes a very striking illustration of the change God makes in a person's life when he trusts Christ. Magic tricks have power to gain and maintain attention.

The second part of a Biblical basis for Gospel magic is God's own use of the spectacular as an attention-getting device. He could have dealt with people without using the miraculous, but with Moses He chose to use a bush that burned without being consumed, with Balaam He used a talking donkey, with

Joshua He used a destructive trumpet blast to bring down the walls of Jericho, and with Belshazzar He wrote on the wall with a giant hand.

Many of the prophets used spectacular attention getting devices, such as shaving the head, wearing a rotten garment, making a model of Jerusalem. And what a sight Jonah must have been, bleached from the digestive juices of the great sea monster, as he paraded through Nineveh proclaiming the judgment of God.

But perhaps most spectacular of all are the descriptions of the events surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus. It could have happened without a lot of fanfare, but Christ's death was accompanied by darkness and earthquake. The resurrection was accompanied by a blast of light that left the guards stunned and dazed.

I have seen some very impressive and effective use of "magic" to illustrate principles from the Scripture. When sleight of hand and illusion are harnassed for the purpose of explaining Gospel principles, it can be very powerful from a psychological point of view.

Performance Leads to Pride

A serious objection is that when people are amazed and admire the performer, this leads to pride. This is certainly a possibility, and the Christian performer (no matter what art form) must guard against pride. This is true of the Christian singer, actor, magician, ventriloquist-- and even **preacher!** Let us condemn pride in any form and in every presentation, but the possibility of pride should not deter a person from exercising a skill that can point people to God's truth and lead them to Christ.

Conclusion

To wind up this brief treatment, let me make several practical suggestions about your own attitude towards "Gospel magic."

1. Enjoy "magic" presentations. Don't worry about being fooled. You don't need to understand how every trick is done in order for it to be alright.

2. Pray for the Christian magician. He wants to present Gospel truths in an effective way, without violating what is proper. It is easy to give in to the sins of pride and presumption. He needs your understanding and support. Praise God that He has given this performer opportunities to present a message at places where a preacher might never be able to speak.

3. Seek God's mind. Be sympathetic and ask God to help you understand what attitude is right to have towards forms of ministry that you do not wholeheartedly understand or support. Realize that the same medium may not be best for everyone, but God can bless it and use it for His glory.

4. If you continue to have reservations, work them out. Talk to your local Christian magician, or write your question down and send it to the address below. We will be happy to discuss it with you!

Thanks for being open to consider some new ideas. I hope they have helped you to gain a new perspective. Read Acts 10:9-20 and rejoice that God opens the hearts and minds of His children who are ready to receive His messages.

> And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks and honor and glory through Him to God the Father.
>
> Colossians 3:17

Scripture Passages Concerning Magical Arts

Following are some of the major Bible references having to do with witchcraft, sorcery, divination, and other similar activities. Anyone undertaking a complete study of the subject should take all of these passages into consideration. If you find other significant Bible references applicable to the subject, you are invited to share them with the author, so as to help make this list more exhaustive.

Genesis 30:27 Laban learned by divination that the Lord had blessed Jacob.

Genesis 41:8 Pharaoh calls for the magicians and wise men to interpret his dreams. The butler remembers Joseph.

Genesis 44:5, 15 Joseph's brothers "stole" his "divining cup." But his brothers should have known he would know!

Exodus 7:11 The Egyptian magicians and sorcerers and wise men imitated Moses' "trick" by changing their rods into snakes.

Exodus 7:22 Then they changed water into blood.

Exodus 8:7 Then they produced frogs.

Exodus 8:18-19 Pharaoh's magicians tried to produce lice, but could not, and recognized it was God's hand.

Exodus 9:11 Pharaoh's magicians could not stand with the plague of boils.

Exodus 22:18 Do not allow a witch to live.

Exodus 31:18 The Lord inscribed the two tablets of stone with His own finger! (Exodus 20:18-20: The people were afraid seeing the smoke, but Moses reassured them.)

Leviticus 19:26 Do not practice divination or sorcery.

Leviticus 20:27 A medium or spiritist must be stoned to death.

Numbers 22:7 The Moabite leaders came to Balaam to pay for him to cast a spell against Israel.

Deuteronomy 18:10-14 All kinds of sorcery are forbidden.

I Samuel 6:2 When the Philistines were jynxed by the Ark of the Covenant, they called for their diviners, who apparently diagnosed the problem accurately.

I Samuel 9:6-20 Saul sought the man of God (Samuel) to tell him where to find his donkeys.

I Samuel 15:23 Rebellion is just as bad as witchcraft.

I Samuel 28:3-20 Saul goes to the witch of Endor to communicated with the dead prophet Samuel. See especially verse 11.

II Kings 17:17 Israel made idols and practiced sorcery.

II Kings 21:6 Manasseh practiced sorcery.

II Chronicles 33:2,6 Parallel passage with II Kings 21:6.

Isaiah 2:6 The people are superstitious.

Isaiah 8:19 Why do you consult spiritists and not trust the true God?

Isaiah 19:3 Prophecy against the Egyptians who consult with spiritists.

Isaiah 44:25 The Lord makes fools of diviners.

Isaiah 47:12 Babylon will continue in sin and witchcraft, and then will fall.

Isaiah 57:3 God's accusations against people who trust in sorcery.

Ezekiel 13:20-23 God will set free the people who were ensnared by sorcerers.

Ezekiel 21:21 The King of Babylon will seek fortune by lots. (By reading the liver.)

Daniel 1:17 Daniel and his three friends had great wisdom to understand dreams. In verse 20 it says he was ten times better than the King's enchanters.

Daniel 2:2 The King called the astrologers etc. to interpret his dreams.

Daniel 2:18 Daniel took his lot with the rest of the dream interpreters. See also verse 27.

Daniel 4:7-8 The magicians could not interpret my (Beltashazzar's) dream. But Daniel has the spirit of the gods.

Daniel 5:11 Daniel was appointed head magician.

Micah 5:12 The Lord will destroy Jerusalem's witchcraft.

Zechariah 10:2 The diviners deceive.

Malachi 3:5 God will testify against sorcerers.

Matthew 2:1, 9, 12 The magi came to worship Jesus.

Acts 8:9-11 Simon, the Sorcerer, tried to buy the Holy Spirit's power with money. See also 18-24.

Acts 13:6-11 Paul rebukes Elymas (Bar-Jesus) in Cyprus with blindness.

Acts 16:16-18 Paul exorcises the fortune telling maid in Philippi.

Acts 19:19 At the revival in Ephesus, they brought 50,000 talents' worth of magic books (that's about the equivalent of 1500 **years'** wages!) and burned them.

Galatians 5:20 The deeds of the flesh include witchcraft.

Revelation 18:23 Babylon's enchantment led the nations astray.

Revelation 21:8 Sorcerers were cast into the fiery lake along with the immoral.

Revelation 22:15 Outside the gate are witches and other immoral types.

ETHICAL ISSUES FOR THE GOSPEL MAGICIAN

A Biblical Justification for Using Magic to Present Gospel Messages

@ 1990 by Robert H. Hill
Antheon 10
Agia Paraskevi
GR 153 42 GREECE

Should a Christian do Magic or Conjuring?

Doesn't the Bible forbid magic, fortune-telling and ventriloquism?

Is it right for a Christian to be involved in sleight of hand and illusion— aren't they dishonest because they deceive?

This pamphlet attempts to give a brief answer to these issues. If the reader desires a more comprehensive treatment of these and other subjects related to the Biblical basis for Gospel magic, he is invited to send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the Fellowship of Christian Magicians, P.O. Box 385, Connersville, Indiana 47331 U.S.A. requesting a complimentary copy of the booklet ***Ethical Issues for Gospel Magicians.***

A problem of Vocabulary

First, let's get our terms defined. When the Bible (especially certain translations) uses the term "magic" (*e.g.* Exodus 22:18) or "sorcery" (Deuteronomy 18:11 *et al.*) or "ventriloquism" (*e.g.* Isaiah 8:19), it is clearly dealing with man's involvement in the supernatural, often with the collaboration of evil spirits. The context of the Biblical prohibitions makes it clear that God does not want man to dabble in games with the devil. Today's manifestations of these forbidden activities are such things as ouija boards, tarot cards, the occult and horoscopes. The Christian has no business playing with these, as they open the door to demonic influence.

Let it be emphasized that no true Christian magician or ventriloquist is in any way involved in the supernatural.

A problem rises from the fact that some of the words have two meanings. "Magic" has the meaning of witchcraft or sorcery, but it