

CHRISTIAN MAGICIAN?

By Toby Travis

The following information is provided to assist individuals in understanding what the Bible condemns as "magic" in contrast to the popular form of entertainment that is also described as "magic."

The word MAGIC itself is perhaps the largest source of confusion. We can find at least two meanings for the word "magic" in the dictionary. First we find: "The art of producing effects by what are claimed to be SUPERHUMAN means via occult powers." Even a brief study of the Scriptures will clearly show that what is given in this definition is forbidden by God.

A second definition is: "The art of applying NATURAL causes, whose operation is secret, to produce a surprising effect." This defines what entertainers (called magicians or illusionists) do today. A careful study of every original Hebrew or Greek word in the Bible that has been translated wizard, sorcerer, etc., can only be defined by the first definition.

The Bible does not categorically condemn magicians. Daniel was a great prophet of God, yet his political position (his job) was that of Chief Magician in Nebuchadnezzar's court (Daniel 5). The Greek word "magoi" from which the word "magic" is derived is literally translated "wise men" and is used to describe the men of the East who brought gifts to the Christ Child.

Consider the following words that are found in Deuteronomy 18:9-14:

DIVINATION: A diviner is a person who claims to obtain secret knowledge through occult powers.

AN OBSERVER OF THE TIMES (SOOTHSAYER OR AUGUR): These terms all relate to someone who claims to be able to predict the future by observing the flight or actions of birds.

ENCHANTER OR CHARMER: This is someone who claims to be able to cast charms or spells by the agency of demons.

WITCH OR SORCERER: Both terms refer to "one who whispers spells or practices cheating and defrauding the public." It is important to note that in Jeremiah 27:10 they are described as "liars" and in Isaiah 57 they are told that their practices will not succeed. In fact throughout Scripture we are told that witches, sorcerers, wizards, etc. do not possess any genuine miraculous powers.

A CONSULTER WITH FAMILIAR SPIRITS OR MEDIUM: This is a person who claims to be able to communicate with the spirits of the deceased.

A WIZARD: The literal Hebrew definition is, "one who pretends to have great

knowledge." This is a person who claims to be able to accomplish feats with the aid of evil spirits.

It is obvious that the practices described above are quite different than those being performed by contemporary entertainers who use the title "magician" today. Let there be no doubt, many people today are involved in the occult; but they typically have no connection with those in the entertainment industry who use the term "magician" or "illusionist."

In my performance of illusions or magic tricks I will be the first to admit that I do not possess genuine miraculous powers and I would never seriously claim to have such. In fact I would also be the first to point out Scriptures such as Psalm 72:18 and 136:3-4 which make it clear that God alone can perform the miraculous. Even Satan is unable to perform the genuine miraculous.

In passages such as II Thess. 2:9 we note that Satan's powers are described as "lying wonders" or "imitation miracles." In Exodus 7:10-12 Pharaoh's magicians attempt to duplicate the genuine miraculous performed by God through Moses and Aaron. According to the passage their illusionary wonders were accomplished by their "secret arts." The original Hebrew word found here is "lahat" which is literally translated "to perform covertly" and does not give any indication of genuine miraculous ability - but rather that of a trick or a deception.

Many people are very superstitious and misunderstand the use of natural "magic" or "sleight-of-hand" effects or "optical or psychological illusions." When faced with a mind-boggling experience or effect some individuals take the stand that if they cannot explain the phenomena, it must be supernatural. I am not denying that supernatural events take place in the world today, but the supernatural should not be used to explain everything beyond a person's understanding.

A frequent argument raised concerning the use of magic goes something like this: "because magic has been associated with evil in the past, and Christians should avoid every appearance of evil, it should not be used as an evangelistic or educational tool." This argument would be worth consideration if it could be applied to every other medium of communication and entertainment. Certainly music, drama, and dance have been associated with evil, even aggressively used by satanic influences - but in no way does this mean these methods of communication and entertainment are forbidden for the Christian. Simply because an art form has been used by the enemy does not automatically invalidate that medium.

I have also been questioned as to how I can justify using deception. I can't! I don't! "I love magicians because they are honest men," said author Elbert Hubbard. "They tell you they are going to fool you and then proceed to do it." Without a doubt secrecy is a part of our trade. Secrecy, however, does not equal an evil deception. Just because I do not divulge how my illusions are

accomplished does not mean I am being deceitful. Secrecy is an integral part of my work just as a certain recipe is for Kentucky Fried Chicken! Secrecy is simply a matter of good business.

What I do I do for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and for the purpose of spreading the Gospel. My presentations of illusions and magic tricks have provided me the opportunity to share Christ with millions of people.

My challenge to each reader of this article is to make use of the talents, abilities and profession God has given you to share His love with a lost and dying world.