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## A TOUCH OF MAGIC?

by Eddy Gilpin

The basis of most "magic" is deception. The hand being "quicker than the eye", the tricks performed through sleight of hand amaze youngsters and puzzle adults. Such deception is a part of the harmless game of innocent tricks. There is no such thing as "magic" (the supernatural control of objects), except through sleight of hand. Nothing unexplainable by simple laws of nature exists. However, many claim a belief in such and take "magic" to the realm of the unnatural and supernatural. When this is the case, "magic" is condemned by the Bible. Sadly, there are many members of the Lord's church who take "magic" to this extreme. Oh, they are not witches or practitioners of voodooism. They are common people who see something mystical in many of God's commands. Their speech and actions along this line betray them.

Many in the Lord's church see baptism as containing "a touch of magic." One individual, who is an alcoholic and wayward member of the Lord's church, in speaking to this writer about his son, expressed grave concern because his son (age 20) had not been baptized. There was no concern about his continued faithfulness after being baptized; no stress upon his studying, teaching others or attending future worship services; no inclination upon the father's part to return to the Lord and be the proper example for his son. There was only the expression, "If we could just get him baptized..." His prevailing idea was that there was something in being baptized that would take care of those other items. To this man baptism possessed a touch of magic! In his line of reasoning the "once saved, always saved" people have nothing on us. Why is there such ignorance among God's people? No "Ouija-Board philosophy" can overcome such superstitious thinking. Only a knowledge of God's word will do that. Not only is faithfulness in baptism commanded, but also obedience in every other phase of life (Heb. 5:8, 9; Rev. 2:10). "Baptism only" is as powerless to

save as "faith only." There is no magic in it.

Another source of pseudo-aura to many is the Lord's Supper. Many think that if they can but partake of the Lord's Supper at some point on Sunday, their having forsaken the assembly and pushed aside all other items of worship will magically disappear. When traveling, it matters not whether time has been set aside during the week for study and prayer, or whether arrangements have been made for mid-week services or Sunday morning worship. All that matters is that one makes it in just under the wire to partake of the Lord's Supper on Sunday evening. Presto! But, is it magic or just a misconception and ignorance of God's word? The Lord's Supper is a vital and important part of worship to God. It should be esteemed as such and preparation made for it in advance. However, it is not "the" most vital or "the" most important portion of worship. Every item of worship should be esteemed highly and engaged in unreservedly by every child of God. The commands to sing, pray, teach, and give are just as important and binding. There is nothing magical in the Lord's Supper. It is a memorial feast instituted by the Son of God for a forgetful people. It is to be engaged in in remembrance of Him, as one looks forward to His coming again (I Cor. 11:24-26). No, there is no magic here, but rather simple obedience to the will of God. The observance of one command to the willful exclusion of others does not result in magic. It results in condemnation.

Still others see the approval of fellow peers as something magical. If worship services are forsaken, just excuse yourself the next time you show up by telling someone how bad you thought the weather was going to be or how that little something just came up at the last minute, and "abracadabra", all is forgiven. It matters little that that same individual offers the same lame excuses from time to time and thus "understands" your situation. It matters

little that God's word condemns forsaking of the assembling of the saints (Heb. 10:25). It matters little that the scriptures demand public repentance, confession and prayer for the forgiveness of such public sins (I Jn. 1:9). Because there is "conscience-easing magic" in the approval (or at least the non-condemnation) of a confidant, the word of God can be set aside. Though such teaching would be condemned if publicly proclaimed, the loud-speaking actions of many herald its soul-condemning message on a daily basis. The idea that any sinful action will be forgotten if someone "understands" and approves of that action without its being repented of is an idea formulated in the halls of Hell and based on "magic" (which does not exist). Although faults between individuals must be worked out between individuals (Mt. 5:21-24; 18:15-17), the ultimate forgiveness of sins occurs in the mind of God. Such forgiveness cannot be obtained by "magic", but by obedience.

Why is it that so many members of the Lord's church continue to practice such "magic?" The answer is found in two places: 1) Ignorance of God's word; 2) Stubbornness to conform to that which is known. Both of these will condemn one's soul, and no "magic" can keep it from it. There is nothing magical in baptism. The grace of God, blood of Christ, and faithful obedience will save the soul. Although baptism is included in this, in and of itself it possesses no more power than does "faith alone." There is no touch of magic in the Lord's Supper. Other commands of worship are just as binding. No sleight of hand by obtaining the approval of others for one's misgivings will "trick" the Lord into forgetting their occurrence. There is nothing magical in obedience. Simple obedience to the gospel and faithful obedience throughout life will assure one of an eternal home in heaven - no voodoo; no sleight of hand; no touch of magic. "If ye love me, *keep my commandments*" (Jn. 14:15).

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*Building boys is better than mending men. Once truth is firmly planted in a child, it continues steadfast through any test; but the planting has to be done early in the growing season.*

**FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS**

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**Four Little Things**

by T. Pierce Brown

Since I was raised on what we called a farm (mostly twenty acres of rocky hillsides) I spent a lot of time outside the house. When it was too cold or rainy to be out, I would spend a lot of time with the Bible and the Sears & Roebuck catalogue, which were about the only two books we had. About 60 years ago, I read Proverbs 30:24-28, "There are four things which are little upon the earth, But they are exceeding wise: The ants are a people not strong, Yet they provide their food in the summer; The conies are but a feeble folk, Yet they make their houses in the rocks; The locusts have no king, Yet go they forth all of them by bands; The lizard taketh hold with her hands, Yet she is in kings' palaces."

I think perhaps it was because I was small and exceedingly ignorant that it had a special appeal to me. So I went out and observed the ants. I did not know what conies were, but someone told me they were a rock badger, somewhat like a rabbit. So I took a special interest in them. Locusts and grasshoppers were abundant. Since I only had the King James Version, I read "spider" instead of "lizard", but I was especially fascinated with the spider.

Some lessons from all of them have impressed themselves on my mind for the past 60 years, and I would like to share some of them with you, for Solomon says "They are exceeding wise".

One of the first things I noticed about the ants was that while they were preparing their food in the summer, no task seemed too difficult for them to approach with confidence that it could be accomplished. Many times I have

been amazed to see the tiny creature with a burden many times its size. If it could not carry it going forward, it walked backward with it. If it could not get it over the object which was in its path, it went around.

There were two immediate lessons that impressed themselves upon my untutored mind. First, they seemed to know that there was a season when they had to prepare their food, for there was a time coming when they would either have no food to prepare, or the circumstances would prevent their preparing it. I doubt that they reasoned it out. They just acted as God created them to act. Would not the results be fantastic beyond imagination if we would do likewise?

Paul put the lesson in these words, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2b). James said it this way, "Come now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into this city and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away" (James 3:13-14).

Shakespeare had the same idea in mind when he said, "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries."

The second lesson I learned was that although weak and small, through industry, perseverance and the proper use of their God given talents, they could accomplish tasks which seemed impossible. Some ants may have been lazy, cantankerous, proud, self-willed, unwilling to help another who was in trouble, and would continuously act contrary to the nature God gave it, but I never found one. Every ant that I observed was industrious, cooperative, searching for ways to get the job done rather than trying to find an excuse to get out of it.

No wonder Solomon said in Proverbs 6:6, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise."

Then I looked at the rabbit. It was the closest thing to the conie of which I knew. Knowing of their natural helplessness and weakness, they have the wisdom to make the rocks their refuge. Just calling attention to the songs which suggest the Rock as our refuge, our abiding place, our source of Living Water, shelter from storms and desert heat, etc. would take more space than is now available. But it is a lesson we all need. Especially in times of prosperity, we have a tendency to depend on our own strength, wealth, wisdom,

ability, power and influence. Even Paul apparently had to be taught by his thorn in the flesh that his power was not in himself, but in God. He did not simply say, "I can do all things", as some of the popular books on self confidence would have us do. He said, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me". Peter could walk on water. But it was not by learning better techniques of walking, or studying in more detail the movement of the waves, but by relying on and obeying his Lord.

Then I studied the locusts. I had previously thought primarily of their destructive power in the case of Pharaoh and the stories my mother told me about the plague of locusts a little before I was born that ate the diapers from the clothes line and destroyed all the vegetation on the farm where they lived.

But as I studied this, I realized that Solomon was not talking about the character of their work of destruction, but the wisdom of the system by which they accomplish it. Without a king, they still cooperate on an individual and collective basis and accomplish tasks that would otherwise be inconceivable. When you consider that you can easily squash a dozen of them at one time with a foot, yet working together toward one goal or purpose they accomplish their task in spite of the opposition of all the forces that men can muster against them.

What a fantastic lesson for us today! Without any human authority, popish control or earthly headquarters, there is not any task God wants done that we could not do. Our problem is that we so seldom unite with burning zeal for the accomplishment of any one task which God ordained. We are so busy biting and devouring one another that we have little time or strength to get the primary task done that Christ left for us.

This in no sense implies that we should hesitate to "Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine" when false doctrine or ungodly living faces us (which it does constantly). It does mean, however, that even when I differ with you on the manner in which you preach, do your radio program or write your article, when/if/as you suggest a specific plan to get the gospel into all the world, even if I think I could do it better than you, I should cooperate with you, if you are a part of God's family, like the army of locusts cooperate in chewing up all opposition and overcoming all of Satan's hosts.

The spider is probably not trying to make a show of her work, but if you ever saw a spider web with the early morning dew on it, shining in the sunlight, you surely would glorify God. Skill, patience, progress in simply doing what

God made you able to do in the way God wants you to do it will enable you to produce things of beauty and joy for the good of man, and for the glory of God. I never heard a spider make any great noise, or any kind of fuss that would call attention to itself or its work. Nor did I ever see one make an unsightly web or do slovenly work.

If there was ever a great lesson concerning the need of patient perseverance in the use of the means God gave us in order to achieve specific ends which God ordained, it is in the work of the spider. Not only is there unity, proportion, completeness, artistry and beauty in the work, the spider is found in kings' houses. The spiders I observed seemed to be just as content in the humble log cabin in which I lived as they would have been in a palace, but their quiet diligent faithful activity would get them to any place they wanted to go.

Surely there are tremendous lessons in these four little things, not only in our day by day Christian activities, but especially in our efforts to get the gospel into every home in this nation, and into all the world. If we will meditate on and appropriate the lessons we can learn from these four little creatures and actively, quietly, assiduously and cooperatively work toward the end for which God made us, we can within the next year not only get the gospel message into every home in the nation, but glorify God throughout the world in an unusually effective way.

Box 144X, Rt. 2  
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**The World's Greatest Criminal**

I am the greatest criminal in history.  
I have killed more men than have fallen in all the wars of the world.  
I have turned men into brutes.  
I have made millions of homes unhappy.  
I have transformed many ambitious youths into hopeless parasites.  
I make smooth the downward path for countless millions.  
I destroy the weak and weaken the strong.  
I make the wise man a fool and trample the fool into his folly.  
I ensnare the innocent.  
The abandoned wife knows me; the hungry children know me; the parents whose child has bowed their gray heads in sorrow know me.  
I have ruined millions, and shall try to ruin millions more.  
*I am Alcohol.*

-The American Issue.

**We Sing**

by P. D. Wilmeth

MUSIC has many styles—good and bad, high brow and low brow, sacred and secular. Any one style ought to be protected from the others. Let this scribe hasten to say that he is not a musician, and these are simply observations any casual observer would note. Sacred music debases itself when it resorts to popular tunes. Secular artists indulge in gross sacrilege when they swing a hymn for the juke box. A negro spiritual that I like very much is being ruined as a genuine expression of worship since it has fallen into the rock-and-roll trade. It is that tune we call, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands." Who knows, maybe "Rock of Ages" will be next on deck and we'll be hearing something like, "Rock-Rock-Rock of Ages."

A man recently thumbed through an old hymn book and observed with interest that the title of many of the hymns had after them the legend: "(Irregular)." He was struck by the pieces so noted:

"The Way of the Cross Leads Home," "Have Thine Own Way," "Love Lifted Me," and "Wonder Working Power"—all had "Irregular" after them. Most irregular—indeed, at least the way some people sing them. When a song is announced it is easy to distinguish between the "I-dare-you-to-make-me-sing" crowd and the "Make-a-joyful-noise-unto-the-Lord" crowd. It is also easy to recognize the lip-movers, the light-bulb counters, and those who faithfully worship, expressing their faith to God in song.

Clarence Day in "Life with Father" tells of his boyhood days in worship when he was puzzled over what a "consecrated cross-eyed bear" had to do with religion. Years later he discovered that the congregation had been singing about the consecrated cross which they would bear for Christ.

In most hymns the words we sing are plain enough; the saints doing the singing are the problem. Paul wrote saying: "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding (mind) also." (1 Cor. 14:15.)

**WE SING**

*We sing* "Sweet Hour of Prayer" and content ourselves with five minutes a day, or do we pray that much?

*We sing* "There Shall Be Showers of Blessings" but we do not attend services when it is raining.

*We sing* "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" and let the slightest offense sever it.

*We sing* "Onward Christian Soldiers" and wait to be drafted into his service.

*We sing* "Oh, for a Thousand Tongues" and do not use the one we have.

*We sing* "Serve the Lord with Gladness" and gripe about all we have to do.

*We sing* "Cast Thy Burden on the Lord" and worry ourselves into a nervous breakdown.

*We sing* "The Whole Wide World for Jesus" and never invite our next-door neighbor to attend Bible school or a worship service.

*We sing* "We're Marching to Zion" but fail to march to Bible class and worship.

*We sing* "The Gospel Is For All" and then we are so selfish that we are not willing to share it.

*We sing* "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" and then act as if he is a stranger.

Brother, how do you sing?

*Most irregular*, indeed. Can you imagine Jesus and the disciples not meaning it when they sang a hymn before they went out at the institution of the Lord's supper to the Mount of Olives? (Matt. 26:20.) Or, Paul and Silas letting the mind wander when they sang hymns at midnight in the jail at Philippi? (Acts 16:25.) Concentration is always one measure of consecration.

Is this not the reason why Paul wrote: "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding (mind) also?" (1 Cor. 14:15.)

Now, all together, everybody sing!

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*Many people have a nice sense of rumor.*

## What Will You Make Of Your Children?

A blacksmith makes \$5.00 worth of iron into horseshoes, and gets \$10.00 for them.

A cutler makes the same iron into knives and gets \$200.00.

The machinist makes the same iron into needles and gets \$6,800.00.

The watchmaker takes it and makes it into mainsprings and gets \$200,000.00; or into hairsprings and gets \$2,000,000.00; sixty times the value of the same weight in gold!

So it is with life and the opportunity that is given to each one of us. One person takes his time and talents and combines them to advance his earthly interests alone. Another takes the same opportunity and, through wisdom and counsel of God's word, shapes and molds his life for time and eternity.

One set of parents will bring children into the world and give no thought at all to the eternal destiny of their children: they simply allow them to "grow bigger," with no higher aim to their existence than to make money and spend money in the pursuit of satisfying the lusts of the flesh.

Another set of parents will bring children into the world and immediately set about to point them toward Almighty God. In doing so, they do the best thing that parents can do for their precious children.

It has been correctly said, "Every child has a right to a Christian father and mother."

What kind of parents do YOUR children have?

—Selected

*Children are often guilty of tearing up a house, but never of breaking up the home.*

When a task is once begun,  
Never quit until it's done.  
If your task be great or small,  
Do it well, or not at all.

*A marriage will have its pepper when a man is so busy earning his salt that he forgets his sugar.*

Faith is not believing God can – it is believing God will.

*Sin is man's most expensive pleasure.*

## THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

## GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelations 2:10).

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