

The Life and Times of Golden Girl and Globetrotter Ruth Ward Heflin



by G. Richard Fisher

Few had heard of Ruth Ward Heflin until 1998. Then newspapers across the country began reporting on the latest Charismatic sideshow saying that gold glitter was being dispensed by God in church meetings. The names Bob Shattles, Brazilian-born Sylvania Machado and Ruth Ward Heflin were consistently prominent in the news articles. Heflin carried reports on her web site about Machado's claims that "holy gold flakes" appeared on her face and that "oil began to flow supernaturally from her body."¹

Heflin's overly hyped Mount Zion Miracle Chapel in Israel must not have made much of a splash either. Missionaries working in Israel for over 30 years among the Arab communities and Messianic believers reported they knew nothing about her.² So I was not the only one.

Though a self-proclaimed power-preacher and healer, Heflin's untimely death of cancer made more news. A Religious News Service story reported:

"Revivalist Ruth Ward Heflin Dead at 60. — Revivalist Ruth Ward Heflin, known for her role in the so-called 'gold dust' revival involving churches across the globe, died Friday (September 15) at a Richmond, Va., hospital. Heflin, who had suffered from cancer for several

months, was 60. ... She directed the Calvary Pentecostal Campground in Ashland, Va., which was founded by her parents in the 1950s and later led by her brother, Wallace, who died in 1997."³

Her death grabbed a full page in *Charisma* magazine:

"During her nearly 40 years of ministry, Heflin's burden for Israel and for evangelism and discipleship took her around the world. Heflin also was the founder and director of Mount Zion Fellowship, an international prayer ministry in Jerusalem, where she lived for more than 25 years before returning to the United States. ... Heflin suffered a broken ankle in an automobile accident last year. In April, doctors diagnosed her with breast cancer that already had spread into her bones. Heflin underwent a mastectomy on April 25, but refused chemotherapy or further cancer treatment because she said the Lord told her to refuse, according to Connie Wilson, her personal assistant. ... Heflin recently has been a central figure in the so-called gold dust revival. People who attended her camp meetings said they saw gold dust appear on their faces and hands,

and some reported that God put gold fillings in their teeth. Some said they even saw diamonds, rubies or feathers appear."⁴

So Heflin died of cancer even though she boasted wildly in her 1999, autobiography, *Harvest Glory*: "I suddenly knew how easy it is to raise the dead and to heal all manner of sickness and disease. How easy it is in that realm of glory! How easy to see people leaping out of wheelchairs and off stretchers! How easy to see blind eyes opened and deaf ears unstopped! In the glory realm nothing is impossible."⁵ Whatever the "glory realm" is, Heflin, it appears, was not in it personally.

But she continues:

"That glory must have stayed with us two or three hours. God was giving us a foretaste, as He often does, of a greater day, so that we could encourage ourselves and others to move into the glory realm. God showed me that day that if there is no death working in me, if there is no bitterness, no strife, no criticism — nothing of death — I can command death. If death is working in me, I have no authority over death. If only life is flowing through me, I have an authority over death, and I can command it in the name of the

Lord. As we moved deeper into the resurrection power of God and learned to live in the glory realm, I knew that we would see the miraculous as the world had never seen it before. It was a beginning of greater things for all of us."⁶

Shortly after that statement, she was anguishing with breast and bone cancer. Here was a lady under a very strong delusion. Neither could Heflin stay the hand of death for her brother, the Rev. Wallace Harrison Heflin Jr. He died of a heart attack on December 27, 1996 at age 64.⁷

Just an elementary knowledge of the Bible shows us that disease and the realm of death is not defeated until the resurrection day according to 1 Corinthians 15, Romans 8 and Revelation 21. It is sad that people will not believe just what the Bible teaches while claiming to be Bible believers. Illusions of a "glory realm" now are so much nonsense.

LOCAL OPINIONS

Heflin was born and grew up in Ashland, Va., a suburb of Richmond of about 6,500 people. In 1955, Heflin's parents founded Calvary Pentecostal Camp and in 1980 her brother, Wallace Jr., opened End Times Food Inc., selling dehydrated food and giving tips on food storage in preparation for the food shortages and power outages that were on the horizon. Followers were told to "stock up before Armageddon comes."⁸

Heflin inherited the role of camp director after the death of her brother, who had acquired the position in 1972 following the death of their father. The site is on Route 626, south of Ashland, and is well known for help with community services, according to Jay Pace, editor of the *Herald-Progress-Hanover News*. Vagrants and battered women find their way there. Pace was and is a longtime friend of the Heflin family.

Pace noted that Heflin was rarely at the camp because she traveled extensively. He added that the camp often

was a noisy gathering place (accommodating 550 guests in 30 buildings at capacity) attracting worldwide visitors rather than the locals. It all took on an aura bigger than life with fantastic claims of the miraculous. When Heflin was described as brash, pushy, manipulative and one who constantly created photo opportunities for effect, Pace replied, "That's her!"⁹ The camp was run by about 80 people who live there on donations.

HINN HYPE

Heflin gained a further measure of notoriety in the months prior to her death with a "prophecy" regarding the ministry of faith healer Benny Hinn. Hinn, on his *This Is Your Day* broadcast, told followers:

"Ruth prophesied over me back in the '70s and everything she said has happened. She's just sent me a word through my wife and said the Lord spoke to her audibly and said that He is going to appear *physically* in one of our crusades in the next few months. ... She said the Lord spoke to her audibly and said, 'Tell Benny I'm going to appear physically on the platform in his meetings.'"¹⁰

Hinn alluded to Heflin's prophecy at various times while promoting his upcoming healing crusades, most notably his June meeting in Kenya. Despite Heflin's audible word from the Lord and Hinn's fanfare of the prophecy, Jesus never "physically" appeared at his meetings "in the next few months."

Heflin admits that after almost 40 years, "I was still relatively unknown in America."¹¹ Her rise to greater fame in the past few years was a result of an invitation to speak at a Pastor's Conference at Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola and her attendance at numerous Benny Hinn Crusades.¹² All of the sudden, she became larger than life.

PROMOTING THE OCCULT

Heflin's autobiography gives no clear conversion story but does contain accounts of strange phenomena

she experienced as a girl. She claimed pictures taken of her when developed were "filled with bright light."¹³ Though the book includes 40 pages of photos (over 100 pictures) none of them shows the bright light she refers to. As with many of her claims, there is no documentation whatsoever.

She also claimed that as a result of a vision she had of the Chinese people, her physical appearance changed and she took on Chinese features.¹⁴ But again, there is no photograph included in the book to document the claim. She wrote that she often spoke in Chinese in her sleep.¹⁵ However, later in the book she admitted that she had a difficult time learning Chinese after arriving in Hong Kong.¹⁶

Heflin claimed her father had success in healing a leper and crippled children¹⁷ but offered no documentation.

At times Heflin sounds like a fortune teller as she practices clairvoyance. She recounts how she was criticized by one (unnamed Pentecostal leader) but "the Lord spoke to me and gave me a message ... concerning his son."¹⁸ She practiced this throughout her life as she recounts, "This was the beginning of God speaking to me in a new dimension and sending me to pastors and other church leaders all over the world. The gift would greatly expand in later years."¹⁹

Extra-sensory ability, where it is not faked, is a tool of Satan. Occult expert Kurt Koch lists clairvoyance in his book, *The Devil's Alphabet*.²⁰

Heflin admitted to other occult experiences, namely out-of-body transport, otherwise known as astral projection:

"I began to be conscious of the fact that I was remembering only the first line of each prophecy and the last line. I could never remember anything in between. In the end I realized that I had not been sleeping at all, but had been carried away in the Spirit. I was conscious of the first line, as my spirit was being carried away, and of the last line, as my

spirit came back into my body. Later, when I got back to Jerusalem, there was a postcard there that I had sent back telling everyone about those amazing days and that I must have been carried away in the Spirit at least a hundred times during that short period."²¹

Heflin's guidance system also consisted of inner promptings and dreams.²² Dr. Jay Adams warns against this kind of mystical practice. Commenting on Psalm 119:2, he writes:

"Notice that the place to seek God is in the Bible. Counseless will find Him and His will for their lives nowhere else. Mystics think that they can have encounters with God apart from the Scriptures. They think that nothing need come between them and God (not even Christ, nor the Bible). They therefore work up some sort of 'experience' they suppose to be the presence of God in this manner and look down on the 'peons' who try to find God in the Scriptures."²³

ON THE ROAD — AGAIN

Heflin recalled another experience, in which she claimed that a "prophecy" was given over her, giving her the assurance from God that, "I will give you My knowledge and My wisdom."²⁴

As a young woman and far into her adult life, Heflin's main pursuit was travel all over the globe. She not only loved travel, it was her obsession. As long as she could get from church to church, she could gather the funds to move on, always making the claim that in this way she was reaching the nations.

The implicit idea is that her getting to a nation was tantamount to the nation being reached. She recounted her trip to Brazil in these words:

"My trips did not always involve ministry to people. Sometimes they were for the purpose of declaration and prophetic release, as in the case of a trip I

made to Brazil. ... I prophesied to Rio and to all of Brazil. I was conscious that God was changing the atmosphere over the city and over the nation. ... God had sent me to take care of the spiritual atmosphere over Rio."²⁵

However, old-line Roman Catholicism has been growing at a steady rate in Brazil since 1960 and about 65% of the population considers itself Roman Catholic.²⁶

Heflin's autobiography gives numerous examples of being brash, pushy and demanding, which served her well and opened many doors and opportunities. Many contacts made in this way with various embassies gave her great photo opportunities as the numerous pictures illustrate.

She displays pictures of herself with Hillary Clinton in Jerusalem in 1995, with Benny Hinn in Jerusalem in 1996 and with former President George Bush in Alabama in 1998. Unwittingly though, she may have tipped her hand and revealed her "M.O." when she wrote:

"I was introduced to Astronaut Jim Irwin at the San Francisco Airport as the tour lined up at the counter to check in for our flight. The Chinese government was thrilled about the visit of a U.S. astronaut, and they were planning to roll out the red carpet for him. *We would benefit from his celebrity.*"²⁷

Heflin actually made a career of touring. Upon arrival in a city, she would contact major embassies and check the schedule to see if there were any public functions she could attend. She would get public tours of parliaments and government buildings and network and name-drop.²⁸ She was constantly meeting and making friends. Every new friend was a virtual steppingstone.

Heflin would go on numerous paid tours with bankers or businessmen, even with airline executives to widen her sphere of influence and information. It also built up many contacts. She was a professional tourist.²⁹ Heflin knew all the ropes as far as travel.

On one occasion, she used an expensive hotel to freshen up in after having slept in her car.³⁰

Heflin would introduce herself to travelers at airports, question them and make immediate friends.³¹ She had it down pat. The more friends (casual and otherwise) she acquired, the more homes she had as stopover places as she crisscrossed countries. She was an obsessive traveler. Having driven a car from England and across Europe to Israel, she exulted, "It was one of those trips I would gladly take again, especially if I had a nice car to do it in."³²

HOLY CHUTZPAH!

At times she admits to wheedling, cajoling and manipulating to get what she wanted. On arrival in Jerusalem, she called the office of then Prime Minister Golda Meir and told Meir's spokesman that she insisted on speaking to the Prime Minister. When she was denied and told that the spokesman would see her for five minutes the following day. She recalls:

"I suddenly found myself saying, 'You see me today for five minutes, and tomorrow afternoon you will call me.' The Jewish people are famous for their *chutzpah*, their boldness, and I suppose in that moment he felt that I had out-*chutzpahed* everybody he knew. He laughed, and then he said, 'All right, I'll see you this afternoon for five minutes.'"³³

This kind of arrogance and brazenness is talked about again and again in her book.

Heflin boasts that she met and was photographed with then Mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kolleck.³⁴ This is not a major feat and means next to nothing. Kolleck was a regular at large Christian gatherings and very often at public events. One could run into him regularly at hotel gatherings as this author did in Jerusalem some years ago. Status by osmosis may be a public relations gimmick but it is empty of real meaning. People's Temple leader Jim Jones was photographed with public officials, as was

false prophet Herbert W. Armstrong, usually after he gave some large amount of his followers' money to a public or community project.

Heflin, at one point (in the early 1980s), began networking with the infamous scammer and disgraced televangelist Robert Tilton. Tilton assisted her in building a prayer chapel on the Mount of Olives.³⁵ Each one used the influence of the other.

DON'T BE DUPED

We need to look at Heflin by way of an outline, realizing that she is typical of the hyper-Charismatics and restorationists so prominent today. We can do this by using the acrostic *DUPED*.

DIRECT (and **DANGEROUS**) **REVELATION**: Heflin told her loyal followers that she had a special direct open line to heaven. She framed her claims in this way:

"God had dropped important revelations into our spirits, and by the time we got ready to go, we had ten or twelve major revelations to work on. We were learning that you can travel for God without an address, but you don't dare go without a revelation."³⁶

This kind of talk makes the Bible seem dull and unappealing and certainly not a Word from God for today. She makes no appeal to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, but rather to her personal revelations. They seem more immediate, exciting and up-to-date.

Then Heflin said God told her He would, "deal with you in sevens and eights. Don't try to figure out what I'm saying, but I want you to fast seven days and eat on the eighth, and fast seven more days and eat on the eighth, and do it for seven weeks and eat on the eighth week."³⁷

She then adds:

"That night, however, while I was preaching in the church in Richmond, the Lord spoke to me in the middle of my sermon and told me to fly to Jerusalem the next day."³⁸

Some of these "revelations" were a danger to her life:

"That night when I got into my bed, I had an experience in which the Living Creatures from Ezekiel chapter 1 and Revelation chapter 4 flew into my bedroom. I cannot say for sure how long they were there, but their presence was glorious, and when they left, I knew that I would spend my life with the Jewish people. The next morning as I was on my way to church, I could still feel the glory I had felt when they were in my room. It seemed that my arms were possessed of a great jet propulsion. I was trying to drive the car, but my hands would fly off the wheel and flutter as those of the Living Creatures. I would put my hands back on the wheel, and the surging power would hit them again. It was only the presence of angels that got us safely to church that morning."³⁹

Heflin either has a very wild and vivid imagination or is just telling stories. The only other option is demonic activity. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is self-control, not flapping one's arms uncontrollably.

Heflin also reports being "stuck" and unable to move on numerous occasions.⁴⁰ She makes no attempt to explain what this unbiblical experience of being "frozen" has to do with the Christian life or sanctification. Some years ago, before entering ministry, this writer did construction work on the interior of a mental hospital in New Jersey and saw many people in locked wards in states of catatonic schizophrenia. It certainly was not anything connected with anything good, let alone Christianity. Being overtaken and unable to move may be more connected to altered states or the dark side, unless it is pure hype for effect.

UNDOCUMENTED CLAIMS: Heflin makes outlandish claims without a shred of documentation. She claims she healed someone of polio.⁴¹ Her wildest claim was that based on the verse, "*Before Zion travailed, she*

brought forth" God showed her a new thing. That new thing was giving birth without pain. That was later confirmed to Heflin by an article in an Australian women's magazine, "SING YOUR WAY TO A PAINLESS CHILDBIRTH."⁴² The effects of the curse in Genesis 3 will not be lifted before Jesus comes (Romans 8).

Heflin goes on to claim that, "In one service alone fifty-six hearing- and speech-impaired Russians had received their healing, and thousands had been saved and filled with the Spirit."⁴³ Boasts like this can be easily made far from home. She never produced the goods here either.

Likewise, for all of Heflin's visions about China and her boasts of "many exciting events in connection with China,"⁴⁴ the country still remains with only about 6% professing Christians.⁴⁵

Heflin makes many claims regarding either her prayers or presence being a large factor in the ebb and flow of nations. The flip side is who gets the blame (or credit) for the Biafran war breaking out just after she arrived in Lagos, Nigeria?⁴⁶ She seems to indicate that her prayers at the Wailing Wall the night before Anwar Sadat's historic peace visit had some special meaning or effect,⁴⁷ but where was she when Sadat was assassinated? These claims are self-serving interpretations that have little to do with reality. They are not only undocumented but unproven and unprovable. This author was in Israel the year Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat shook hands in Washington. So what? The events in recent days in the Middle East now show the handshake meant very little.

Another undocumented claim is made by Heflin about a spiritual facelift:

"That sister was so drunk with joy that we had to carry her home after the meeting, and all through the night I could hear her laughing. The next morning she looked twenty years younger, as if she had received a total face lift."⁴⁸

Are we to really believe that not only gold dust but a “gold nugget” has fallen from heaven at her meetings?⁴⁹ Are we to take seriously the story that a shipping clerk at Montgomery Ward got saved simply seeing gold dust (glitter) on a lady’s face?⁵⁰

Heflin reports that while speaking in Christ Church in Jerusalem in September 1998 gold dust appeared. In a phone interview with the Rev. Neil Cohen, pastor of Christ Church, he laughed at the report and then said, “I was there, present at her meetings. I heard the rumor afterwards but while there I saw nothing.” He said that Heflin was admired by some in Jerusalem and despised by others.⁵¹

Heflin even passes on a story about the healing of chickens:

“One night in the great government conference center, she told of a Japanese chicken farmer who was losing all his chickens to sickness. She told him to have the chickens fast for two or three days, and when the chickens fasted, they were all healed. ... It was the chickens fasting for their own healing.”⁵²

The great chicken healing feat was supposedly done by David Yonggi Cho’s mother-in-law, whom Heflin nicknamed “Hallelujah Mama.”⁵³

Though Heflin did not give a date, she asserted that oil flowing from people’s hands and gold dust coming out of their pores started first among visitors from Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is only 7% “Christian,” the bulk of those being Roman Catholic. Of the approximately 19 million in Sri Lanka, over 70% are Buddhist. Over 21% are Muslim and Hindu, making for a very dark and superstitious land.⁵⁴ Since oil and gold flakes are not a biblical phenomenon, there are only two choices left — deception or demonic.

Heflin was also adept at “after-the-fact” prophecies. She wrote she knew that “Bibi Netanyahu would become Prime Minister of Israel.”⁵⁵

Heflin, like faith healers Oral Roberts and Benny Hinn, wanted us to believe that she raised a woman from the dead. The woman fainted at a funeral home and revived but Heflin insisted she died. There was no attending physician or medical documentation and the woman was taken to a hospital where she recovered. Heflin admitted she never prayed for the lady but that the “miracle” just happened “in the flow of the river.”⁵⁶

PRIVATE INTERPRETATIONS: Heflin is quite proficient at Scripture twisting. One example is her use of Ezekiel 39. She claimed:

“Under a great anointing I began to prophesy that it was time for the events of Ezekiel 39 to come to pass, that God would now breathe His life into His people and that they would stand up in the authority of the Holy Spirit. ... When it came time to open the conference, I stepped to the microphone and encouraged everyone present to join me in shouting the name of Jesus three times. That name had never been shouted in that particular building before, but suddenly the power of it began to go through the atmosphere. The declaring of His name in Jerusalem opened up a whole new era for what God was about to do in the land.”⁵⁷

Two big questions pose themselves:

What has changed in Israel in the last 30 years? Absolutely nothing for the better! The suspicion and hatred is worse than ever. Israel is becoming more secular and unbelieving. Where in Scripture are we told that shouting “Jesus” in a crowded building does anything. Other “healers” say you must shout “Fire” or “Heal” or “Glory” or “More, Lord” or “Take it!” Whom do we believe?

Second, what about Ezekiel 39? Is it a prophecy of Jews standing up “in the authority of the Holy Spirit”? Is it about widespread spiritual renewal?

Foremost, the chapter has to do with war and judgment. It mentions

“birds of prey” (v. 4) and the awful labor of burying invaders for seven months (v. 11-12). It is only after severe judgments fall on Israel for its sin (v. 23) that God extends mercy. Heflin appears to have left that part out. Most commentators would see this in an eschatological connection. It has to be a future event since verse 21 tells us it culminates in God, setting His glory “among the nations” resulting in “the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from this day forward” (v. 22). Nothing like any of the biblical events above has occurred in Israel in Heflin’s lifetime.

Bruce Larson gives an illustration regarding where private interpretation can take people. It shows the length to which people can go:

“I read about the arrest of three sisters in Lansing, Michigan. These young women had removed their clothes, smeared themselves with mustard and were riding around in a stolen van. The police tried to determine the motive for this bizarre crime. It seems they were reading the Bible when the Holy Spirit seemed to speak to them. They discarded their clothes, having read that in the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve were naked. They read elsewhere the passage that likens faith to a grain of mustard seed, and so they lathered on mustard. The stolen van seems to have no biblical explanation. They claimed they went under the compulsion of the Holy Spirit. We all know people around us who claim that the Holy Spirit is directing them. There are many warnings in the Bible about testing the spirits.”⁵⁸

Another passage totally distorted by Heflin and other hyper-Charismatics involves the rising waters of Ezekiel 47:3-5. Ezekiel sees waters that are so abundant and high that he could not cross over without swimming (v. 5). The verse has nothing to do with dancing, jumping, screaming and getting out of control or about Catholics and Pentecostals getting together as Heflin suggests.⁵⁹

The verse has to do with geography. If one believes in a literal millennium, it would have to do with literal and topographical changes on a renewed Earth. The waters flow toward the east (v. 8) and the Dead Sea is made fresh (vv. 9-10). If one does not believe in a literal millennium, the passage then is seen as a future renewal in the eternal state when God makes all things new.

EXPERIENCE ORIENTATION: As we have already seen much of Heflin's teachings have to do with her experiences and her interpretations of her experiences. Feelings and emotions can be notoriously unreliable and open to conflicting interpretations. Her connection to the heretical End Time Handmaidens group is very suspicious.⁶⁰

At times Heflin seems really delusional. She claims a vision in which she "released all the wealth of America that would be needed for the ingathering of the last-day harvest."⁶¹

Are we also to really believe Heflin's report of her father's out-of-body experience? Of course, it is Heflin's report of what her father told her he experienced, but it makes for good story telling nonetheless:

"Tears came to my father's eyes, and he told us that while he had been praying his feet had actually lifted up off the ground, as he felt himself being lifted from the mountain earlier that morning. He immediately thought of the work that was left undone, and, in that moment, he came back down to earth. As he stood in the glory of that experience, he had to wonder if he had made the right choice."⁶²

One can stand with eyes closed and imagine all kinds of things and create various sensations. Altered states of consciousness can bring all kinds of bodily sensations and twinges. The average Christian would get discouraged believing these kinds of reports, thinking themselves unspiritual because they have never flown without a plane. But where does the Bible

suggest we would or should? There is no piece of armor in Ephesians 6 called flight. This really is unbiblical nonsense. Even the hymn, "I'll Fly Away" is understood as after death.

One of the strangest things about Heflin was her utter devotion to President Bill Clinton. She did not want him impeached and emphasized that, "Our nation's economy and the world's economy are at stake and with them the whole American way of life, as you and I have known it."⁶³ She also confesses, "I prayed that President Bill Clinton would remain in office. I knew that for the sake of America and for the sake of revival, we needed a stable presidency. ... It would be a great loss for us to sacrifice President Clinton."⁶⁴ This makes Clinton sound almost Messianic. Nevertheless, her prayer was answered despite the fact that many Americans did not think Clinton's ouster would be a great loss.

DANGEROUS DOCTRINES: Much of what Heflin teaches is dangerous in that it either ignores the Bible for experience or distorts the Bible for effect. One of Heflin's main teachings was what I call *lazy evangelism*.

Heflin promoted the idea that just being in a place effects great spiritual changes in the atmosphere and is to be equated somehow to a Gospel witness that will set up the Second Coming of Christ. While in Israel, Heflin and her friends would go outside and dance, sing and pray and claim they were opening up and evangelizing nations far away.

Just a whistle stop on a train could suffice:

"One year, while I was ministering in Australia, the Lord brought to my mind something He had said to me in America. He showed me that I should travel across both China and Russia, fasting and praying as I went, believing for the release of the land and its people. I knew that it was time to fulfill that call. ... At each stop, I would step out on the platform and pray and

prophesy. The words the Lord gave me, different for each place, were declaring the release of the Jewish people and the spiritual release God wanted to bring to the country as a whole."⁶⁵

Of course, Heflin would leave the hard work of transport and absorption of Russian Jews (and the expenditure of millions of shekels) to the Israeli government. She just says the words but others have to get the job done.

If Heflin visited a place, she considered it tantamount to reaching that country for Christ:

"In each place God led us by His Spirit, making divine appointments, causing the soles of our feet to possess new territory, making sure that the Gospel of the Kingdom was preached in every nation for a witness before the end comes, using our voices as prophetic instruments to spark life into that which was dead. He was causing us to gather, by our prophetic voices, *Harvest Glory*."⁶⁶

EASY WAY OR HARD WAY?

How easy this was compared to a missionary who has to give his blood, sweat, tears and life in living with a people and doing the hard work of translation and evangelism. Jesus told us to "make disciples, baptize and teach them" (Matthew 28:19-20). We are told not to pray "vain repetitions" (Matthew 6:7), but rather pray that the Lord of the harvest "would send out *laborers* into His harvest" (Luke 10:2). Lazy evangelism is as serious an error as hyper-Calvinism. The Apostle Paul labored to "persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11).

When Joshua was told, "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you" (1:3), the people of Israel still had to do the work, engage in battle and involve themselves. Obedience to God's battle plan secured the land. Heflin mistakes travel for evangelism. After traveling on a whirlwind tour of 20 countries in six months she is so bold to say "by

faith we had done the route. ... and everywhere we had traveled, we were possessing the nations for the Kingdom of God."⁶⁷

Can we believe that, "Ireland, England, France, Turkey, Syria, Israel, Egypt, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, the Congo, Cameroon, Gabon, Senegal, Nigeria"⁶⁸ which are places she had visited, have been possessed for the Kingdom of God? The suggestion is ludicrous and one would have to be incredibly ignorant or out of reality to think so.

WHISTLING IN THE DARK

Heflin claimed to have a gift I had never heard of: "whistling in the Spirit." Apparently, even this could evangelize. She said it began in China and she described it this way:

"I began whistling in the Spirit (something I do with increasing regularity) and I whistled into the microphone. When I did, it caused an immediate stir among those who had come. They had never heard anyone whistle in the glory and they brought people from every direction over the coming days to hear. Their lives were changed as a result."⁶⁹

In retrospect, Heflin lived an illusory life. She traveled far and wide, met numerous people, made incredible and unfounded claims, spread false teaching, and perhaps believed her own press. One can only think of the "strong delusion" of 2 Thessalonians 2:11.

IT WAS THERE ALL THE TIME

Maybe all her pull toward China and Israel were not so supernatural and mysterious as she would have us believe. Her uncle (William Ward), her grandfather and parents were great travelers. She described them as having "'faraway places' syndrome."⁷⁰ Her mother and father had supported missionaries in China and Heflin's baby book had photos of Chinese pastors in it. Her grandfather had made a trip to Israel the year she was born and "had sent back post-cards."⁷¹ Heflin had been raised with travel as a family value and a family

pursuit. As well, the church she grew up in stressed missions and was constantly buzzing with incoming missionaries.⁷² Travel was the way she attained her identity and approval. And without a husband, she was free to travel even more.

On the last page of her autobiography, she rhapsodizes herself into fantasyland:

"We are called for this day and this hour. Born for it. Destined for it. It is a time greater than the Day of Pentecost. Greater than the period of the first-century church. The end time. The time of the culmination of all things. The day of fulfillment. The day that the Apostles longed to see. The day that we are not only seeing, but the day we are experiencing. ... Angelic hosts assist us. Signs, wonders, healings and miracles confirm us. All that has happened through the centuries has been geared for this hour."⁷³

And then she died!

Endnotes:

1. "Testimonies of Signs and Wonders at Campmeeting," available at: <http://www.revivalglory.org/campfest.htm>
2. E-mail correspondence from missionary Wayne King to author, dated 11/2/2000.
3. *The Christian News*, Sept. 25, 2000, pg. 10.
4. Renee DeLoria, "Ruth Ward Heflin, Revivalist and Prayer Minister, Dies of Cancer at 60," *Charisma*, November 2000, pg. 24.
5. Ruth Ward Heflin, *Harvest Glory*. Hagerstown, Md.: McDougal Publishing, pg. 241.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Carrie Johnson, "Wallace Heflin Dies," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Dec. 29, 1996, pg. B-3.
8. Ed Briggs, "Campground and Church Center of Heflin Ministry," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, March 7, 1987, pg. A-13.
9. Phone conversation with Jay Pace and the author, Oct. 31, 2000.
10. Benny Hinn, *This Is Your Day*, March 29, 2000, tape on file.
11. *Harvest Glory*, op. cit., pg. 370.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 370-371.
13. *Ibid.*, pg. 15.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.
15. *Ibid.*, pg. 20.
16. *Ibid.*, pg. 29.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.
18. *Ibid.*, pg. 41.

19. *Ibid.*, pg. 42.
20. Kurt E. Koch, *The Devil's Alphabet*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregal Publications, 1971, pp. 33-34.
21. *Glory Harvest*, op. cit., pg. 275.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.
23. Jay E. Adams, *Counsel from Psalm 119*. Woodruff, S.C.: Timeless Texts, 1998, pg. 3, bold in original.
24. *Glory Harvest*, op. cit., pg. 17.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 267-269.
26. See further, Peter Brierley and Heather Wraight, *Atlas of World Christianity*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998, pg. 98.
27. *Glory Harvest*, op. cit., pg. 296, emphasis added.
28. *Ibid.*, pg. 312.
29. *Ibid.*, pg. 286.
30. *Ibid.*, pg. 322.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 323-324.
32. *Ibid.*, pg. 323.
33. *Ibid.*, pg. 172.
34. *Ibid.*, pg. 175.
35. *Ibid.*, pg. 325.
36. *Ibid.*, pg. 104.
37. *Ibid.*, pg. 163.
38. *Ibid.*, pg. 171.
39. *Ibid.*, pg. 176.
40. *Ibid.*, pg. 374.
41. *Ibid.*, pg. 160.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 229-230.
43. *Ibid.*, pg. 320.
44. *Ibid.*, pg. 276.
45. *Atlas of World Christianity*, op. cit., pg. 98.
46. *Glory Harvest*, op. cit., pg. 124.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238.
48. *Ibid.*, pg. 337.
49. *Ibid.*, pg. 388.
50. *Ibid.*, pg. 391.
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53. *Ibid.*, pp. 338-340.
54. See further, *Operation World*. Seattle: Youth With A Mission, 1993, pg. 502.
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56. *Ibid.*, pp. 384-385.
57. *Ibid.*, pg. 197.
58. Bruce Larson, *The Commentator's Commentary, Luke*. Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1983, pp. 56-57.
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63. *Ibid.*, pg. 394.
64. *Ibid.*, pg. 392.
65. *Ibid.*, pg. 317.
66. *Ibid.*, pg. 125.
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68. *Ibid.*
69. *Ibid.*, pg. 328.
70. *Ibid.*, pg. 402.
71. *Ibid.*
72. *Ibid.*, pg. 401.
73. *Ibid.*, pg. 406.