

Hickory Grove church of Christ
1131 Hickory Grove Rd.
Almo, KY 42020-9332

Return Services Requested

Sunday Services: 9:00 a.m.
Bible Classes 6:00 p.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday: 7:00 p.m.
Bible Study

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and newspaper articles. My articles had a great many quotations from the Koran, their supposed-to-be holy book. The religion is dangerous and a great threat – Editor).

“Thank you for your great article on the ‘Compromise of Convictions.’ I do the Bible Studies each week before our regular service... I have used materials from past Banner of Truth issues in my past Bible Studies. This subject of ‘Compromise’ I have chosen for my sermon Sunday. There is a lot of material to cover and you have given me a lot of help in preparing it. Thanks again. I really enjoy getting your issues and the articles they contain. Brother in Christ” – **Ron Reynolds.** (Thanks for your favorable comments. In my more than 50 years of preaching, I’ve never seen compromise as extensive as it is now. I continue to wonder how it is that brethren who have known the truth for years and at one time loved it, can now compromise it. But when we stop to think about it, the many warnings sounded forth in the New Testament should cause us to expect this sad condition. – Editor).

“I’d like to write and let you know that I wrote for you to send me a package of 15 of the B.O.T. papers. Well, I’m getting the package and I do thank you so much for them. You can discontinue that which is mailed to me and I can get one from the package and then pass it on. I do hope you are doing much better. God bless and keep you and yours. In Christian love” – **Thelma Clark, MS.** (I am doing quite well. Naomi fell a few weeks ago and dislocated her shoulder. She has done well over that but her sciatic nerve has been giving her serious problems. – Editor).

“Thanks so much for BOT and all you do – **Lucille Krantz, TN.**

“I would like to receive Banner of Truth. My address is attached – **Mrs. Kim Ward, CA.**

Has your address changed? Please let us know in order that we can continue to send BOT, save dollars on our expenses. – Editor.

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Will America Suffer God’s Wrath?

Editor’s Note: This article was carried in the June issue of Banner of Truth in 1993. I have a request to run it again, and inasmuch as the moral conditions in America have worsened considerably in almost twelve years, the request is considered timely. When it was run in 1993 our mailing list was about 2,000, we now run more than 7,600. To many the article will be new.

In God’s revealed will, contained only in the Bible, there is overwhelming and irrefutable evidence that God’s wrath will be suffered by a nation or people which continues pursue the course which America is now following at such a rapid pace. It is not a matter of whether or not it will happen; it is only a matter of *how* and *when* it will occur. But there is a bright side for the God-fearing people. That is, God’s faithful servants can have an unfaltering courage in the Divine assurance that victory will ultimately be theirs as *overcomers* having “escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (Rev. 2-3; 2 Pet. 2:20).

A careful examination and consideration of the present deplorable moral state of our nation and the proper application of God’s word relative to the matter will clearly justify the above conclusion, and that America is a people now ripe for destructions. Consider:

I. The Moral State Of Our Country

The evidence showing the horrific moral decline in our nation is so extensive that we can only consider a small part of it. But we begin by reflecting upon history. From history we learn that the mighty Roman Empire into which Christianity was ushered, was in many respects very similar to today’s America, the most powerful nation in the world. The Roman Empire, due to the extensive moral corruption and decay permeating it, ceased to ex-

ist. In more recent times Alexander Solzhenitsyn is quoted as saying those who lived through the Bolshevik takeover in Russia, attributed the terrible tragedy to the following: “Men have forgotten God, that’s why all these things happened.” We have just witnessed the breakup of the former Soviet Union after 70 years of Godless rule by atheistic communism. Cal Thomas, a syndicated columnist, wrote, “A common malady of many nations that collapsed internally before →

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Continued from Page 1

being conquered externally was a melting of the moral resolve." Another writer, a former government official, said, "There has never been a case in history in which society has been able to survive for long without a strong moral code... Recovering our moral code—our religious truth—is the only way our society can survive." From the Bible we learn that Israel was brought to her knees time after time, due to the forgetting of God and going astray. In view of what has happened in the past, of we think American can never fall as a nation, we have another thought coming. And, whether we fall as a nation or not, God's wrath will surely come upon the disobedient, as we shall discuss later. But at this point we want to consider a few areas relating to America's moral condition now.

A. A Concerted Effort To Extinguish All Christian Influence

Who would have thought forty years ago that our country, which prided itself as a "Christian Nation,"

heavily influence by Christian principles, would now be suffering from a powerful effort to extinguish the Christian influence of those believe in God? This effort began in a pronounced way in the early 1960's when prayer, the Bible and its influenced were removed from the schools. Another giant step was taken in the *Roe vs. Wade* decision by our Supreme Court. In recent times we have been hearing a lot about the "ethnic cleansing" which is taking place in Bosnia. Well, there is an attempted "cleansing" underway in our country. Its objective is to "cleanse" our society of Christian influence. Tragically, some who claim to believe in God are apparently unaware of this anti-God effort, though the valid evidence is abundant to the observing person. It is sadly ironic that we as a nation are gravitating toward the condition which existed, existed and failed, in Eastern Europe. They now want the Bible taught to their people and a strong element here wants to do away with the Bible and its Godly influence. We shall consider a few areas where that evidence is apparent.

The News Media. For the most part it is ultra liberal with respect to God and Christian influence. A case in point is the way the media often characterizes those who uphold traditional family and moral values. They are put down as poor, ignorant, uneducated radicals of the "Religious Right," or some times the "radical Religious Right." The media bias is so evident in upholding and/or leaning toward that which is far-out morally speaking.

The Entertainment Industry. Various surveys have revealed that the grater majority of the Hollywood clan have very low moral standards, and their productions by way of movies, TV shows, etc. attest to that fact. Programs which do not run counter to Godly principles are a pitiful few. Even country music has reached a new low in upholding immorality and indecency. And, what of other so-called music?

The Printed Page. *The Washington Times*, 3/25/93, reports that Janet Reno is expected to close down obscenity cases, with the exception of the most vile child pornography. The lewd and lustful are often prominent in today's writings, magazines, etc. Pornography is big business as the demands of the amoral people are supplied. Lewd literature is available to almost everyone who wants it. Base and vulgar literature, pictures, etc. are so commonplace today whereas not too many ↓

Fifth Annual Banner of Truth Lectures 2005

Murray, KY., June 27-30

*Lessons from Prophets of Old
for Modern Man*

Tentative Speakers: Alan Adams, Richard Adams, Ken Burleson, Jimmy Bates, Jeff Bates, Leon Cole, Roger Campbell, Paul Curless, Lindon Ferguson, Richard Guill, Lloyd Gale, Rick Knoll, David Lemmons, Walter Pigg, Garland Robinson, Roger Scully, Joe Spangler.

Tentative subjects: In The Beginning God Created. God Created Man In His Image. Cleave Unto His Wife. The Eyes Of Both Of Them Were Opened. You Shall Not Surely Die. It Shall Bruise Thy Head. The Lord Had Respect Unto Abel. Noah Did All the Lord Commanded. I Will Make Of Thee A Great Nation. The Lord Rained Fire And Brimstone. Joseph, A Goodly Person. Ten Commandments. People Sat Down To Eat And Drink. Strange Fire Before The Lord. So The Lord Was With Joshua. The House of Israel. All Came To Pass. Me And My House, We Will Serve the Lord. They Stood Every Man In His Place. But They Have Rejected Me. To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice. Stand Still, And See The Salvation Of The Lord. Out Of Zion Shall Go Forth The Law. A Virgin Shall Conceive. Prophecy Not Unto Us Right Things. Son Shall Not Bear Iniquity Of The Father. My People Destroyed For Lack of Knowledge. Arise, Go To Nineveh. Will A Man Rob God? **We intend to have finalized lectureship plans in the March issue of BOT.**

— Editor

Readers' Response

"My prayer is that God will continue to bless your work. Your work of faith and love is being spread abroad. It has reached Pontiac, Michigan where I am privileged to preach the gospel of Christ. I would love to be placed on your mailing list for your free publication or if there is a fee please bill it to the Franklin Road church of Christ. Thanks in advance for the knowledge and encouragement that I will receive from you printed page. Love for the brotherhood" — **Darrell Hold**, MI (*We are happy to add you to our mailing list. We do not charge for Banner of Truth. It is made possible by individuals and congregations who choose to have part in the cost.* — Editor).

"My name is Joe McIntyre, and my wife is Cynthia. We're both members of the Emerson Street church of Christ. This is to let you know our appreciation for your work and our intent to send \$30 per month until we can increase that amount. Take care and God bless — **Joe & Cynthia McIntyre**, AR. (*Thanks so much for you willingness to have a part in our work for truth.* — Editor).

"Keep feeding us with the hot bread from the oven of heaven. We love you 'Banner of Truth.' Hope this small donation will help somewhere — **Toi Jackson**, CA. (*Your donation will help us to carry on. It is good to hear from you after some years. May the Lord bless.* — Editor).

"We're sending this donation to help you with your expenses in spreading the gospel through your paper, 'Banner of Truth.' Keep up the good work — **Everett & Colleen Anderson**, MI. (*Thank you for helping — Editor*).

"Keep up the good work, and keep sending the bundles. I enjoy passing them to good Christian people. They enjoy BOT. — **Kenneth Kemp**, TN.

"If available please send me one copy of the article you did on Lads to Leaders. \$1.00 enclosed for postage — **Herman J. Smith**, TN. (*It has been in my plans for a long time to do something on that organization, but I still haven't found the time. I have on hand enough information to know that I could not support it.* — Editor).

"I just came across an issue (Oct. 2001) of Banner of Truth that was covering the 'False Religion of Islam.' That is the only one I found and I believe you did either a series, or a continuous study on this matter. I was wondering if I could get you to send me the whole series that you did and also recommend reliable resources to study this matter. I would like to teach our Sunday school class more about this, but I want to understand it better myself. If there is any cost, please inform me. Thank you, have a 'God day' — **Timothy R. Williams**, OH. (*I have done three articles on the subject. I'm sending them. You can find much information on the internet, encyclopedias, the Koran,* ↓

to the fellowshiping of the Christian Church. Why in the world would Freed-Hardeman provide a sounding board for a rank false teacher, who may well influence some students to believe that the use of instrumental music is just a matter of preference? I used to say that Freed-Hardeman has not gone off as much as some of our schools, but now I'm seeing little difference as error is being upheld on a broader and increasing basis.

What Can We Do About the Status Quo? There is a great deal brethren can do, but a pressing question is: "How many are willing to do something?" The serious change which has come about did so, not because brethren could not do anything to stop it, but rather, because they were unwilling to do what they could do. When brethren are indifferent, when they lose their concern about spiritual things, a field left wide open for error is the result.

We have seen other schools, such as Abilene, Lipscomb, and Pepperdine become steeped in error because our brethren did nothing to stop it, and in a great many instances did things to encourage it. Those who want error to prevail, and the New Testament gives many warnings about error, can find nothing more to their liking than for those who are concerned to just keep quiet and do nothing.

The way to do something about the error is spelled out in one word: Money. As long as the money comes in error will prevail. This tells us something as to who is guilty of wrongdoing. It is not only the board members and the administration engaged in error, those who support the school are equally guilty. It is well within their power to change things, but there must be the desire to do so.

Several years ago a preacher in the general area of Freed-Hardeman responded to something I had written about our schools. With regard to Freed-Hardeman he said he was going to go along with it regardless of what happened. He then made a statement that sounded nonsensical. He said that by going along, if something happened to the school no one could say it was his fault. This is an example of how the undaunted loyalty to a school will cause one to follow it regardless of what direction it takes, be that into error or what not. Another thing I cannot understand is the number of brethren who claim to be sound who seem comfortable in being birds of a liberal feather. —Editor

Stream in the Desert Spiritual Renewal Weekend

April 1-3, 2005

The above program is "Sponsored by Golf Course Road Church of Christ in Midland, Texas." Registration is \$30.00. Concert tickets are \$5 for members, and \$10 for the public. Box lunches: Adult, \$7; child, \$5.

This church sponsored program is billed as, "Celebrating 10 Years of Spiritual Renewal." Even with all things being equal, in view of the featured speakers over the past nine years, how could this be a "Spiritual Renewal". Beginning with 1996, they've had: Terry Rush, Joe Beam, Jim McGuiggan, Rick Atchley, Mike Cope, Lynn Anderson, Chris Seidman, Jeff Walling, and Rick Atchley. Who could come up with a cavalcade of more liberal brethren?

In past programs, there have been topics such as: "new and fresh understanding of the Holy Spirit," "healing," "the healing stream of God's Spirit," "a Spirit-filled performance," and others. They have a clear infatuation with the direct operation of the Holy Spirit.

More than one reference is made to "laughter," with "Saturday Entertainment" including Mike Williams, of whom it is said, "So if you want to laugh until it hurts, you won't want to miss Mike Williams." In a sketch of the 2002 program it is said, "Once again Dennis Swanberg lightened the load with an evening of laughter."

Brethren what are our brethren coming to be? Given what is openly known of most of these speakers and what they stand for and don't stand for, by what stretch of the imagination could the above activities be a "Spiritual Renewal"? When did it become the work of the church to provide concerts, laughter and false teachers? Reading their brochure the only reason I could see for laughter would be to keep from crying. Charging for "Spiritual Renewal." Amazing.

There will surely be criticism of this criticism. But this only serves to show what a great need there is for the teaching and preaching of God's unadulterated word, and that without the fear or favor of man. May the Lord help us to awaken to reality and demonstrate our love for Him. —Editor

years ago would have been strictly illegal. The influence of such is seen.

Our Schools. Evolution and atheism can be taught, dishonesty winked at, and sexual immorality encouraged in our schools, but God must be left out. Many of the Devil's ways are given free course but God's ways are off limits and must legally be avoided. True good is treated as evil.

Our Legal System. It was largely built upon the principle that "In God we trust," but we have seen great departures from that principle. For years now efforts have been made to completely secularize our society. Immorality is being "legislated" as more laws based on godly principles are overturned. A court in Louisiana declared "unconstitutional" a sex-education curriculum which suggested "abstinence" as a means of preventing unwanted pregnancies and diseases. This was supposedly because it was related to "religious beliefs and moral judgments." How ridiculous. Had promiscuity been promoted, that would have been fine.

B. An All Time Low In Morality

The line between *right* and *wrong* is becoming dimmer all the time. A growing number of people "call evil good, and good evil," and "put darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isa. 5:20). Past Education Secretary, William Bennett, reported in *USA Today*, 3/16/93, that U.S. "values" have deteriorated since 1960: *Violent crime increased by 560%. *Illegitimate births climbed by 419%. *Divorce rates quadrupled. *Teenage suicide jumped by 200%. To turn these numbers around, Bennett says, "We must engage in the time-honored task of moral education of our young (and the teaching of) values such as self-restraint, respect for other people, the importance of family and self-control." Crime, such as: murder, robbery, rape, theft, child abuse, et al, continues to increase. Truth and honesty are not cherished as they once were.

Sexual immorality has never been so pronounced in the history of our nation. We have reached a state of Godless heathenism and a frightening number of people love to have it so. The millions living together without marriage are seen only as "another life style." *The New York Times* reported that 30 years ago, one in every 40 white children were born to an unwed mother. Today it is reported to be 1 in 5. Among

blacks it is 2 out of 3. We are told that 45% of all children born in New York are born out of wedlock.

The unconcern of society is a disturbing matter. Rather than becoming outraged at the mention of shameful and ungodly deeds, people often only laugh. Society has to a great degree been desensitized when it comes to moral issues. This can only lead to a worsening moral state. Blame for wrongdoing is not accepted by individuals. It is society which is often blamed. Poverty is said to be the cause of much ungodliness and lawlessness. But if poverty is to blame, how did more than a very of us living during the 1930's even survive? Until blame for wrongdoing is placed where it rightfully belong, upon the individual, little progress will be made in reducing it.

Abortion is another black mark upon our society in that it is a reflection of the lack of respect for the sanctity of human life, which is seen in many today, beginning with the President of our country, who is committed to the murder of additional untold millions of innocent unborn boys and girls [President Clinton]. He has pledged his support of FOCA (Freedom of Choice Act). If passed, this will allow abortion on demand, at any point before birth, in all 50 states and territories, and will render void any state law which in any way restricts abortion for any reason. Euthanasia is being advocated by a growing number of people. We are very close to the conditions described in Romans 1.

C. Sexual Perversion Is Being Forced Upon Our Society

"Sin is sin" in the sense that breaking God's law is sin (1 Jno. 3:4), but some sins represent a worse state than other, evidencing a lower state of morals. Sexual perversion is such a sin. Due to the fact that homosexuality and lesbianism represents one of the lowest moral states to which a nation can go, we are giving more attention to it, trusting that we might awaken some to the sobering reality of our condition.

Homosexuality was an abomination under the law of Moses (Lev. 18:22), and was punishable by death (Lev. 20:13). The Lord rained brimstone and fire upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their very grievous sin, which certainly included sexual perversion (Gen. 19). "The New Testament condemns it: "Professing themselves to be wise, they ↓

became fools” (vs. 22), changed the truth of God into a lie” (vs. 25), were given up by God “unto vile affections” which are “against nature.” The “vile affections” were acts of homosexuality (vv. 26, 27). Paul says of those people who “did not like to retain God in their knowledge... who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such sins are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (vv. 28, 32). In I Cor. 6:9-10, Paul says “effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind” shall not inherit the kingdom of God. These words of Paul should serve as a warning to people today just as they did to people when they were written.

Facing The Facts. The frightening facts of our moral state must be faced, like it or not. Though we can only touch the tip of the iceberg, we begin with the President of our country, Bill Clinton. It is a time for weeping on the part of God-fearing people when the President is so obsessed with sexual perversion that he is wholly committed to those practice the ungodliness and is putting forth an almost unlimited effort to encourage this sin and foist it upon those who still believe in God and Christian principles. He has declared his determination to force the homosexuals upon the military of our country, against the advice of those men who have experience and who want this country to have a strong military force.

Clinton did an infamous first when he received a delegation of gay and lesbian activities at the White House. Clinton appointed Roberta Achtenberg to the post of Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity with the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development. Achtenberg is described as “A radical lesbian activist from San Francisco.” She is also said to be hostile toward those who do not accept her lesbianism. In her position she is expected to use her power to force the acceptance of homosexuals with regard to housing, which could mean property owners (including Christians) would have to rent to homosexual couples, unmarried couples, etc. This lesbian has served in high positions in the homosexual community, such as Executive Director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, Inc.; Directing Attorney for the Lesbian Rights Project of Equal Rights; and National Co-Chair of the Clinton for President Campaign. She may also be remembered for her opposi-

tion to the Boy Scouts for failing to accept homosexuals as leaders, etc. Clinton’s Inaugural Parade was infested with homosexuals. Homosexuals were invited to provide entertainment for the parade:

Lisa Strongin, president of the Lesbian and Gay Bands of America, was bursting with pride. ‘It is obviously historical, because it’s the first time any openly gay or lesbian group has participated at the invitation of the administration, Strongin said.’ “Also, a lesbian couple from Dallas rode a float dedicated to American families in the parade, a symbol to show that Clinton accepts the homosexual standard that two homosexuals living together constitute a family and deserve the same benefits as the traditional family.” [This and above re Achtenberg, came from the *AFA Journal*, 3/93.]

That the advocates of sexual perversion are in league with our low morals President with respect to the homosexual agenda is abundantly clear. As evidence of the fact, consider the following, which is only a small part of that which could be given.

New York Mayor David Dinkins has signed an executive order to allow unmarried couples—including homosexuals—to register as domestic partners with the City Clerk. He called it a ‘major step toward ensuring that the thousands of individuals involved in long-term committed and caring relationships are extended the same rights as individuals bonded through the traditional concept of the family unit,’” [AP, 1/18/93, via *AFA Journal*, 3/93.]

According to a report by *National Review* [6/7/93, p. 52], the Hawaiian Supreme Court has legitimized homosexual marriages. *Newsweek*, 5/10/93, carries an article, “An ‘Explosion’ of Gay Writing, suggesting that there is an increase in the promotion of the practice through the printed page. *AFA Journal*, 6/93, reprints the following from the *Princeton Alumni*, 4/21/93: “Princeton University will no longer support Boy Scouts through the local United Way because the Scouts will not accept homosexual scout leaders.”

The degrading homosexual march, in April, which “took over Washington, D.C.,” for a few hours, though far short of what the homosexuals had boasted they would have, and which the new media had given such a favorable billing, represents a new low in morals in America. Clinton was not present but he gave ↴

congregation at some place within driving distance of Freed-Hardeman.

I quickly learned to appreciate most of my teachers. Brother Claude Hall was a very unique teacher, and I have many times said that I believe I profited more from his classes, especially Spoken English, than any others. There other great teachers as well.

There were some rather strict rules on the campus of Freed-Hardeman back then. Smoking was not allowed, period. There were some rules relative to courting, though many found mates there.

After altogether spending about three years at FHC, I finally graduated in 1966. From that poin, though already noticing some changes in the school, my wife and I were involved in raising financial support for it, and succeeded in raising several thousand dollars.

That Was “Then.” Let Us Consider “Now.”

The condition which now exists at Freed-Hardeman did not come about overnight. Change, as is often the case, does not come quickly. As with the proverbial camel, when the camel of error gets his nose in the tent, he doesn’t make a quick move to the center. But once the nose is in, he almost never backs out. When it became apparent that changes were taking place at Freed-Hardeman which were not for good, my wife and I could no longer with a good conscience support the school in any way.

Rather than note the changes which took place from the 1960s onward, we shall give attention to what Freed-Hardeman is now. I have often wondered how brother Dixon would be troubled in spirit if he could now see the school of which he was once President.

Some time ago a friend sent me a copy of Freed-Hardeman’s Lectureship schedule for 2005, “A Light to the Nations: Judgment and Hope in Isaiah.” The schedule is of itself a reflection of the change which has come over Freed-Hardeman. There is need for nothing more to see the change.

The lectures were from February 6–11: We shall call attention to some things which transpired from February 7–10, then we shall note one activity on February 11.

There will be no attempt to call attention to the more than 100 speakers which participated this year, other than that this appears to be an effort to gain a great deal more influence among brethren by inviting so

many speakers. Generally, a speaker would feel some loyalty to the institution which invites him or her to speak.

On Monday morning a speaker is listed who has participated in a Catholic Revival. After his participation in the Catholic Revival, about which he expressed his delight, he was appointed to the board of

Freed-Hardeman. This man is also one who has encouraged people to attend the David Lipscomb Lectures and especially that of F. LaGard Smith.

The last speaker on Thursday evening is a man who says of I Cor. 7:15, with reference to divorce and remarriage, “So, that would give at least two reasons, wouldn’t it?” In the same lesson where the above is said, he says: “God nowhere that I know of has ever commanded that a person live a celibate life.” “I don’t know of any place that God ever commanded that a family break up because of marriage problems.” Just imagine what the influence of such speakers as the above is, from the standpoint of encouraging people to disrespect God’s word. But this is the kind of speakers that are given prime time at Freed-Hardeman during the lectures.

Sandwiched in between the above speakers are a number of known false teachers. These speakers would not have been scheduled back “then,” when I was at Freed-Hardeman. But his is what the school has come to be “now.”

The Disgraceful Episode on Friday. There was a “Contemporary Discussion” is scheduled from 8–10:20 a.m. Note the description. “Should the Use of Instrumental Music in Worship Be a Barrier to Fellowship With Others, Such as Independent Christian Churches?” There participants were Marlin Connelly and Phillip Morrison, a liberal from many years back.

This word “contemporary” raises some questions. *Webster* defines the word as “of the present time: modern.” Isn’t the use of instrumental music in worship something which has been discussed and shown to be without scriptural authority for many years? Are the teachers at Freed-Hardeman no longer teaching the truth on this question? It has become quite “modern” with a growing number of our brethren to take the position that the use of instrumental music is a matter of opinion, not a matter of faith. Some are not opposed to it at all, nor are they opposed ↴

“Dear Walter:

I resent your using the Lord’s money to promote a political point of view, as you have in the last two publications. We must learn the lesson taught in Luke 20 verse 25 and work for the Lord! Please remove my name from your mailing list!

Thanks, Jim Whaley”

Dear Jim:

Your note and request for removing your name from our mailing list have been received. We shall surely oblige you in removing your name. Banner of Truth is not for everyone.

We have had members of the church in our area who valued their loyalty to a political party more than their loyalty to the Lord. Let me pose one question. If my articles in the “last two publications” had been in favor of the political party which upholds abortion and homosexuality, would you have requested the removal of your name?

It is indeed a sad day in spiritual Israel when brethren will turn their backs against the Lord due to their political loyalty. A couple left the congregation where I preach because I presented lessons on the subject of “The Christian and Politics.” Not only did they leave, but a reliable witness reported that they contacted their political party to see if they could cause some trouble. We also had an elder in the area who proclaimed his membership to the political party which upholds homosexuality and abortion, which cast a bad reflection upon the Lord’s church.

Jim, you mention Luke 20:25. “And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things which are God’s.” Do you believe, as some obviously do, that a Christian can completely separate civil responsibilities from responsibilities to God? It would seem so. As mentioned above, some of our brethren supported in the political realm the party which is known for upholding such ungodly things as abortion, homosexuality, and other things. While doing that they turned their backs upon the things which we are to render unto God. Have you given thought to what is said in Acts 5:29, “. . . we ought to obey God rather than man”?

You see, I “work for the Lord,” and render “unto God the things which are God’s” when I uphold the

truth. As a Christian I am charged to “stand fast in the faith” (I Cor. 16:13), and “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). If Caesar upholds something which is condemned in God’s will then I must “work for the Lord” in opposing such.

The idea that one can simply divorce civil affairs from spiritual responsibilities, and do that in the civil area which is in outright opposition to what God has said in His word, is not based upon God’s word, but rather upon the will of men. Christ says, “He that is not with me is against me. . . .” (Matt. 12:30). I am not “with” Christ when I go contrary to his will, and that is true of others as well.

You imply that I do not “work for the Lord.” Yet, most of my time is spent in encouraging people to stand up for the Lord and His truth and oppose that which is against Him, and this includes the political realm. In the day of judgment we will stand before our Lord, not some political party.

Jim, we sincerely encourage you to study further our responsibility to God and to the civil realm, and recognize that obedience to God most come first.

For the cause of Christ, Walter W. Pigg

Freed-Hardeman Then And Now

In August 1953, I obeyed the gospel. My wife, son and I, moved from Memphis to Henderson, Tennessee, where for the Fall quarter I entered Freed-Hardeman college. I was 27 and had been out of school since I was sixteen. Brother H.A. Dixon was then President. As a new Christian I was favorably impressed almost beyond imagination. I quickly learned to respect brother Dixon as a man of knowledge in God’s word and an accompanying love for that truth. I saw him stand before the school assembly and respond to that which he did not believe to be in harmony with God’s word. He was clearly unafraid to contend for the faith, as should be the case of all Christians.

I will always remember the close association that existed among the students, especially the married students. We “preacher students” had much in common, and for the most part there was a great interest in learning God’s word and how to effectively present it to others. A great many of us had our first experience of preaching to a

the event his stamp of approval. Though the marchers numbered 300,000 or less, the event is a reminder of Sodom and Gomorrah. Joseph Farah, writing in the *AFA Journal*, 6/93, said,

The demonstration resembled not so much a civil rights march as a carnival sideshow. Nevertheless, the major print and broadcast media put the best possible spin on the event, downplaying the disappointing numbers, the vulgarity, the obscenity, the foppish stereotypical behavior, the public sex and the outrageousness of many of the speakers and performers.

Concerning the homosexual march, *Newsweek* reported:

During last month’s massive gay-rights march in Washington, 1,500 homosexual couples participated in a ‘wedding’ replete with ministers and rice. The vows weren’t binding, but the point was made. . . . But more and more homosexual pairs are becoming parents, which creates a paradox: if gays can have children but cannot marry, what kind of bastardized definition of family is society imposing on her offspring? [May 24, 1993.]

Sexual perversion is being promoted in the name of religion. Those who claim to believe in God, calling themselves Christians, are flying in the face of God by promoting that which God condemns. Garth Brooks, claiming to be religious, saying, “I love the Bible,” is at the same time a member of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays and promotes homosexuality by his singing. United Methodist Bishop Melvin G. Talbert, joined the league of sexual progressives calling on Bill Clinton to keep his campaign promise to lift the military ban on homosexuals. Michael Meyer and Kenneth L. Woodward, discuss the opposition to “gay rights” in Colorado Springs, via a *Newsweek* article, 3/1/93. The bottom line of their comments, which lean toward the sexual perverts, says that if the city wants to be the evangelical of America, the Christians must “get back to first principles,” which they define as loving their neighbors as themselves. But the love which God’s word upholds, opposes sin of every kind, certainly homosexuality.

Homosexuality Taught In School. Joseph Fernandez gained some prominence a few months ago due to his favored curriculum which taught first grad-

ers tolerance for homosexuals. As Chancellor of New York City Schools, Fernandez became known as “King C-----” leading New York City to become the first city to distribute c----- (contraceptives) in schools. His contract with the nation’s largest school system ends this month, but the school board only voted 4 to 3 to dismiss him, and that was only after the Catholic Church became vigorous in their opposition to him.

Cal Thomas, though not a New Testament Christian as far as I know, makes a great observation: “The open celebration of homosexuality represents the final disconnect from a personal God. If the barrier against societal acceptance of homosexuality falls, there will be no other that can stand.” Concerning the shameful “March on Washington” by gays and lesbians, he says,

The shameless promotion of sexual immorality in the streets of our nation’s Capital and the public blessing bestowed upon it by the president are the latest in a mountain of evidence that proves this nation has forgotten God and is exposing itself to the grave consequences that historically have followed spiritual amnesia.

II. God’s Wrath Upon The Disobedient

Paul lists a number of sins which are prevalent today saying, “For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience” (Col. 3:5). In Ephesians 5:5-6, he gives another list of sins saying, “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” In Romans 1:18, Paul warned, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” He goes on to include in the “unrighteousness,” the sin of sexual perversion, to which God “gave them up.” From the above passage we may make a serious observation. That is, 1) America in general is a disobedient people. 2) There are many people out to deceive us with vain words. 3) Truth, as never before in America, is being held in unrighteousness. This alone should suffice us to conclude that we are in line to be the recipients of God’s wrath. But there is much more.

The Psalmist declares, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Ps. 9:17). So many of our people are turning from faith

in God, willfully ignoring Him as one whose conscience is seared (I Tim. 4:1-2). The “wise man” writes in Proverbs 14:34, “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.” The reproach to America has never been so great as at the present, and conditions are worsening day by day. The apostle Paul sets forth a principle which applies to all, “But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath” (Rom. 2:8). This includes America.

Not only will those in false religions, and the unfaithful within the church, ultimately suffer God’s wrath, those who make no effort at all to serve God will suffer the same. From him “that sat upon the throne,” John received the following words: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and the murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8). Paul writes of the Lord Jesus being revealed from heaven, “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Whether or not God’s wrath comes upon our country as a whole in the fall of the nation, where the innocent could suffer because of the deeds of the wicked, makes little difference. That His wrath will come upon every disobedient individual is a certainty which leaves no room for question. This wrath, however, will not keep the faithful servant from his eternal inheritance.

III. Victory For The Faithful Is Assured

Time after time God, who cannot lie, assures His faithful servants of victory. For the Christian, this provides a true hope, which serves as “an anchor of the soul” (Heb. 6:19) as battles are fought and won in the pursuit of eternal victory. We can see why Paul exhorted the Corinthians to “always abound in the work of the Lord.” (I Cor. 15:58).

A significant point which stands out in each of the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2, 3) is that victory is assured to “him that overcometh.” The eternal Christ reinforces that assurance: “Blessed are they that do

his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14). In the great judgment, when before Christ “shall be gathered all nations,” Christ says of those who had faithfully served him that they would go away “into life eternal” (Matt 25:32, 46).

In Romans 8, Paul gives assurance of the christian’s hope. In this connection he raises the question of being separated “from the love of Christ.” Naming a great many things which could not so separate the Christian, including tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword, he concludes, “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (vv. 35-37). The christian, then, should take courage in that if one walks “in the light as he is in the light” (I Jno. 1:7), always taking heed to avoid “an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12), that no power can take from him that eternal inheritance which has been promised.

For those who long for and would enjoy the beauty and grandeur of that eternal home of the souls, there is not better example to emulated than that of the great apostle Paul. He underwent many severe trials and tribulations, knowing whom he had believed, being “persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12). The results of his unfaltering faith, which can also be ours as faithful Christians, are set forth in his great farewell to Timothy, his “own son in the faith.” Realizing that his departure from this life was near, Paul said: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Addendum:

In the above article, we described in some detail the lowest moral state which has ever existed in our society, and how it related to “God’s Wrath Upon America.” Since the writing of that article, almost twelve years ago, the moral conditions in several areas of our society have only worsened.

We cannot know what time may bring relative to moral conditions. And while we may hope and pray that respect for God may increase, it is some times the

Another Letter of Criticism

Before responding to the letter let me offer a few comments relative to criticism in general. I do expect some criticism relative to the things I write, though the critical response received is miniscule when compared with the positive responses received. This should tell the critics something. That is, they place themselves in a very, very small minority. If they care about being in the majority they are losers by a wide margin.

I expect criticism and sometimes actually appreciate it. I once wrote that Christ was born in Jerusalem. A brother pointed that out to me. On some occasions a critic asks that their name be removed from our mailing list. We do appreciate being informed that the reader no longer wants to read what is carried in Banner of Truth. Though we wish they would continue to receive it and point out what they believe to be mistakes; yet, if they will not do that, it does help us save on our expenses by discontinuing sending something which is going to end up in *File 13*.

I honestly do not appreciate from critics their general attitude of unfairness. One thing which stands out is the “anonymous” critic who is unwilling to be identified. This could represent a number of things, such as: 1) lack of conviction that their criticism is valid or will stand in the face of facts; 2) a lack of courage, which could be cowardice; 3) ashamed to be identified as a critic when that which is criticized is the truth as shown by God’s word. It is also unfair to make broad criticisms without giving any specifics of error.

Another act of critics which is not appreciated is a failure to show from God’s word that their criticism is justified. This is so common among critics, that in several instances it appears that the letters of criticism are from the same person, when they clearly are not. The lack of a basis for just criticism makes one wonder if something which is the truth has “stepped on the critics toes.”

In more than one instance, I have pleaded with critics to demonstrate love for me by showing their respect for Paul’s admonition: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal 6:1). If I am wrong, then I sincerely want to be corrected. I want to be right

with God, realizing that if I am not my soul is in jeopardy. It does look like one would have that much consideration for a brother in Christ, doesn’t it?

Another common characteristic of many critics is that they often attack the one who sets forth God’s truth, as though that one is to blame. Some have said the most unkind and derogatory things about me personally, as though that might add strength to their “no sense of the term justified” criticism. When people reject God’s truth they are rejecting its author. When the Israelites wanted a king and Samuel was displeased, the Lord told Samuel concerning the people, “. . . they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should reign over them” (I Sam 8:7). By the same token, when one criticizes the one who sets forth God’s truth, they reject God.

There is also the matter of inconsistency on the part of some critics. A number of times I’ve received severely critical responses. The basis of the criticism of me was that I criticized something which is contrary to God’s will, or someone who is a teacher of false doctrine. Consistency? Not hardly. It is as though the critic thinks he has a license to criticize while the one contending for the faith does not have a right to criticize error.

Do I engage in criticism? Yes. Do I have a right to do so? Yes. One who truly believes the New Testament to be the word of God and has any understanding of it at all, will agree that the servant of God has a responsibility to criticize evil just as one has a responsibility to uphold the truth. There is much criticism of false teachers and evil activities in the New Testament. And, yes, names of false teachers are set forth, and people are warned against them.

Now we shall give our attention and response to the letter referred to above. We quote the letter verbatim. This critic both gives his name as well as a passage which he believes I have violated. For its worth, we believe by doing this it will help our readers to understand “how” some christians think. We also believe our response serves as a teaching tool which is needed in our day as has been the case in the past. It is our standing practice to invite our readers to respond to what we carry in Banner of Truth. We want to be fair.

Now, The letter and response on page 12. J

False Teachers Who Teach Some Truth

Lloyd E. Gale, Jr.

An honest and informed person will acknowledge that false teachers do teach some of the truth accurately. I have heard false teachers who do an outstanding job presenting the truth on a chosen subject. It is obvious that they have the ability to understand truth and to preach the truth. Is our Lord pleased when a false teacher speaks the truth?

Uninspired men offer various opinions on this question. Some say they are happy that there are so many religious choices for people. Some brethren are willing to form alliances with denominations because they have so much in common. Other brethren are willing to join hands with other “traditions” when there is a “common cause.” Yet, others are adamantly opposed to any cooperation of fellowship with those who teach false doctrine. So, we ask, what does Jesus say about the help of Satan’s agents in proclaiming the truth?

Mark tells us about the beginning of the preaching of our Lord in Capernaum.

And they were astonished at his doctrine for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as one of the scribes. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit: and he cried out, Saying, Let us alone; What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy one of God. (Mk. 1:22-24).

This unclean spirit spoke the truth. He knew more about who Jesus was than most people of that day. This unclean spirit identified Jesus as the Holy One of God, having the ability to understand truth. Our Lord, however, holds a very narrow view of truth. Jesus said that you are either for me or against me (Matt. 12:30), and that no man can serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). Even though the evil spirit stated a great truth, he was not for Jesus. He served a different master. He was, in fact, afraid of Jesus Christ and the whole truth. He would destroy Jesus if he could and was afraid that Jesus had come to destroy him. False teachers and false religions will not welcome a man of God among them if the man of God is not compromised.

What was Jesus’ reaction to the evil spirit’s bold proclamation? “And Jesus rebuked him saying, Hold thy peace and come out of him” (Mk. 1:25). Then a few verses later, Mark records these facts. “And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak because they knew him” (Mk. 1:34).

Any time a servant of God is among false teachers he has the same obligation to rebuke them and to put to silence their false doctrine. False teachers want to be left along to do their own thing. The evil spirit correctly asked, “What have we to do with thee?” False teachers have nothing to do with Jesus. They only desire to use Him for their gain. Jesus did not “gush” because the evil spirit appeared to have some “common ground” in acknowledging who Jesus was.

On another occasion Jesus asked, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Lk. 6:46). There is no virtue in knowing the truth if one is unwilling to obey the truth. A false teacher will teach part of the truth when it suits his purpose, but will not teach all of the truth ever. The person who will teach some of the truth but not all of the truth is a dangerous deceiver. Such a person is not the friend of God or of God’s people.

The inspired James wrote, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (Jas. 2:10). That is, one becomes a transgressor of God’s law. How many false teachers have taught part of the plan of redemption but have stopped short of teaching baptism for remission of sins to become part of the Lord’s church? How many souls have been deceived into believing that they have obeyed God’s plan of salvation when in fact they have not? or that they are Christians when they are not? Christ does not desire the “help” of false teachers and seeking the lost. Jesus said, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoreth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:8-9).

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case that the influence the Devil may grow stronger. This addendum is due to the fact that the latter has happened.

Looking Back Over Twelve Years. The lowest moral state of our society was reached under President Bill Clinton. Surrounding himself with two dozen homosexuals, he showed his affinity for this shameful God-condemned practice. As tragic as that was, worse was yet to come. The President, the most powerful person in the country, with a young woman, engaged in oral sex in the White House Oval Office. In addition to this shameful behavior, he was impeached by the House for lying under oath.

Not only was it a disgrace for our country that the number one person act in such an immoral way, but the fact that almost a majority in our society would go along with such, shows the extent of the moral decay which has fastened itself upon our country, which was built to a great degree upon belief in God and christian principles.

The Anti-God Movement. During the past several years the efforts to remove every vestige of God’s influence from our society have intensified. We have a growing number of enemies of God who want to completely remove God from every facet of our society. What we are seeing now would have been unthinkable just a few decades ago.

The sad results of this anti-God movement is being reflected in the rapid increase of many ungodly activities which can logically be expected when people turn away from God. When there is no Higher Power to whom man must give an account, why not do anything you want, as long your able to get by with it? Is not this reflected in such sins as: dishonesty, theft, drug use, adultery, fornication, illegitimate births, euthanasia, divorce, and a host of other things?

Increased opposition to God is being seen even in so-called Christian religions. We’ve all heard of the many ungodly acts with the Catholic Church. Multiplied millions of dollars have been paid out to make up for the many cases of sexual sins. The Catholics are not the only ones to play the part of hypocrites. What about the ordaining of a homosexual bishop, and the upholding of the so-called marriage of homosexuals? The religion of a number of those who claim to be christians is nothing more than a farce. In

absence of true belief in God, what can be expected?

Ungodliness Displayed In The Last Election. When a politician runs on planks in a platform which uphold and encourage homosexuality, even so called same-sex marriage, the murder of innocent unwanted boys and girls, the support of the lazy for political purposes, this should be an eye-opener for people of a moral persuasion.

A case in point of the above is that of Senator Kerry who ran for president. He said with regard to Vice President Cheney’s lesbian daughter, that she could not help being a lesbian. Just think about the implication of this statement. Kerry is a man who claims to believe in God, yet he pits God against Himself. You see, if one cannot help being a homosexual, one of the most severely condemned sins in God’s word, then God is contradicting Himself. If God contradicts Himself, then He is no longer God. Now, to consider the extent of such ungodly thinking in our nation, some 53 million people voted for this man to be a leader of our country. The time was that a man of such persuasion running for president of our country would not have received 53 thousand votes, much less 53 million.

The Positive Aspect Of The Last Election. It is a matter of fact that moral values were a determining factor in the outcome of the last election. This is indeed encouraging. It is evidence that people are awakening to the reality that the enemies of God are bent on doing away with moral values, the result of which would be a nation steeped in heathenism.

In spite of the progression of evil within the past several years, this is a time for God-fearing people to stand up and be counted. We can influence the future if we so desire, and we must influence it if we do God’s bidding. As we look back on the history of the Israelites, we see times when wickedness prevailed, but there was a remnant which assured that God’s plan for man’s salvation would not be thwarted. Many departures from the faith are predicted in the New Testament, but we can be among the righteous which exalteth a nation (Prov. 14:34). Let us “stand fast in the faith” (I Cor. 16:13), “Contend for the faith” (Jude 3), that God be pleased and our salvation assured.

—Editor

Fishing For Unknown Causes

Alan Adams

The Book of Acts is necessary to an understanding of original christianity as it records for us the process and moment of conversion of different kinds of people and different kinds of circumstances. An examination of each of these conversion records will substantiate at least two points: (1) Granting the fact of outside forces and motivations, conversion is yet an active rather than passive process; something you **do**, not something that is done to you. (2) Conversion takes place according to an unvarying pattern of faith, repentance and baptism by which the heart, life, and relationship of the convert are changed. Some, however, would contend that Lydia’s conversion is a pattern-buster as the Bible explicitly says of her, “whose heart the Lord opened.”

CAUSES KNOWN TO BE PRESENT. The typical view of the matter is that direct, Divine, and abstract influence was brought to bear on the heart of this “seller of purple.” In modern parlance: She got saved; she got religion. Need it be so? In comments on this very matter, the inimitable J.W. McGarvey says, “when an effect can be explained and accounted for by causes which are known to be present, it is illogical to assume a cause which is not known to be present.”¹ Mull over this principle; it is self-evident, sensible, simple, and profound. Luke says,

And on the Sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down, and spake unto the women that were come together. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul. And...she was baptized... (Acts 16:13-15).

As to McGarvey’s “known causes,” we have such factors as: a teacher, teaching, and a potential convert hearing and heeding. Everything specifically given here as part of Lydia’s conversion is the exact thing one finds in every other case of conversion. In light, then, of the things done by Paul and Lydia, how are we then to understand the phrase which says of Lydia

“whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul”? Are there sufficient causes given right within the text to account for **how** God opened her heart. In short, Yes.

THE MOUSETRAP GAME. This was a kind of board game. Players moved around the board and landed on various squares, and according to directions erected, one-by-one, pieces of what would be a rather elaborate mousetrap. A player, by a specific action at the end of the game, would set in motion one of the pieces, which in turn triggered a chain of events; one of which, I vividly recall, was that of a ball rolling down a trough, which at some point caused a boot to kick something or another. The process went until at the end a cage fell over the mouse.

Who, or What caused the mouse to be caught? The answer is one of perspective. Looking at the trap in motion, one might say, “What caught the mouse was the little gizmo that tripped the latch which held the basket which then fell over the mouse.” Yet, another might say, “Wait a minute. The little gizmo to which you refer, couldn’t have tripped the latch which released the basket which caught the mouse, until the metal ball rolled down the trough and tripped yet a different gizmo.” But again, someone else might say, “Actually, the mouse was caught by a person, and that being the player who set the whole process into motion by pressing the first button.” or, A philosophic observer might chime in, “The guy who triggered the events which finally caught the mouse, couldn’t have done any of that were it not for the other players, at whose various turns of play, put into place one or more pieces of the trap.” And then, a really philosophic observer—no doubt stroking his beard and peering over his bifocals—could say, “Ultimately, what caused the mouse to be caught was the person, or persons, who came up with the grand design for the game.” Enough already.

What of Lydia? What, or Who, caused her heart to be opened? In the ultimate sense, God, for the text flat out says the Lord “opened” her “heart.” But, like the mousetrap game, you need to back up several

spaces in order to have the whole picture. In this case, we back up to Acts 16:6. Paul and his group had “gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia”; and whereas, “when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia...the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not.” Verses 9-10 say, “a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.” Finally, they made their way to “Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia.” Then we have the matters in verses 13-15 as set forth above.

Lydia was baptized, which as borne out in each instance of conversion in the Book of Acts, is the final step by which one converts or turns to the Lord. The act of baptism was one of the “things which were spoken by Paul” (v. 14). What caused Lydia to be baptized? The immediate answer is: “the Lord opened *her* [heart] to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul.” **How?** Through several means; let’s count:

1. The Spirit told Paul not to go preach in Phrygia and Galatia. Looking at the map, He in effect told Paul, Don’t turn right (v. 6)
2. When Paul “assayed” to go northwest to Bithynia, the Spirit again said, No (v. 7).
3. A prophetic vision “in the night” showed to Paul a man saying “come over to Macedonia and help us” (v. 9).
4. “Straightway” Paul and party headed out, “concluding [uh-oh: There’s that implication/inference stuff that some people just don’t like] that God had called us to preach the gospel to them” (v. 10).
5. Arriving in “Philippi,” the mission group was “in this city tarrying certain days” (v. 12).
6. They wisely looked for conversion prospects on “the Sabbath” in a place which they “supposed...was a place of prayer” (v. 13).
7. One who came there was Lydia, “one that worshipped God” (v. 14).
8. They “spake.”
9. Lydia “heard.”
10. Thus, did the Lord “open” her “heart.”
11. And thus did Lydia give “heed” to the “things which were spoken by Paul” by “being baptized.”

What was the **cause** of Lydia’s being baptized? The

Lord opened her heart so that she obeyed the things Paul spoken by Paul. One might also say, “It was the Spirit who caused Lydia to be baptized because he told Paul not to go to Galatia to preach, where, had he gone, he wouldn’t have met Lydia.” It could also be said, “No it was the vision which Paul was given in which he saw the Macedonian saying, Come over and help us.” One could yet say, “No, it was Paul’s use of logic which, based on the content of the vision, caused him to conclude that the Lord wanted him to go and preach to the Macedonians.” or, yet another, “Well, it was also Paul’s wisdom in seeking out on the Sabbath a place where worshippers of God went to pray.” Yet again, what about, “It was the preaching done by Paul which converted Lydia.” or, “It was the earnest way Lydia listened to what Paul told her.”

All of these things are true as to Who, What, and How Lydia came to convert to the Lord. Finally, in the comprehensive sense, the Scripture wonderfully wraps up the whole affair into the sublime thought: “whose heart the Lord opened.” As per the axiom cited by McGarvey, there’s absolutely no need—it would in fact be irrational and illogical—to go fishing for some direct, Divine, and abstract force to explain the opening of Lydia’s heart, when right within the immediate context (Acts 16:6-15), the Holy Spirit all but indexes for the reader the sufficient cause for both What God brought about in the life of this devout merchant from Thyatira, and How He did it.

There is no reason for anyone to read: “whose heart the lord opened,” and come away with some idea of a direct operation of the Holy Spirit in this woman’s conversion. Yes: God was the ultimate designer, arranger, and cause by which her heart was opened; but, the marvelous account of her conversion explains all the pieces, put in place by God, resulting finally in her obeying the gospel.

The part in the matter which brought things to a head was Paul’s preaching to her the “gospel which is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). If you can understand and play the Mousetrap Game, you should be able to understand how it was that God “opened” Lydia’s “heart.”

¹ **Original Commentary On Acts**, p. 203.