

REDEEMING THE TIME

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

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FALL 2022

Methodists Battle the Denominational Machine

106 United Methodist Churches File Suit Against the Board of Trustees of the Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Inc.

BY BRAD K. GSELL

An astounding 106 churches in Florida have joined to file suit against the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, together with Bishop Kenneth H. Carter, Jr., and a number of other Conference officials. These churches plan to leave the denomination, due to its continuing apostasy and open allowance of those who flagrantly violate its already deeply compromised doctrinal standards. Before returning to this present story, a little history will be of value.

"The Traditional Plan"

Like most mainline denominations, the United Methodist Church has had continued struggles among its membership over the matter of homosexual

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Commotion, Chaos, and Confusion

*"O God of our salvation ...
which stilleth ... the
tumult of thy people"*

Psalm 65:5,7

BY ROBERT W. ANDERSON

It has been common for earth's population from time to time to live through extraordinary seasons of commotion, chaos, confusion, disorder, destabilization, disturbance, rioting, tumult, turmoil, turbulence, and the turning of things upside down. We see it today, just as men lived it in Bible times.

After the commotion attending the trial and crucifixion of Christ, on the morning of his resurrection, He joined two of

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KENYA 2022

BY BRAD K. GSELL

Although my trip to Kenya, earlier in 2022, was on behalf of the International Council of Christian Churches and The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, I was honored to be invited and graciously hosted for about 10 days by

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At the Africa Gospel Unity Church on the campus of the Bomet Bible Institute.



The Scottish Reformation

PART 8

BY MARK W. EVANS

EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

The Reformation Prevails

As detailed in Part 7 of this series, in the last issue of *Redeeming the Time*, John Knox arrived in Scotland on May 2, 1559, and joined other Protestants assembled in the city of Perth. He delivered a sermon against Rome's idolatrous mass. Following the sermon, a priest defiantly and openly celebrated the mass. A young boy yelled that the cleric was an idolater. The infuriated priest struck the youngster, and the boy in turn threw a stone at the priest. The stone missed the target and shattered an image. On impulse, those standing nearby began smashing other images and items of Rome's superstition. The gathering grew into a "rascal multitude," as Knox called it, refusing to heed the pleas of the magistrates and Knox.

The mob divided and pillaged monasteries, known as places of wickedness. The event provided the Queen Regent, Mary Guise, a pretext for the use of military force. She gathered and led a force of 8,000 French Roman Catholic soldiers to Perth. As she approached the city, she learned that the Protestants had assembled their own army and stood ready to defend Perth.

Recognizing her danger, the Regent changed to the ploy of negotia-

tion. She sent the Earls of Argyle and Moray to meet with the Protestants.

John Knox instructed the earls: "The present troubles ought to move the hearts of all the true servants of God and lovers of their country, to consider what the end of such tyrannical measures will be, by which the emissaries of Satan seek the destruction of all friends of religion in the

Church historian J.A. Wylie wrote: "The archbishop ... sent a message to him [Knox] on Saturday night, that if he dared to appear in the pulpit of the cathedral tomorrow, he would cause his soldiers to shoot him dead." ... The next day, John Knox mounted the pulpit to preach to a crowded audience on the topic of Christ's cleansing the Temple....

country. Therefore I most humbly require of you, my lords, to tell the Queen, in my name, that we, whom she in her blind rage doth thus persecute, are the servants of God, faithful and obedient subjects of this realm; and that the religion which she would maintain by fire and sword, is not the

true religion of Jesus Christ, but expressly contrary to the same; a superstitious device of men, which I offer myself to prove, against all who in Scotland maintain the contrary, freedom of debate being allowed, and the word of God being the judge. Tell her from me, that her enterprise shall not succeed in the end; for she fights not against man only, but against the eternal God."¹

The Regent promised not to harm the city if the Protestant forces peacefully dispersed. The offer was gladly received. However, John Knox said, "I am persuaded that this promise ... shall be no longer kept than the Queen and her Frenchmen can get the upper hand."² Knox's prediction came true. Mary stationed a garrison of French soldiers in the city and established the worship and practices of the papacy. In reaction to her duplicity, the two earls gave their allegiance to the Protestant cause.

The Protestant leaders faced a stark reality. The Queen Regent's deceptions and fraudulent promises had stymied the Reformation. No longer could they trust what she said or promised. Roman Catholic French armies were already in the land.

Reformation leaders determined to establish Protestant worship wherever they had the power. The city of St. Andrews, the center of Rome's powerful clergy, was selected as a place to begin. John Knox was called upon to preach the Word of God.

The Reformer arrived on June 9, 1559, and immediately faced a serious threat. Church historian J.A. Wylie wrote: "The archbishop, apprised of Knox's coming, hastened from Falkland with 100 spears, and sent a message to him on Saturday night, that if he dared to appear in the pulpit of the cathedral tomorrow, he would cause his soldiers to shoot him dead."³ The Protestant lords of the Congregation agreed that the attempt to preach was too risky and must be cancelled.

However, the Reformer had different views. Wylie wrote: "Knox, who

felt that to abandon a great design when the moment for putting it in execution had arrived, and retire before an angry threat, was to incur the loss of prestige, and invite greater attacks in [the] future, refused for one moment to entertain the idea of not preaching. He said that when lying out in the Bay of St. Andrews in former years, chained to the deck of a French galley, his eye had lighted on the roof of the cathedral, which the sun's rays at that moment illuminated, and he said in the hearing of some still alive, that he felt assured that he should yet preach there before closing his career; and now when God, contrary to the expectations of all men, had brought him back to this city, he besought them not to hinder what was not only his cherished wish, but the deep-rooted conviction of his heart. He desired neither the hand nor weapon of man to defend him. He whose glory he sought would be his shield. 'I only crave audience,' said he, which if it be denied here unto me at this time I must seek where I may have it."⁴

The next day, John Knox mounted the pulpit to preach to a crowded audience on the topic of Christ's cleansing the Temple. He likened Rome to the "sellers and buyers" that the Son of God forcefully removed.

Wylie wrote: "As he described the corruptions which had been introduced into the Church under the Papacy — the great crowd of simonists, pardon-mongers, sellers of relics and charms, exorcists, and traffickers in the bodies and souls of men, with the sin and shame and ruin that followed — his eye began to burn, his words grew graphic and trenchant, the tones of his righteous yet terrible reproof rung out louder and fiercer, and rolled over the heads of the thousands gathered around him, till not a heart but quailed under the solemn denunciations. It seemed as if past ages were coming up for trial; as if mitred abbots and bishops were leaving their marble tombs to stand at the judgment-seat; as if the voices of Hamilton, and Wis-

hart, and Mill — nay, as if the voice of a yet Greater were making itself audible by the lips of the preacher. The audience saw as they had never done before the superstitions which had been practised [sic] as religion, and felt the duty to comply with the call which the Reformer urged on all, according to the station and oppor-

What a glorious blessing for a country to have fearless preachers like John Knox. There is nothing too hard for our God. With Him there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Our Savior said, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:38).

tunity of each, to assist in removing these abominations out of the Church of God before the fire of the Divine wrath should descend and consume what man refused to put away. When he had ended, and sat down, it may be said that Scotland was reformed."⁵

After three more sermons, the city of St. Andrews took action. Wylie wrote: "The magistrates and townspeople assembled, and came to a unanimous resolution to set up the Reformed worship in the city. The church was stripped of its images and pictures, and the monasteries were pulled down. The example of St. Andrews was quickly followed by many other places of the kingdom."⁶

If John Knox had followed the exhortation of the leaders and of his friends, he would have vacated the pulpit and possibly the Reformation would have fallen to the ground. In some ways, this event has been likened to Martin Luther's determination to appear before the Diet at Worms. When Luther was close to the city he received a message from his friend, Spalatin, telling him not to enter the city because his life was in imminent

danger. Luther "fixed his eyes" on the messenger and said: "Go and tell your master that even should there be as many devils in Worms as tiles on the house-tops, still I will enter it."⁷

The following summary appeared in an old Presbyterian encyclopedia: "In the three days at St. Andrew's — the primal see of Scotland — Popery was utterly overthrown, the Reformed worship was set up, images and pictures were torn from the churches and monasteries were demolished.... Where-soever that doctrine went, and it ran very swiftly, Popish power and Popish idolatry, with all the paraphernalia thereof, melted before it. In less than a month after his triumphal appearance at St. Andrew's, Knox's voice was ringing among the rafters of St. Giles and of the Abbey Church at Edinburgh."⁸

What a glorious blessing for a country to have fearless preachers like John Knox. There is nothing too hard for our God. With Him there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Our Savior said, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:38). •

¹John Howie, *The Scots Worthies* (Edinburgh: Johnston, Hunter, and Company, 1870), p. 53.

²*Ibid.*

³J.A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, Vol. III (London: Cassell and Company, n.d. [originally published, 1878]), p. 492.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 492-493.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 493.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Wylie, Vol. I, p. 335.

⁸Alfred Nevin, Ed., *Encyclopaedia of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Encyclopaedia Publishing Co., 1884), p. 406.



The Rev. Mark Evans is the Moderator of Faith Presbytery, Bible Presbyterian Church, and is pastor of Hope Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC.



With Dr. Michael Koech (far right) and the students at the Bomet Bible Institute

KENYA 2022

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those in churches and schools of other faithful groups.

I was hosted at the Bomet Bible Institute by Bishop Michael Koech, Dr. Jonathan Langat, and others. I was able to bring the Word of God to the students on several occasions.

It was wonderful to see the beautiful campus which we had heard so much about from our Faith Presbytery, Bible Presbyterian Church, missionaries Raymond and Ruth Carlson, and Howard and Bonnie Carlson. Everywhere we went in Kenya we saw the lasting work of the Carlsons, both in the hearts of the people and in the facilities dedicated to God's work.

It was an honor to meet Rev. Simon Cherangoi, a father of the Africa Gospel Unity Church (AGUC). He, along with Bishop Koech and others are working on painstakingly translating the entire Bible into the Kalenjin language, which is spoken in that area of Kenya. These men are real scholars of the Bible and the Biblical languages.

Bishop Koech also took me to preach the Word in the Chesoen AGUC, and the Cheikeliek AGUC. We also stopped to see the Kapkwen AGUC, where Bishop Koech ministers. They are assembling the materials to erect a new church building.

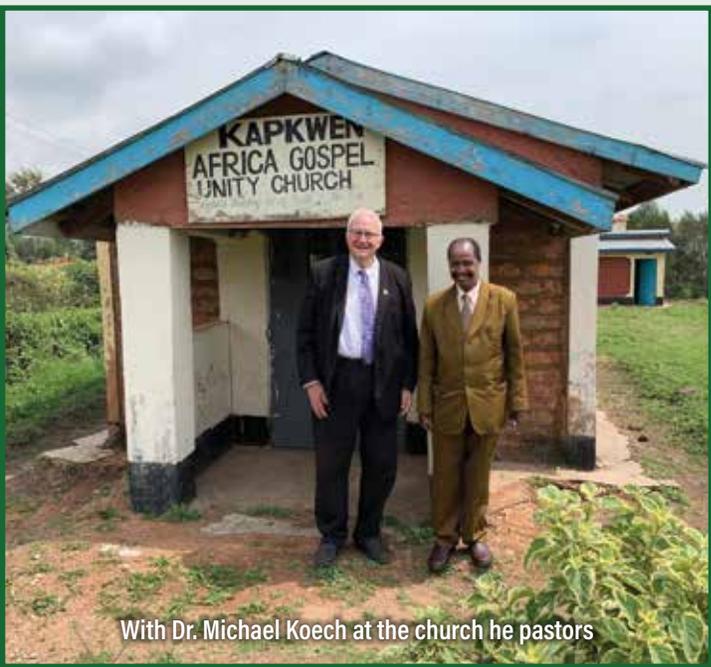
My next stop was in Kisumu, on the shores of Lake Victoria. Here, I was hosted by Archbishop Elisha Ako and the Holy Trinity Church. I had the privilege to speak to the students of the Kisumu Bible Institute, as well as to some of the bishops and pastors of this denomination. Archbishop Ako and Dr. Nelson Were carved out some time to take me to see beautiful Lake Victoria. Dr. Were is a leader in the Holy Trinity Church, is Deputy Principal and teacher at Faith College of the Bible, and is presently working on a new, faithful translation of the Scriptures into the Swahili language.



Part of the campus at the Bomet Bible Institute



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With Dr. Michael Koech at the church he pastors



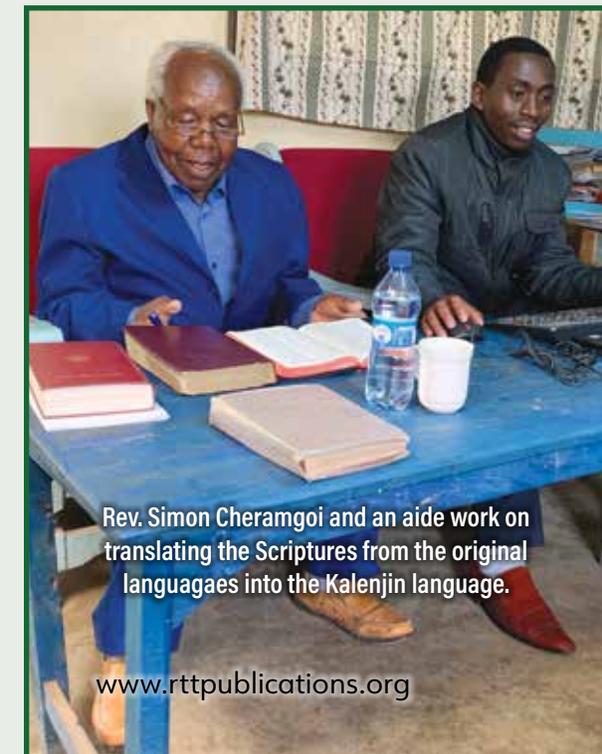
Enjoyed a meal with Dr. Jonathan Langat and his family. Loved singing together, "Since Jesus Came Into My Heart," during the devotions after the meal.



Ministering at the Chesoen Africa Gospel Unity Church near Bomet



With (left to right): Rev. Simon Cheramgoi, Bishop Michael Koech, and Dr. Jonathan Langat, of the Africa Gospel Unity Church



Rev. Simon Cheramgoi and an aide work on translating the Scriptures from the original languages into the Kalenjin language.



Ministering at the Cheikeliek Africa Gospel Unity Church near Bomet

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We then traveled to Eldoret to the campus of Faith College of the Bible. Here I was hosted by Rev. Joshua Musyoka (principal) and Rev. Philip Lagat (academic dean). Other faculty members and students showed me many kindnesses.

I had opportunity to teach a class on the Biblical doctrine of Separation to the student body, as well as to a number of visitors.

Faith College is another institution that I had heard of for many years through missionaries Judith Collins, and the Raymond and Howard Carlson families. It was a joy to see the beautiful campus God has provided.

During my time there I had opportunity to speak to the students at the Kosyin School of the Independent Presbyterian Church (IPC), as well as visit the Kosyin IPC.

I also had the privilege of addressing the delegates to the District Meeting of the Good News Church of Africa, at the facilities of its Chuiyat congregation. Then, on the Lord's Day, I preached at the Lelmolok AGUC.

During my time in Eldoret, I was asked to speak with some of the leaders of the East Africa Christian Association about the ICCC. I presented the work of the Council, and they asked a number of questions.

• • •

I praise the Lord for the mighty work that has been raised up all throughout the land of Kenya, and am thankful for the opportunity I had to represent the ICCC and The Independent Board. Pray as we seek to carry on a faithful, obedient witness for Christ in East Africa. The Board missionaries and the ICCC regional council, the East Africa Christian Alliance, are working diligently to go forward for Christ, without compromise and in obedience to God's Word. •

With Archbishop Elisha Ako and other bishops at the Holy Trinity Church in Kisumu



With Dr. Nelson Were (left), Archbishop Elisha Ako (right), and photographer Ken Guya at Lake Victoria



Preaching the Word at the Holy Trinity Parish Cathedral in Kisumu





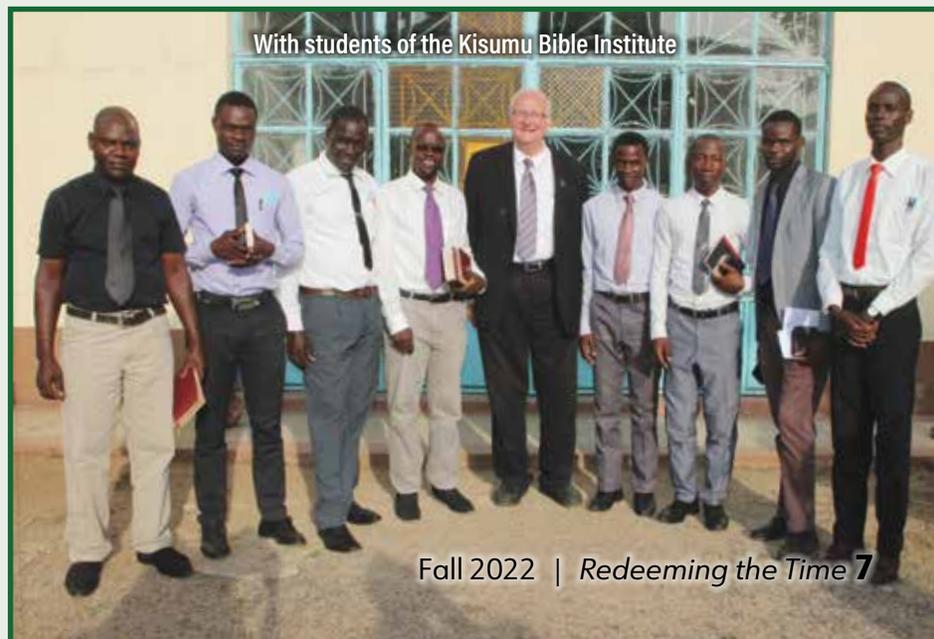
With ministers and students at the Holy Trinity Church in Kisumu



With Dr. Nelson Were



Enjoying fresh tilapia from Lake Victoria



With students of the Kisumu Bible Institute





Great hospitality displayed in the home of Rev. and Mrs. Joshua Musyoka (Principal), and daughter Dorcas



With Rev. Shadrack Cheruiyot, Registrar and professor, and his son Ethan, in the library at Faith College of the Bible



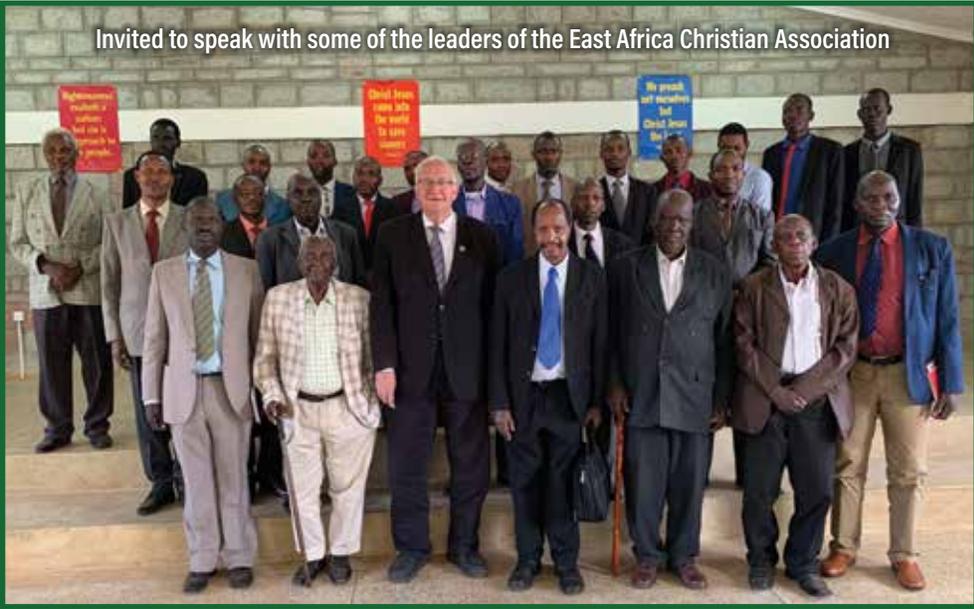
Enjoyed theological and other discussions with Dean of Students Rev. Philip Lagat in the place we were staying



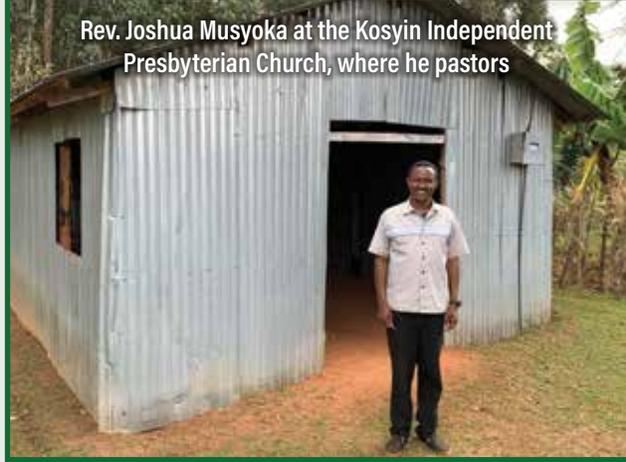
Part of the Faith College of the Bible campus in Eldoret



Africa's beautiful acacia trees



Invited to speak with some of the leaders of the East Africa Christian Association



Rev. Joshua Musyoka at the Kosyin Independent Presbyterian Church, where he pastors



At the Kosyin Independent Presbyterian Church School



At the District Meeting of the Good News Church of Africa



Brought the Word of God to the believers at the Lemelock Africa Gospel Unity Church



With Rev. Philip Lagat and Rev. Samuel Bett of the Good News Church of Africa



Great time of lunch, tea, and fellowship in Nakuru, on the trip to Nairobi from Eldoret

COMMOTION, CHAOS, AND CONFUSION

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His disciples (who did not recognize Him) as they journeyed from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Jesus asked, “what manner of communications are these that ye have one to another ... and are sad?” Cleopas, one of the two, answered, “Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?” (Luke 24:17,18).

Today, as we communicate with one another about the goings on in our nation — the commotions, disorder, and tumult — we too are sad. Like Cleopas, we would think a person had to be an absolute foreigner not to be cognizant of the present social turbulence rampant around us. The times are fraught with fearful uncertainties.

With this state of affairs churning around us, it may be beneficial to assess our relative national disorder in the light of Scripture’s record of similar events, along with how we should respond.

The history of what a man has done is set in the moral framework of what he is, as spelled out in Roman’s 1:29-31, an abbreviated “obituary” of the human race (Jew as well as Gentile). What an obituary it is!: “... being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness ... envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers....” Thinking of all the sins being practiced around us brings into sharp relief a miserable world of tumult and chaos. With sin and its chaotic effects in mind, we look at a few scenes of commotion in the Bible, starting with the New Testament and working backwards through the Old Testament to the beginning — the ultimate source of it all.

Ephesus and Thessalonica

In Acts 19:23ff, Luke writes about the uproar that occurred in Ephesus.

During Paul’s ministry in that idolatrous Asia Minor city, so many had espoused faith in Christ that the sale of images of the goddess Diana, to whom the city was devoted, fell off sharply. Business having been eroded, Demetrius, a “union head” of the craftsmen, rallied his compatriots, telling them that their craft was in danger. “And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. And the whole city was filled with confusion” (Acts 19:28,29a).

The tumult pushed its way to the town’s outdoor theater that would accommodate 25,000 people. It was there that some “cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together” (verse 32). Most of the people were manipulated into a frenzy. Now that sounds strangely familiar.

Do not think to blame the Apostle for the commotion. Paul had done nothing wrong to provoke it. For the three years he had been in the city, he had been involved in nothing but orderly preaching and teaching. People had turned from worshipping their goddess to the true and living God. Until it impinged on economic concerns, the city had taken no notice of the Apostle. Only when the impact of the gospel was felt did the intolerance of unbelievers ignite a noisy tumult.

A similar disturbance had occurred shortly before this in the Greek city of Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-6). Seeing the effects of Paul’s shorter ministry there, “the Jews which believed not, moved with envy [notice the Spirit of God assigned a motive for their actions], took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, [who can forget that description?] and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar ... crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also ... and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. And they troubled the peo-

ple and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things” (Acts 17:5,6-8).

Luke’s account of the uproar in Thessalonica reads like today’s news.

Demonic possession

A lesser tumult, but still evidence of Satan’s direct involvement in ruinous disorder, is the extraordinary number of demonic possessions present when Christ was living on the earth. In Mark 1:26, when Jesus orders a demon to leave a man, we read, “when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.”

Another instance, recorded in Mark 5:3-5, is of a man “who had his dwelling among the tombs [no ordinary dwelling place]; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains ... neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.”

And again, in Mark 9:17ff, we read of a man bringing his son whom a demon had rendered speechless. The father told Christ “wherever he [the demon] taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away.” Later the father added, “Ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters to destroy him.” What a soul-wrenching description!

If we want to consider ruinous upsets in our current times, we can find millions of souls excited to heart-rending self-destruction by the ordinary (not extraordinary) work of Satan.

The Crucifixion

The high water mark of societal eruptions, not just in the New Testament, but in the entire Bible, is the trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The uproar on that occasion is recorded with the most minute detail of any in the Bible, as described in all four Gospels.

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COMMOTION, CHAOS, AND CONFUSION

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It is important that we are aware of the source of the tumult of that evil day: its national Jewish leaders, their religious leaders. To get a sense of the mindset present among those leaders — chief priests, elders, Pharisees, scribes — who precipitated the greatest sin of the ages, we go to John 7:45-49. Officers sent to apprehend Jesus had returned to those in authority empty handed. When asked why they had not arrested Jesus, they explained, “Never man spake like this man” (verse 46).

Here we meet up with some “elites” of the day. Hear their tone: “Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?” (verses 47-48) These “elite” Pharisees then added a contemptuous reference to the “deplorables”: “But this people [this rabble] who knoweth not the law are cursed” (John 7:45-49). The mindset of the Pharisees was like Simon Magus, who gave “out that himself was some great one” (Acts 8:9). These leading lights of Judea determined that Jesus was expendable.

On the day of the crucifixion, “the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death” (Matthew 27:1). Notice whose secret deliberations precipitated the commotion that eventuated in Jesus’ crucifixion. From that back room of the religious power bloc, the scene moves to the seat of political power, Pontius Pilate, the Roman appointed governor of Judea. Scripture says that Pilate “knew that for envy they had delivered him” (Matthew 27:18). In the presence of Pilate the tumult gains steam. As John Calvin said to his congregation in Geneva, “when the devil ... lights the fire he also pumps the bellows.”¹

And what do our ears hear on that tumultuous, evil day, when, in the previous dark night hours, the noisy upset got underway? First we hear the words

of the betrayer, “Hail, master” (Matthew 26:49). Next, to our sorrow — since even the child of God can sometimes momentarily join the wrong side — we hear Peter forcefully, loudly we suspect, deny Jesus “with an oath, I do not know the man” (Matthew 26:72). We hear the pompous, heated charges of blasphemy voiced against Jesus by the high priest (Matthew 26:65). The loudness increases. Chief priests and scribes are heard “vehemently” accusing him (Luke 23:10).

By and by, we listen in as Pilate washes his hands before the multitude, saying forcefully enough that they may hear his voice above the crowd, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person” (Matthew 27:24). The decibels keep mounting. There are cries, “Crucify him.” We listen as the cries become louder, “they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him” (Mark 15:13-14).

The Jewish religious leaders made a great show of zealous piety when they accused Jesus, but on that day the godly could have said, “judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth” (Isaiah 59:14,15a).

As evil passions were running at high tide, what do we witness further? His accusers “buffeted” Jesus with their fists, and “spit in His face” on at least two occasions. He was “smitten” with the open palms of the hand, and later “with a reed ... on the head.” Down upon that same head was rudely pushed a crown of thorns. Finally we see his tormenters derisively “wagging” their heads (Matthew 26:27-27:67).

As they go about to crucify Jesus, we hear the soldiers mocking him: “Hail, King of the Jews!” (Matthew 27:29). We hear the words with which his enemies “revile him” and hurl insults. At some point in these awful proceedings, we catch the harsh sound of the hammer driving nails into tender flesh of hands and feet.

Underlying all the scenes of pretended zeal for the God of Israel was

a rushing river of hatred from the world: “... me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil” (John 7:7). As Psalm 2:2 prophesied, “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed.”

When the commotion had reached a fevered pitch never before equaled, what cannot be overlooked for a moment is that there was not one iota of grounds for it. The charges fly against our Lord Jesus, yet those accusations were without a speck of evidence. Peter said of Christ, “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” (1 Peter 2:22). On the day of Pentecost, he had the fortitude to say to that crowd in Jerusalem, “Jesus ... a man approved of God ... ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (Acts 2:22,23).

Destruction of the Temple

The first of the commotions we single out in the Old Testament is in Psalm 74, which, in vivid poetic imagery, engages in an anguished remembrance of the destruction of Solomon’s temple in 586 B.C., less than 400 years after it had been built and dedicated.

Here is the picture: “the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary” (verse 3). “Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations [not among the people, but in the place of assembly itself] ... they set up their ensigns for signs” (verse 4). As the psalmist looks back on that grievous scene, where once the visible emblems God appointed stood alone in the temple and its precincts (the brass altar, the candlesticks of gold, etc. (2 Chronicles 4:1,7), there now stood Babylonian emblems, regimental banners, conquering banners. These were, for the Jews, painfully humiliating banners. Verses 6 says, “... now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers” — a reference to the smashing destruction of the intricate artistic temple carvings.

Verse 7 continues: “They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground.” What the Jews saw as their temple burned brings to mind the sight of flames devouring buildings in our inner cities in the summer of 2020, or what the French viewed in 2019 as Notre Dame Cathedral went up in flames.

However violent the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, it was less so than the crucifixion. While Babylonian violence destroyed Solomon’s temple, Jewish violence “destroyed” the body of Christ. He prophesied, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up ... But he spake of the temple of his body” (John 2:19,21).

The Tower of Babel

Not all confusion needs to emanate from men hostile to one another. It can come from men united in their hostility to God and His commandments, as illustrated by the roar of the post-flood world determined to build the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). Judge the din and clamor of voices supportive of that tower construction by the current incessant roar supporting some pet philosophy or project. Loud voices were stridently insisting, “Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (verse 4). There was a lot of loud and proud talk about tower building to “make us a name.” Everywhere the chant was “Go to” and “Go to” (verses 3-4). It drowned out every other bit of talk. There was a building philosophy, building plans, and building materials: “brick for stone and slime [bitumen] had they for mortar” (verse 3).

The issue was anti-God, anti-scattering. Notice carefully that God had said to Adam, and, after the flood, again to Noah, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis

1:28, 9:1). In a manner of speaking, God’s standing mandate was that men should “scatter” and fill the earth. But men countered the command of God with their own creation, the tower, “lest we be scattered abroad.” Those who proposed to build the tower were resolved NOT to be scattered.

The cry in the crucifixion was for death. The cry on the plains of Babylon was for a tower. In both instances, the tumultuous roar of voices was against God. There are uproars that pick different issues, take different directions, but at the bottom they are all anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Bible. Such, at heart, are many of the disorders and tumults of our day.

The First Disorder: Adam’s Sin

The very first of ruinous upsets among men, the beginning of all of them that ever have been, was the sin of our first parents in the garden. Just one man and woman involved in eating the forbidden fruit might seem quiet and trivial to the unconverted mind, and scarcely noticeable. James 3:6 tells us, “the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity,” so it was a world of iniquity for man to put forth the heart and hand to disobey God’s law. Every human being, except Christ, has descended from the first man by ordinary generation, and so also sinned and fell with Adam in his first transgression.

Oh, the noise, the riot, the commotions, the disorder, the upsets that have thundered out of that event down through the course of human history! Spouses, parents, children are at noisy war against each other: “And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death ... and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household” (Matthew 10:21,35-36).

From that one act by our first parents, a tsunami of evil has swept over

mankind. The home with its turbulence has been the nest that contributes to the present day tumult in the streets.

Adam’s sin brought chaos and disorder into man’s inner being, and was reflected in the external world. Sin brought a schism into the soul. While conscience condemned what was out of keeping with the law of God, his mind, emotions, and purposes warred against one another.

As an example, we observe King Saul, who, jealous of David’s popularity, sought to take his life, hounding him all over the kingdom. When David had opportunity to kill Saul, but did not, and Saul learned of it, his conscience led him to speak in opposition to all his prior intentions to slay David. Saul said, “Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil” (1 Samuel 24:17).

Between the years when the king let slide the governmental business of Israel to chase after David, and this moment when David might have killed him, but did not, the inward motions of Saul’s soul toward David underwent a radical 180 degree turn. But it was only temporary. Such are the vacillations of which fallen men are susceptible.

Another example of inward turmoil is found in Amnon, one of David’s sons. Scripture says that Amnon wanted Tamar, but she was a virgin, so he “thought it hard for him to do anything to her” (2 Samuel 13:2). At the outset of the story, his mind resisted the thought of doing her evil. But as the story unfolded, his will and his desires trampled down the temporary conviction of his mind, and he went ahead and violated her. This illustrates the law of “lusts that war in your members” (James 4:1). Manifestly there was a tumult in Amnon’s soul: mind contending with desires, will contending with and overpowering his thoughts. The power of com-

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motions in the hidden man of the heart has its display all around us.

Lucifer's rebellion

All the endless turbulence that mars the pages of history and now troubles our land has its ultimate source in the rebellion of Lucifer and his angels against God. The pages of Scripture give us only occasional, partial glimpses into that event, but it is enough to assure us that it took place with awful consequences that the sovereign God decreed to permit for His glory. In the fall of Satan it could be said, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." In Paul's admonition that an elder in the church should not be a novice "lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6), we perceive that it was pride that brought such fearful and inescapable condemnation upon the devil and his followers. In all the New and Old Testament tumults that we have noted, there was the seed of pride. That same pride, one of the seven things that "God hates" (Proverbs 6:16-17), is surely at the fountainhead of our national chaos.

Refuge in a time of trouble

What is a Christian's resort as life-destructive, property-destructive, liberty-destructive events are rampant? We "wait on the Lord." First, we make God our refuge. We pray and, in faith, lay hold of His promises. When fear for a season seizes us — and that happens (God spoke to Jeremiah of "the men of whom thou art afraid" [Jeremiah 39:17]) — what shall we do?

David said, "Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me ..." (Psalm 56:2). David experienced fear. He confessed to God, "What time I am afraid," but

immediately followed up with, "I will trust in thee" (Psalm 56:3). Fear interrupts, but trust is the habitual posture of the believing soul. And so David, who admits to seasons of fear, recommends trust in God. "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble" (Psalm 9:9).

The book of Psalms repeatedly encourages us. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.... The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge" (Psalm 46:1,7). "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge" (Psalm 57:1).

"Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us" (Psalm 62:8). "I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living" (Psalm 142:5).

In these verses, and many more to the same effect, David and his compatriots are embracing God for the soul's comfort in times of trouble.

What shall we do in times of chaos and commotion? Second, resort to God's sovereign and just ruling over all people, over all — absolutely all — events. God has a remarkable way of ultimately frustrating, thwarting, and overturning the riotous schemes of transgressors. God's absolute rule and righteousness informs the prayer in Psalm 5:10, "Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall [fall — by what?] by their own counsels." Many other verses are to the same effect: "Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself; into that very destruction let him fall" (Psalm 35:8). As it pertains to his enemies, those he styles "the workers of iniquity," David voices this assurance, "So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves" (Psalm 64:2,8). "Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape" (Psalm 141:10).

Solomon's proverb tells us about sinners, "they lay wait for their own

blood; they lurk privily for their own lives" (Proverbs 1:18). We resort to such verses as these when the wicked are busy with their own schemes. While we pray for the salvation of the cast of evil characters, we leave them to God to catch in a net of their own making. "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him" (Proverbs 26:27). As a friend says, God "will beat them with their own stick." Those who are fathering the disruptions of our hour shall not have the last word. The final, incontestable word is God's.

Conclusion

We end our comments on these times of trouble and how to respond with a quote from B.B. Warfield's article "Is the Shorter Catechism Worth While?" He writes:

"We have the following bit of personal experience from a general officer of the United States Army. He was in a great western city at a time of intense excitement and violent rioting. The streets were over-run daily by a dangerous crowd. One day he observed approaching him a man of singularly combined calmness and firmness of mien, whose very demeanor inspired confidence. So impressed was he with his bearing amid the surrounding uproar that when he had passed he turned to look back at him, only to find that the stranger had done the same. On observing his turning the stranger at once came back to him, and touched his chest with his forefinger, demanded without preface: 'What is the chief end of man?' On receiving the countersign, 'Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever'—Ah! said he, 'I knew you were a Shorter Catechism boy by your looks!' 'Why, that was just what I was thinking of you,' was the rejoinder."²²

If the Shorter Catechism will foster men of that mettle in the midst of "the surrounding uproar," how much more will the Scriptures, on which the Shorter Catechism is founded, pro-

duce men of “combined calmness and firmness of mien” in our own day of commotion, chaos, and confusion. •

¹John Calvin, *Sermons from Job* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 4.

²B.B. Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings*, Vol. 1 (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1970), pp. 383-384.

PCA Pulls Out of NAE

The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) came into being in 1973 as a more conservative Presbyterian denomination than the mainline churches. They pointedly did not seek to join the Bible Presbyterian Church, which took a clear-cut stand against the apostasy and New Evangelical compromise. In his book entitled *As the Years Go By: A Little Leaven Leaveneth the Whole Lump*, Dr. Carl McIntire warned that the PCA was being birthed in compromise.

The PCA has been a member of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) since 1983. However, in June 2022, the majority of delegates to the PCA General Assembly voted to withdraw from the NAE. The NAE was founded in 1942. From the beginning, it opposed the faithful Bible witness of the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC), inaugurated in 1941. It refused to obey the Scriptures in separating from unbelief.

We are glad for the PCA’s action, but are distressed that its objections did not center on the NAE’s long-standing compromise and willingness to cooperate and associate with apostate groups. Rather, the focus was on the NAE’s slide into advocacy for leftist political positions, and the objection of some to the church getting directly involved in the specific issues that face our nation. Sadly, the PCA remains in compromise both within its own ranks and with its associations. •

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clergy and weddings. The Methodist Book of Discipline declares: “We do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian doctrine.”

With increasing calls to remove this language, a special session of the United Methodist Church was held in February 2019. There were several “plans” for the delegates to consider. By a narrow margin, the “Traditional Plan” prevailed, which kept the wording about homosexuality being incompatible with Christian doctrine.

However, this far from settled the matter. Some bishops, ministers, and so forth, said they would disobey this, with full plans to remain in the United Methodist Church. Others have sought to use technical church procedures to countenance their disobedience to the Bible. Still others have simply turned a blind eye. There are now homosexual clergymen in good standing, and even a lesbian bishop.

“Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation”

As tensions continued to rise, a number of bishops and church leaders signed a proposed “Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation.” The document stated: “A local church that affiliates with a [different] Methodist denomination pursuant to this Protocol other than the post-separation United Methodist Church retains its assets and liabilities. The Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church to which the local church belongs at the time of separation will not exercise its trust clause and shall release such local church from the provisions of any and all trust clauses.”

This was supposed to be voted on at the 2020 Quadrennial Convention of the United Methodist Church. However, shortly after it was written

in January 2020, the whole world was faced with the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the Convention was canceled, meaning that it could not be voted on until 2024. Therefore, it has not been enacted to this day.

In the intervening years, many who advocated for this Protocol have hardened in their apostasy and have since withdrawn their support. There are a growing number of previous supporters, and even those who were on the team to produce the Protocol, who have signed a document which states: “Given the growing opposition to the Protocol within the constituencies we represent, the dwindling support among General Conference delegates, and the serious reservations of Central Conference leaders, we can no longer in good faith support the Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace through Separation or work towards its adoption at the next General Conference.”

The Global Methodist Church

With lack of resolution over these past few years, a number who were dissatisfied have formed the Global Methodist Church, presumably a more conservative alternative. This new denomination holds to the Methodist Ar-



ticles of Religion, and some of the historic creeds of the Church. It should be noted, however, that the United Methodist Church holds to many of these things on paper, but not in practice. Time will tell what path will be

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taken by this new denomination. If they fail to follow the Scriptural command to separate from apostasy and unbelief — as many of their founding pastors and churches have done for decades — they will never become a faithful Biblical church.

A Long History of Apostasy

Sadly, we hold out little hope of this new, more conservative denomination being a faithful bulwark for Biblical truth and faithfulness. Any church leaving the United Methodist Church in 2022 has tolerated terrible apostasy and many unbiblical stances and actions. The issues of homosexual ordination and marriage were the tipping point, but serious theological defections were seen as far back as the late 1800s, when many Methodist ministers studied under Modernists in Germany and elsewhere. Things greatly came to a head in the 1930s.

Where were these ministers and churches when different Methodist bishops, over many decades, have denied the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, His substitutionary atonement, His virgin birth, His deity, His working of many mighty miracles, the inerrancy of His Word? Many decades ago, Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam declared in his book *A Testament of Faith*: "But must God have a sacrifice, the Lamb slain from the beginning of the foundation of the world, as the Book [Bible] says? No, no, I cannot think of it this way.... I have never been able to carry the idea of justice to the place where someone else can vicariously pay for what I have done in order to clean the slate...." There goes the very heart of the Gospel. Bishop Oxnam cannot be recognized as a Christian.

Many of the official Methodist Sunday school lessons have taught heresy on numerous occasions. The

Methodist *Adult Student*, September 1951, declared: "Paul would never have understood the declaration of the Nicene Council in A.D. 325 that 'Jesus was very God of very God.' ... It was the Church that exalted Jesus to the rank of Deity."

Where were they when contributions were being made, through the Programme to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches, to Communist liberation movements?

Where were they when the United Methodist Church supported, as a right, for women to obtain abortions? Where have they been when Methodist bishops have condemned the overthrow of *Roe v. Wade*? We could go on and on.

Faithfulness to Christ

In 1939, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church South and the Methodist Protestant Church consummated a union. The Eastern Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, by a decisive vote, refused to be a part of this merger. Why? As one writer put it, "the new Methodist Church would be controlled by leaders who did not believe in an inspired, infallible Bible." The Rev. Newton Conant crystallized the issues in his book *Present Day Methodism and the Bible*.

Later, 34 of these churches banded together and took the name Bible Protestant Church. They helped found the American Council of Christian Churches, along with the Bible Presbyterian Church. They continue today as the Fellowship of Fundamental Bible Churches.

Other Methodist leaders, such as Evangelical Methodist W.W. Breckbill, and Methodist Protestant leader Franklin Sharp rallied Bible-believing Methodists to build ministries and denominations faithful to the Bible and its teachings. We praise the Lord for Bible-believing Methodists all around the world who continue to refuse to bow the knee to Baal.

The Current Lawsuit

Although Bishop Kenneth H. Carter, Jr., of the Florida Annual Conference, is reported to have said that he planned to institute the provisions of the Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation in his Conference, it appears that he has gone back on his word. The current lawsuit challenges the United Methodist trusteeship provisions as being in conflict with Florida law, that the Conference has failed to obey the provisions of Florida law, that the Conference is applying these standards inconsistently and arbitrarily, and that this provision is abrogated by an acknowledged change of position by Conference officials concerning some exceedingly important doctrinal matters, to which these congregations object out of conscience.

One church is arguing that it was built and maintained long before there even was a United Methodist Church, and that their joining the denomination in no way gave over their rights to their property. You may read the legal complaint at: <https://www.scribd.com/document/583124614/UMC-Florida-Annual-Conference-Filed-Complaint>.

A Call to Obedience and Faithfulness

We call on all United Methodists who can no longer abide the apostasy in their denomination to "Come out from among them and be ye separate." First, make sure that you have been saved by the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Then, determine, with the help of God's Spirit, to be faithful to the Word of God, no matter what personal sacrifice is necessary. Repent for remaining in the wicked apostasy for so many years. There are already many Bible-believing Methodists with which you can join and fellowship for the furtherance of the Gospel and Christ's kingdom. •