

**Visualized Bible Study**  
**Part 5d**  
**The Protestant Reformation**  
**And a Call for**  
**a return to God's Way**

*History of  
The Lord's Church*

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**5**

# **The divisions multiply**

## **The protestant reformation**

**During the middle ages and later,**  
**many incidents** occurred

In which copies of the Scriptures  
in the common languages of the people  
were **confiscated and burned**  
upon **orders from**  
**the medieval Roman Church.**



**History shows that while many Catholic leaders did not go this far, to say the least none of them actually encouraged the reading of the Bible by the people.**

**The following is an excerpt from an address by the Cardinals to Pope Pius 3rd**

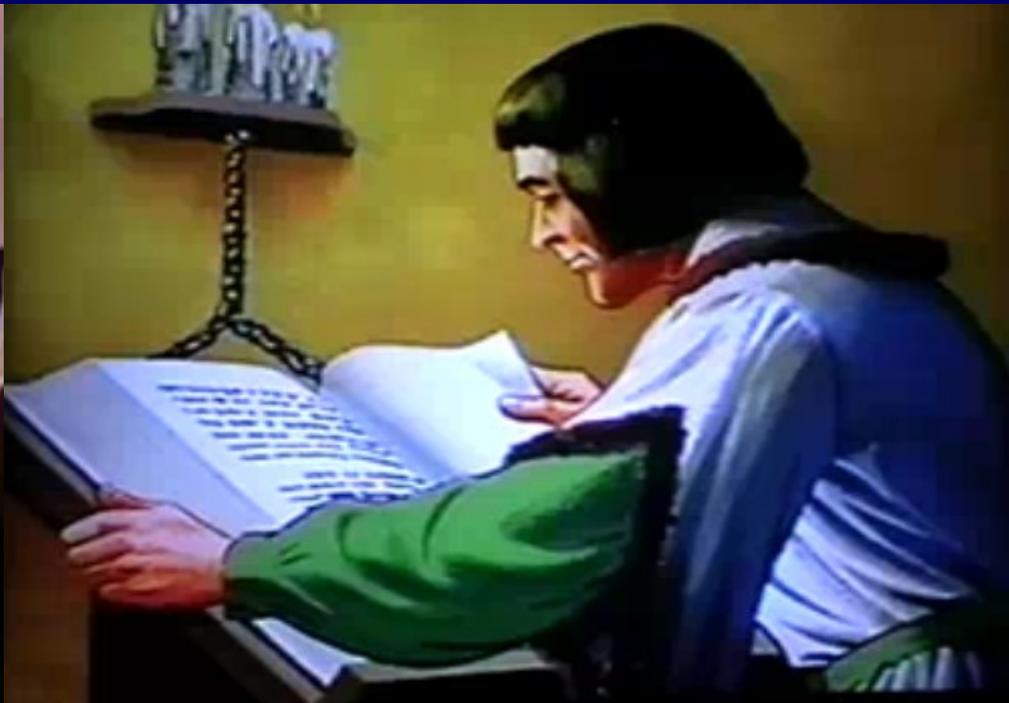
**And is preserved in the National Library of Paris :-**

**“of all the advice we can offer your holiness.**

**We must open your eyes well and use all possible force in the matter; viz, to permit the reading of the gospel as little as possible in all countries under your jurisdiction.**

**(Folio No 1068, Vol 11, pp 650,651)**

**“Since these church authorities felt that **THEY ALONE** had the right to interpret the Scriptures for the people, they were not interested in putting the Bible in the hands of the common man.”**



**But men still craved  
spiritual enlightenment  
through their own study of the Bible.**



**This hunger for God's Word  
was almost universal.**



**“It shaped the culture and provided  
the background for the great religious  
Reformation of the 16th century which gave  
the Bible to the people in their own language.”  
Latourette, *Ibid.*, p. 158.**

**The Roman Church tried to stem the tide of this rising opposition to its medieval policies.**

**Many of those who pioneered in giving the Scriptures to the people in their own language were seized and imprisoned by order of the church authorities.**



**Some were put to death.**

**John Wycliffe, one of the first to translate the Bible into English, was excommunicated by Rome.**

**“In 1384 Wycliffe died a natural death but 44 years later, under Pope Martin V, Wycliffe's bones were dug up, burned and scattered over the River Swift to show the disdain of the Catholic Church for Wycliffe's works.”**

**I Latourette, Ibid., p.151.**

**Only a few copies of the scriptures  
in the English language  
were available at that time  
and the people  
who were fortunate enough  
to own a copy of the scriptures  
treasured it highly.**

**At the risk of incurring the anger  
of church authorities, they continued  
to study the scriptures in secret  
and discuss God's Word with others.**

**As they read of God's way  
in the New Testament Scriptures,  
they saw clearly that many  
of the current practices of the Roman church  
were not appointed by God.**

**“Slowly but surely a great spiritual awakening  
emerged among the populace and the time  
for religious reform was ripe.”**

**Norwood, Ibid., pp. 134-135.**



**Early in the 16th century,  
Martin Luther, a Catholic priest,  
led a sweeping movement  
to reform the Catholic Church.**



**Luther bravely challenged  
Catholic scholars to a discussion  
of 95 different propositions in which  
Catholic doctrine directly conflicted  
with the Holy Scriptures.**

**Though he was soon excommunicated  
from the Catholic Church.**

**“He continued his work  
which resulted in  
the great Protestant Reformation.”**

**Norwood, Ibid., p. 43; Latourette, Ibid., pp. 168-169.**

# DEFYING CHURCH AUTHORITIES.

Luther translated the Scriptures into German, the language of his people.

He believed that the Scriptures, not the church, was the source of authority and that every man should have the opportunity to read it for himself.



**His efforts at reform were a major beginning in a return to the Scriptures.**

**While we admire Luther's dedication and bravery, we must not forget that his major purpose was not so much to restore the original new testament assembly.**

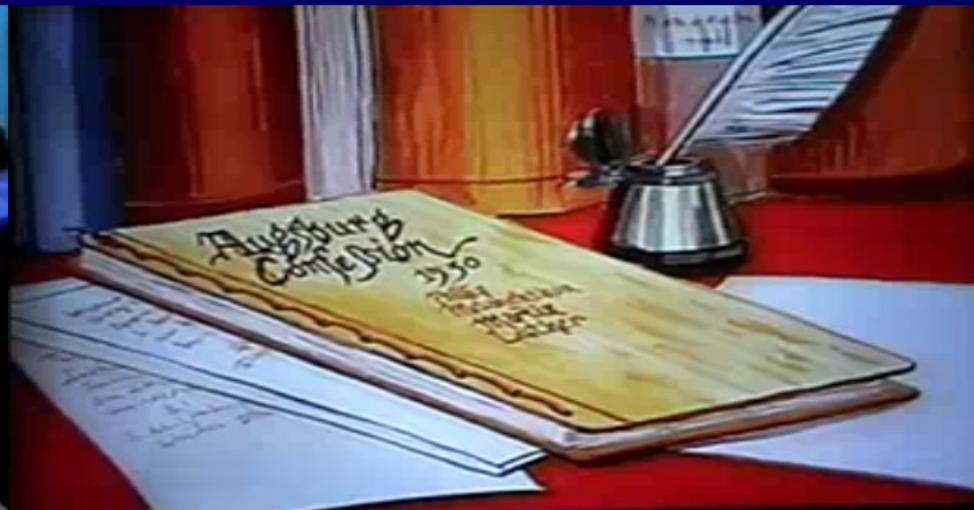
**“It was to reform the existing Catholic Church. Neither did Luther intend to begin a new church.”**

**Latourette, Ibid., p. 172; 2 Norwood, Ibid., p. 35;  
a Hutchinson and Garrison, Ibid., p. 199.**

However Luther and his followers soon were called upon to produce a formal statement of Luther's teachings.

Adopted in 1530, this statement is known as the "Augsburg Confession."

After Luther's death, the followers continued to circulate his teachings.



**“Many people who had become dissatisfied with the tyranny of the priesthood eagerly embraced this new creed.”**

**Norwood, Ibid., pp. 52-53.**



**A new era had begun  
known to history  
as the Protestant Reformation.**

**Because Luther's followers protested  
against unfair advantages given to the  
Catholics by the German rulers, they  
came to be referred to as “Protestants.”**

**All Protestant churches  
are less than 500 years old.**

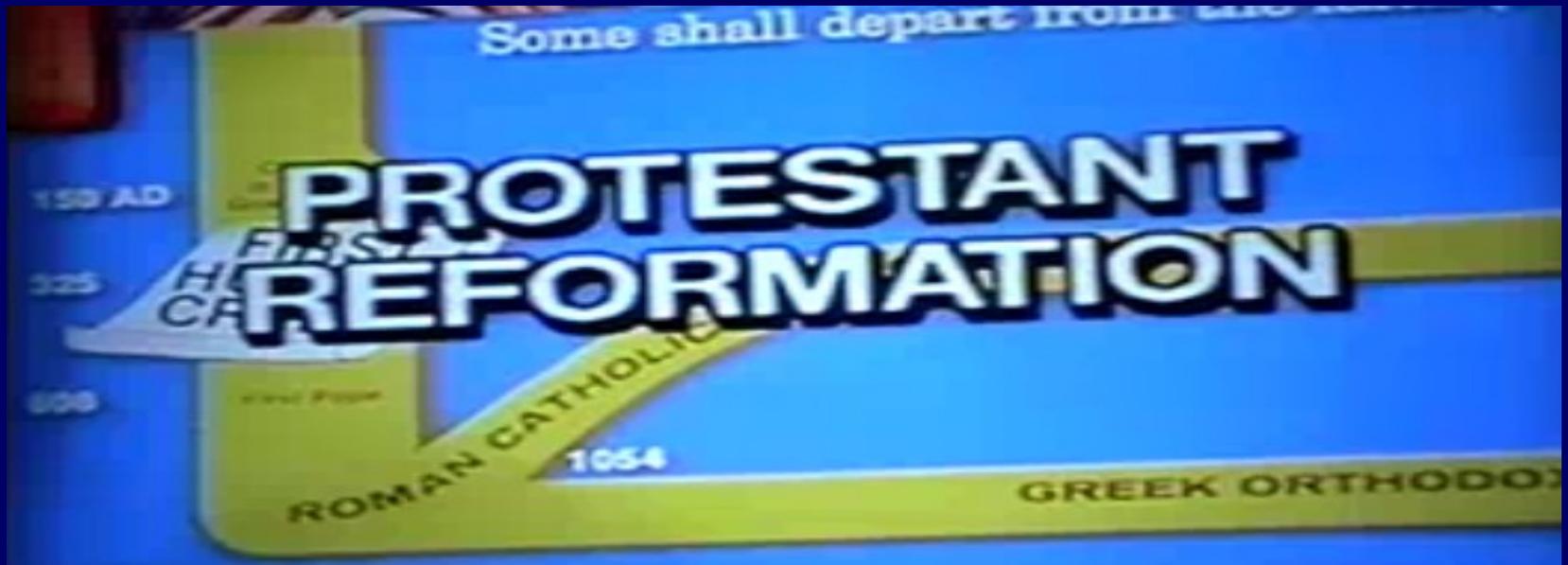
**“Like the Catholic Church itself,  
they came into being  
hundreds of years after  
Jesus had established His Family.”**

**Norwood, Ibid. p. 52,**



As would be expected  
**Luther's followers** soon came  
to refer to themselves as "**Lutherans.**"

The **new movement** crystallised  
before the close of the 16th century  
into **a distinct religious organization**  
known as the "**Lutheran Church.**"



**This development contradicted  
the teachings of Luther himself.**

**Because of principles  
he had learned from the New Testament,**

**Luther had pleaded with his people  
not to call themselves “Lutherans”  
but only “Christians.”**

**Norwood, Ibid., p. 50.**

**The Lutherans rejected many false teachings of the Roman Church and returned nearer to God's way, the Scriptural pattern for the assembly found in the New Testament.**



**However, they still retained many Catholic traditions and doctrines which Luther was too cautious to reject, even though they were not found in the Word of God.**

**“Protestantism, like Catholicism, was a product of human history rather than the teachings of Jesus and His apostles.”**

**Norwood, Ibid., p. 50.**

**The Presbyterian church**  
Evolved in **Scotland** from  
a **reformation movement** begun earlier  
in **Switzerland** by **John Calvin**.

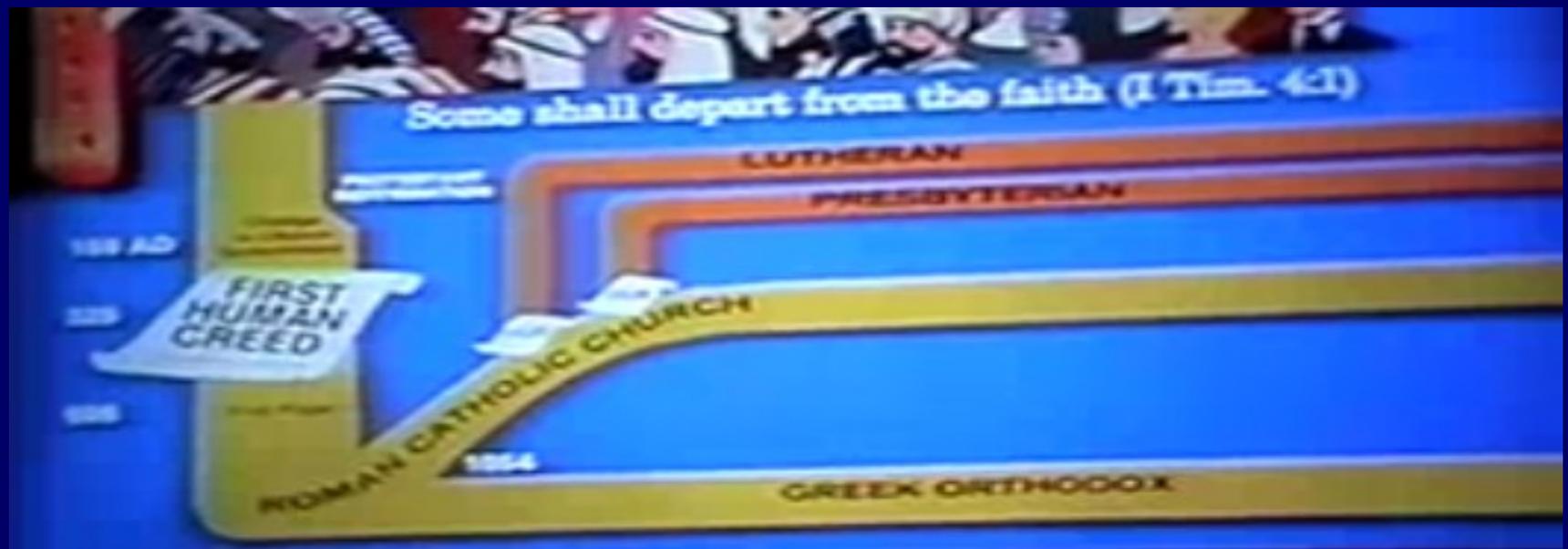
Having fled from France to Switzerland  
to escape Roman persecution.

**Calvin, "the fiery reformer,"**  
published his famous  
**"Institutes of the Christian Religion"**  
in **1536** as a defence  
of **Protestantism** in France.

**Calvin's followers** in Switzerland were known as the **“Reformed Church.”**

**“But, as the movement developed** in Scotland, it came to be known as **the Presbyterian Church.**

Norwood, Ibid., p. 63; Norwood, Ibid., p. 57.



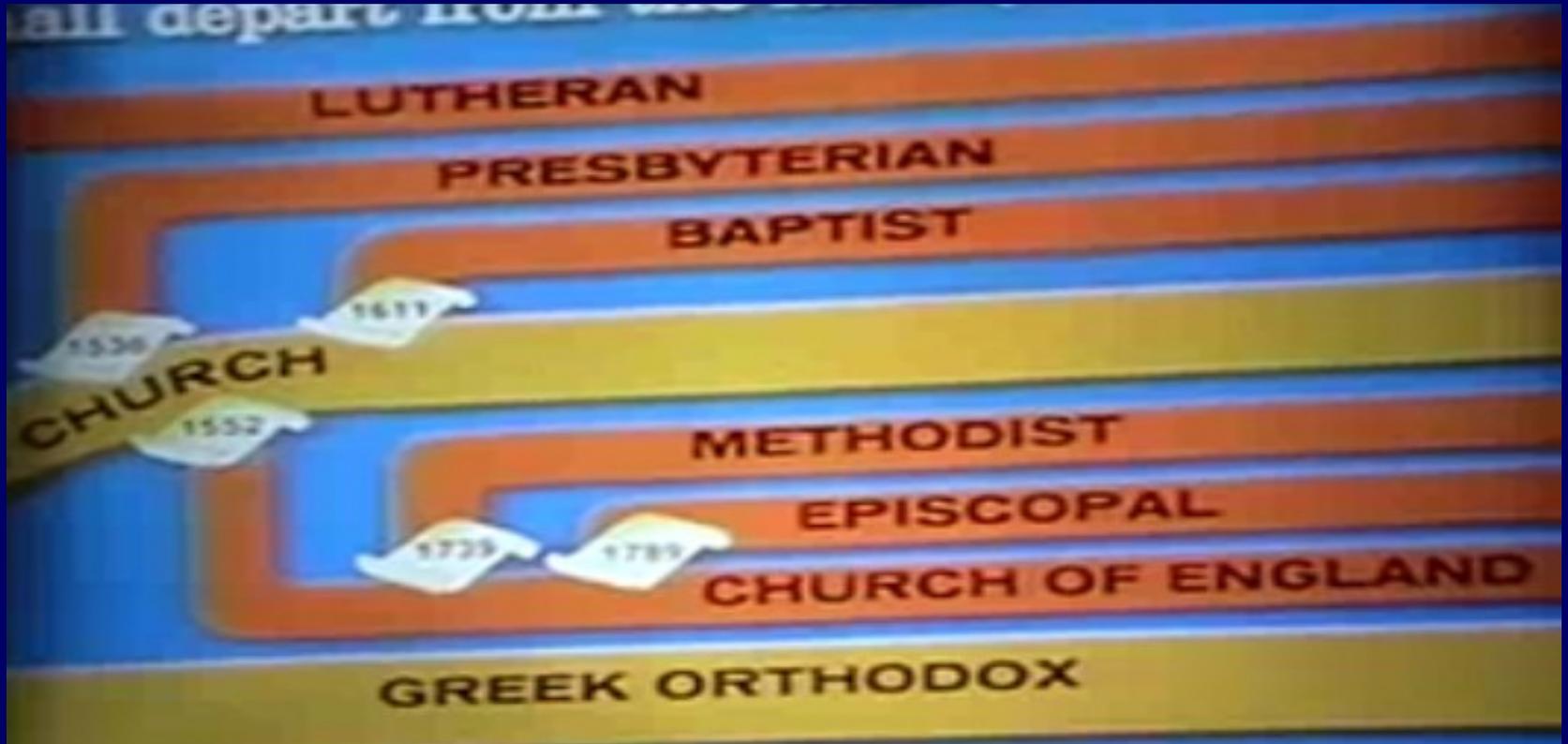
**Both Martin Luther and John Calvin  
were brave men of deep conviction.**

**Their search for truth  
has blessed the world.**

**Regrettably their followers  
built denominations around  
their names and doctrines  
instead of following  
their search for truth**

**and a complete return to God's Way.**

**Protestant denominations began to multiply rapidly. More and more people were being divided religiously as one denomination sprang from another.**



**Instead of going back to God's way  
in the Bible so that all might  
be one body, each denomination  
stressed its own teachings.**

**Each was named either  
after its founder or a particular doctrine  
or some religious practice;**

**But none of the denominational names  
gave glory to Christ  
who had died for His body.**

**It is possible to join one or more  
denominations of men today  
without ever accepting God's saving  
grace and without ever being added  
by Christ to His family. Acts 2:41;**

**It does make a difference  
to which assembly we belong  
regardless of how sincere we may be.**

**Under Henry 8th the Church of England  
was declared as a separate body  
from the Roman Church in 1534.**

***In 1552 this new church  
Issued an official creed  
Known as the “Forty-two Articles”  
(later the “Thirty-nine Articles.”)***

**Many churches today, including  
the Methodist Church (1739)  
and the Protestant Episcopal Church (1789)  
are an outgrowth of the Church of England.**

One of the **prominent groups**  
Which began in opposition  
to **the Church of England**  
is the **“Baptist Church.”**

The **first recognizable Baptist Church**  
was **established in Amsterdam,**  
**Holland** early in the **17th century.**

The **first permanent Baptist Church**  
on **English soil** **dates from 1611.**

Norwood, *Ibid.*, p. 74; *Op. Cit.*, pp. 128-129; *Op. Cit.*,  
pp. 166-167; *Op. Cit.*, pp. 103-104; *Op. Cit.*, p. 105.

Today men find it easy to forget  
that **Jesus built His assembly over  
1900 years ago exactly as He wanted it.**

We can read in the New Testament  
of **Christ's assembly**  
which **existed** hundreds of years  
before **Catholic and Protestant churches**  
came into existence.

When the Word of God, the pure seed  
is planted today it should produce  
only **Christians united in the ONE body**  
established by **Christ Himself.**

**However we have seen that when the doctrines of men are mixed with the pure “seed,” various denominations have resulted until today they number over 1,800.**

**We have seen also that it is entirely possible for a person to join one of these denominations by observing its distinctive rules of admission without ever receiving God's saving grace through obedience to Christ Himself.**

**In spite of the perversion  
of the New Testament Pattern  
for the assembly.**

**There has always been  
a remnant of men  
Who held God's way  
as the only way to live.**

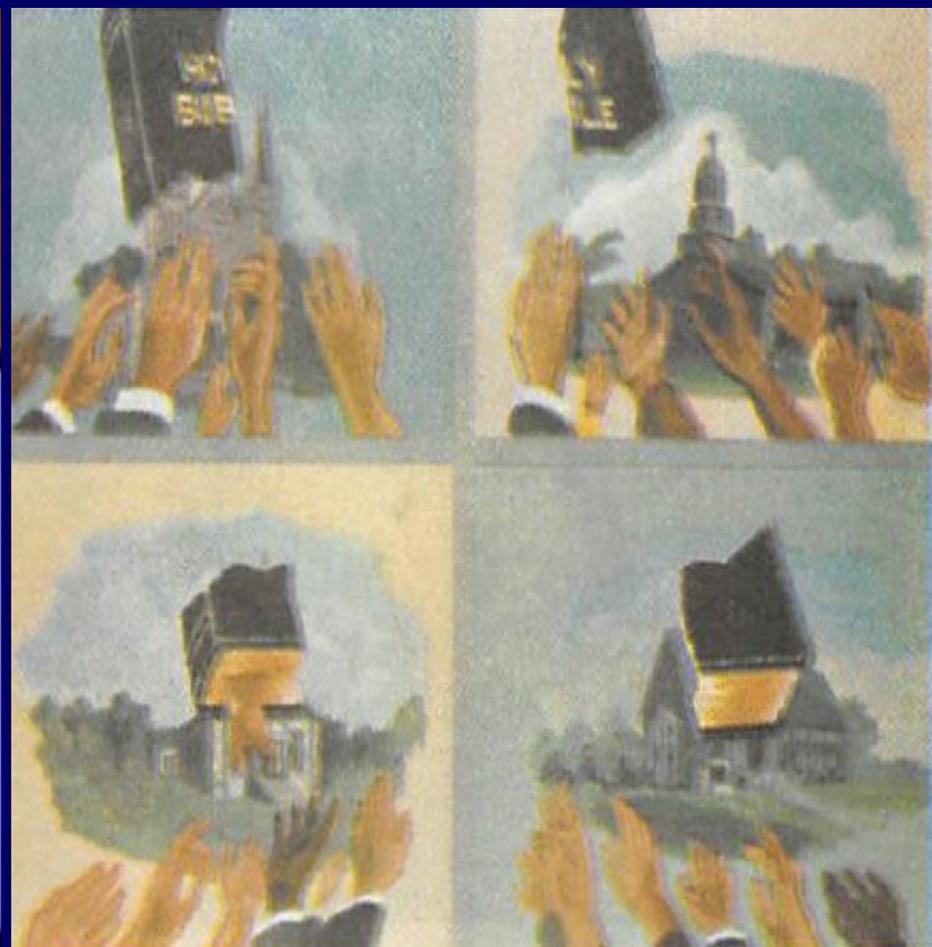
**And that they began  
turning back from denominationalism  
to the pure doctrine of Christ  
found in the Word of God?**

**Unlike Luther, Calvin and Wesley,  
whose work resulted  
in new denominations.**

**These men merely pointed people  
to the New Testament Scriptures  
That people may be added to the  
ORIGINAL BODY which JESUS built.**



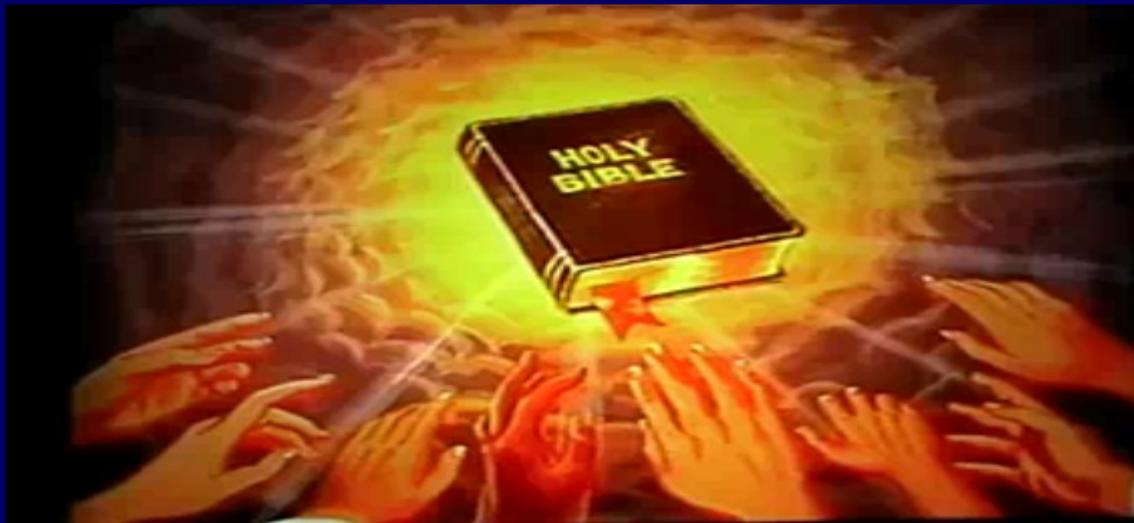
Even among the **religiously divided** people, there was **a common respect** for **the Bible as the Word of God**.



**The scriptures were the only ground upon which all religious people could be united under Christ.**

**Didn't they all accept the Bible as God's Word?**

**Didn't they all believe in the same God?**



**The sin of religious division,  
therefore, arose, not from the Scriptures,  
but from denominational names,  
creeds and barriers erected by men.**

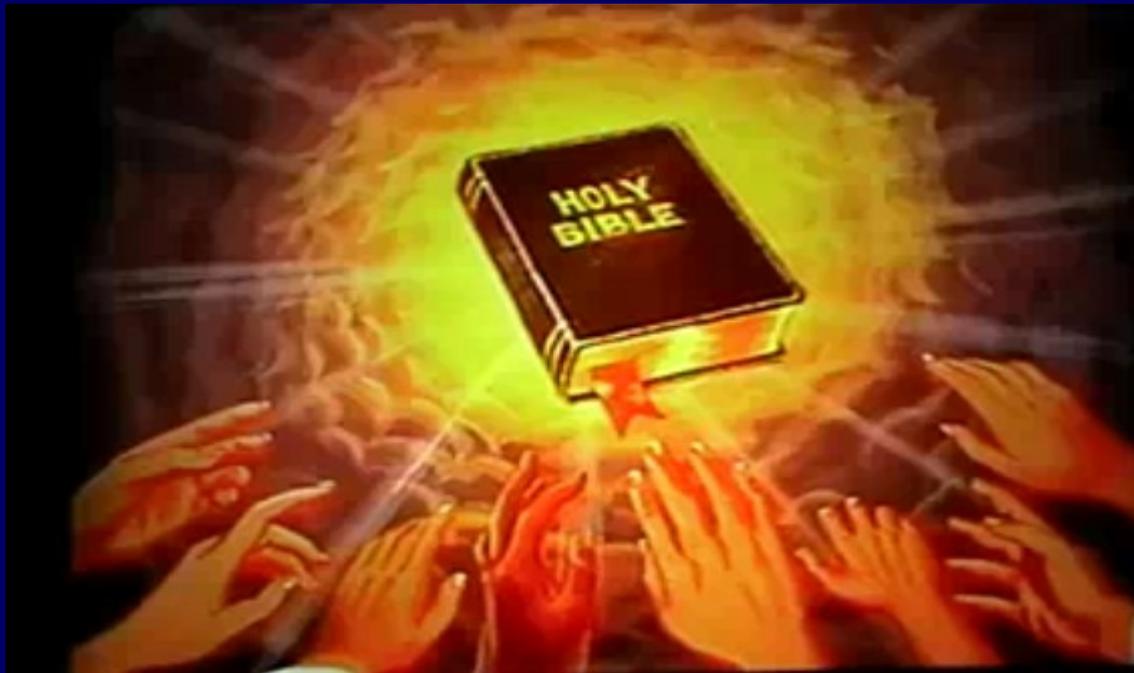
**The Scriptures itself,  
the only hope for religious unity,  
was being ignored for the most part.**

**Division continued to flourish  
because most people gave allegiance  
to their church manuals  
and creed books rather than  
to the Scriptures as final authority.**

**This caused people to cling  
to those portions of the Bible  
which seemed to them to support their  
own particular denominational creeds.**

***Many showed greater loyalty  
to their denomination  
than they showed to God, Himself.***

**But sincere men  
seeking to follow Christ,  
began to remember Jesus' words:-**



**“In vain do they worship me,  
teaching for doctrine  
the commandments of men.”**

**“every plant which  
my heavenly father  
hath not planted,  
shall be rooted up.”**

**(Matthew 15:9, 13;)**

**Sincere religious leaders  
in different denominations  
began to see that if denominational  
creeds, names and practices  
were discarded, their religious  
differences would soon melt away.**



**By once again enthroning  
God's word as supreme authority,  
Christians can be  
united in the Lord's Body  
as in the days of the apostles.**

**Not only is this plea reasonable,  
but more important,  
it is the plea of Christ our Saviour.**



**It is still possible for all those  
who truly love Christ  
to go back behind  
all denominationalism to Jesus.**

**Back to His cross and to the family,  
His body, His kingdom  
which He established centuries before  
any of the Catholic or Protestant  
denominations existed.**

**This Bible plea does not require  
that any person bow to the whims  
of any man or religious group.**

**Each individual must willingly  
lay aside denominational names,  
creeds, and practices  
which are foreign to the Bible.**

**With courage and freedom  
from men's teaching,  
return to God's way as revealed  
in the New Testament.**

**Through His teaching the Lord Jesus  
today still is pointing all men to  
God's inspired Writings, the Scriptures.**



**Have you ever wondered  
how Jesus would worship  
if He were on earth today?**

**Would He really feel comfortable  
in the midst of  
all the religious division?**

**Would He feel at home  
in a human denomination where  
man-made creeds, names and doctrines  
are being taught and honoured?**

**How could Jesus approve  
of these things now which  
are so foreign to the life He lived  
and the teaching  
He left for man to follow?**



**Jesus once said  
of the scribes and Pharisees:-**

**“These people honour me  
with their lips but their heart  
is from me in vain do they  
worship me teaching for doctrines  
the commandments of men.”**

**Jesus prayed for a unity  
that can only be found  
when men forsake all  
human elements in religion.**

**And return completely to God's way  
revealed in the New Testament.**

**Today all believers  
can be united in His body  
The only assembly that  
Jesus died for and built.**

**Remember when His cruel death  
on the cross was imminent,  
Jesus poured out His soul  
in prayer to His Father.**



**“Father . . . neither pray I for these  
(apostles) alone, but **for those also  
which shall believe on me through  
their word; that they all may be one ...  
that the world may believe that  
You have sent me.”****

**(John 17:20, 21;)**

**Jesus' prayer for unity among believers  
was answered during the days  
of the apostles when **all Christians  
belonged to the same body, family.****

**Christ's prayer can be answered again today when men forsake all human elements in religion and return completely to God's way revealed in the New Testament.**



**Our scripture survey ends  
with this significant thought.**

**All over the world today  
people in great numbers are feeling  
the impact of the Saviour's prayer  
for unity and the scripture's plea  
for simple New Testament Christianity.**

**In nation after nation people  
are studying the New Testament  
Scriptures for themselves.**

**Throwing off  
the shackles of denominationalism  
and various world religions,  
men and women of all nations  
are being added to the  
ONE BODY OF CHRIST.**

*Acts 2:47; Ephesians 4:4-6;*

**Joining hands and hearts,  
they worship and work for the Lord  
according to God's way.**

**Let God's word about  
this New relationship available  
through Jesus blood take your hand and  
lead you into His family.**



**You, too, will find forgiveness of sin,  
peace of heart, communion with God  
and the promise of eternal life.**

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