

30. The Christian Faith was Darkened before the Reformation.

For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people. Is. 60,2.

Dark, indeed, were the Middle Ages. People were taught that the Pope was a divinely appointed and infallible interpreter of Holy Scripture and that the Bible in the language and hands of the people was dangerous. Then, in place of the Word of God, the Pope at Rome set up his own word and authority as the only true light and demanded unconditional obedience of every soul in Christendom under pain of excommunication, even death. The people were kept in darkness. In this darkness many evils crept into the Christian Church and corrupted it. In this darkness the people could be led to believe many strange and unscriptural doctrines and traditions. Not having the light of the Bible, seekers for the truth searched in vain for salvation and peace for their troubled souls.

Ignorance and corruption held sway, and there was scarcely anything left of the Christian faith but the name. What at one time had been Christianity became little more than baptized heathenism. Masses, penances, and confessionals took the place of Christ and His righteousness. Darkness of night had set in. Superstition and vice raised their uncouth forms. The great apostasy, foretold by St. Paul, came, and the man of sin and the child of perdition, the abomination of desolation, foretold by Daniel, Christ, and the apostles, materialized in the Papacy of Rome. And the Pope's servants, the bishops and priests, were like their master.

Many sighed for the light and liberty of the Gospel. Earnest men of God worked and prayed and laid down their lives as martyrs for the truth — all apparently in vain, as the power of darkness crushed them. But when the Church seemed utterly undone, when attempted reformations by church councils and others had failed, God heard the prayer of the oppressed and made Mount Zion rejoice.

Prayer.

O merciful God and Father in heaven, look down from heaven upon the distress of so many people. Let the light of the Gospel rise unto those who as yet are far from Christ, the Fountain of salvation, and are still groping in the dense darkness of idolatry. Give unto us shepherds who do not rule harshly and severely over the sheep nor devour their substance, but who minister unto the weak in the spirit of love and gentleness, who comfort the sick, bring back the erring, seek the lost, and whose lives are as living examples for the flock. Amen.

The glorious light was lost from sight
When Pope and priests came riding
The souls for pelf and praise of self,
In God's truth not abiding,
But led the flock to fields of rock,
To works and worship hollow,
While sin and shame, in virtue's name,
In darkness' wake did follow.

This devotion is one of 318 taken from *Daily Bread* by F. E. Pasche, published by CPH in 1926, but now in the public domain. They have been copied and reformatted by Rev. Bruce G. Ley and made available for distribution by pastors and missionaries.

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