

On the Eve of the Reformation

The Catholic Church in the beginning of the sixteenth century was shot through with problems from top to bottom. Local clergy were often uneducated and had concubines; bishops were generally uninterested in reform and were involved in simony, plural offices, and did not live in their dioceses; the papal curia was riddled with corruption as well. A few reform movements started, but they dealt with cleaning up obvious abuses without asking about the underlying causes of the problems.

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I. The Need for Reform

A. The Local Clergy

1. The Black Death

2. Lack of Education

3. Concubinage

B. The Episcopate

1. Oversight of Local Clergy

2. Simony

3. Plurality of Office

4. Non-residence

C. The Papacy

1. The Borgias

2. Leo X Medici

3. The Curia

D. The Religious Orders

II. Early Reform Programs

A. Episcopal Reformers

B. Desiderius Erasmus
1. Humanist Reformer

2. Education

3. Model of Early Church

4. Goal: Clean up abuses

5. Very nearly successful