

Whenever the Bible and its teaching of salvation through the grace of Christ alone cease to be primary in the church's life and central in the church's witness, reformation is needed. Reform is like putting a plaster over a sore. Only reformation can affect the root of the problem.

REFORMATION OR REFORM

Most discussions of the Reformation begin by pointing out the great need of reform in the church of the early sixteenth century.

As the church had become wealthy many of its leaders had lapsed into luxury and laziness. It has been asserted that at this time as much as one-third of the real estate of Europe belonged to the church. Groups and organizations that were theoretically devoted to poverty often took the position that the vow applied only to ownership of property by an individual, and insisted that the particular Order as a whole could own a great amount of property. In many cases the members of such an Order were found to be enjoying a life of idleness and corruption, despite their reputed vow of poverty.

A particularly widespread abuse was what is known as simony--the sale of church offices. It is said that Pope Leo X made over a million dollars annually from the sale of more than 2000 offices, most of which involved no actual service at all.

Other common abuses were pluralism and absenteeism. At the close of the fifteenth century Dr. Robert Sherborne, who was Dean of St. Paul's, was at the same time rector of Alresford, Master of St. Cross, Master of Holy Trinity Hospital, Kingsthorpe, and Archdeacon of Bucks, Hunts, and Taunton. A little later Richard Pace was Dean of St. Paul's, Salisbury, and Exeter, and Archdeacon of Dorset, besides holding four prebends, two rectories, and two vicarages, all at one and the same time. Cardinal Wolsey, at the time of his fall in 1530, was Archbishop of York, Bishop of Winchester, and Abbot of St. Albans, as well as being Lord Chancellor. In addition to these English preferments Wolsey received from the king of France an