



Keepers of the Keys of Heaven: A History of the Papacy

Roger Collins

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One of the most enduring and influential of all human institutions, the papacy has also been amongst the most controversial. No one who seeks to make sense of modern issues within Christendom—or, indeed, world history—can neglect the vital shaping role of the popes. In *Keepers of the Keys of Heaven*, eminent religion scholar Roger Collins offers a masterful account of the entire arc of papal history—from the separation of the Greek and Latin churches to the contemporary controversies that threaten the unity of the one billion-strong worldwide Catholic community. A definitive and accessible guide to what is arguably the world's most vaunted office, *Keepers of the Keys of Heaven* is essential reading for anyone interested in the role of faith in the shaping of our world.

Keepers of the Keys of Heaven: A History of the Papacy Details

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From Reader Review Keepers of the Keys of Heaven: A History of the Papacy for online ebook

Carrie says

not able to finish, i was disappointed in the dry writing.

Jonele says

This was an extremely detailed, balanced historical look at the papacy, from Peter to the beginning of Pope Benedict's leadership. I was especially impressed by the fact that the author did not give a biased account of any pope, but left the reader to decide the efficacy or stewardship of each. Excellently written.

amanda eve says

SO DRY. There's a lot to cover, obviously, so it is very dense -- which would be fine, but Collins manages to make something as gruesome and outlandish as the Corpse Synod read like a grocery list.

Curmudgeon66 says

I found this an informative overview of 2000 years in 600 pages, so obviously some popes get a lot more ink than others. And surely some deserve a lot more, while some could do with very much less.

I suspect that anyone who reads this or is interested in the papacy, will bring their own preconceptions of the papacy to the reading. I certainly did. As a convert to the Catholic Church from a Lutheran tradition, I'm sure I still have some left over views of Medieval and Renaissance popes.

This book only served to heighten my long held views, that some of the popes of those times were far more political than religious in their outlook and actions.

But overall I learned much, even if it was that there was far more politics involved in the Church's history than I, as a modern person with hindsight, wish there had been. The net result is that I have a better understanding of the modern church and its leadership, as I look at this overview of 2000 years.

I would recommend this to only those who are "history buffs" as there is a great deal of political history of Italy, and the rest of Europe. If you are looking for a religious history of the church, or doctrinal history, then look else where; while the author mentions some articles of faith and doctrine, this is not the place to learn about those.

Steve says

Excellent books and it really does focus on the institution of the Papacy, not just the characters of the individual Bishops of Rome. My reading of it was broken up by travel so it took longer to finish than it should have. Very well written with much good information and analysis.

Brian Merlo says

Terrific refresher on all the papal epochs and watershed moments.

Doreen Petersen says

Not a bad book but there are some discrepancies with the Catholic faith I have issues with.

John says

A dizzying, but fair, history of the papacy. The author tried to cover about 100 years per chapter. In the 11th-13th centuries, each chapter was chock full of Popes and controversies and was sometimes hard to keep going. I finally understood (I think) the Investiture Controversy and the suppression of the Jesuits, and the book contained many amusing anecdotes; for example, the tradition of looting the possessions of the newly-elected Pope.

Nathan says

Thought it would be a bit more informative, especially about the times right after the death of Christ and the apostles but found it to be quite vague. However, I understand the intent of the author and purpose of the book and therefore give it a higher rating. I must say I don't particularly like the title of the book as I fundamentally believe all authority was lost and not passed down as the Catholic Church believes. Other than that it is a very well researched and well written book!

Joshua says

Informative and long

Kiri says

This was a very good overview of the papacy; however it reads like a textbook so it is a bit weighty to get

through. It also assumes that you have a thorough foundation in European History from about 300 AD through the 20th century. As such, it can be difficult to follow at times and I found myself having to resort to Wikipedia often to gain a better understanding of the discussion. It also includes a thorough chronological listing of all the popes and anti-popes and the selected bibliography is very well sourced.

David Alonso vargas says

Un gran repaso de la historia de una de las instituciones más longevas y polémicas de Occidente

Rindis says

Roger Collins is a name I've known for many years through his Early Medieval Europe 300–1000, so when I realized that a book I was considering getting was by him, it became an instant first choice.

Covering nearly 2000 years of history in about 500 pages, even if restricted to a single institution (the papacy), is no mean feat, but Collins does it quite well here. There are places where names and titles go by at a dizzying pace, but mostly he picks an issue or a pope, and does a subchapter on it. This breaks the narrative into a large number of discrete chunks that mostly read very cleanly.

He actually starts in 1942, with an excavation under St. Peter's which eventually turned up what was later announced as the bones of St. Peter himself. Collins points out a number of unresolvable uncertainties about the claim, and moves on to how this claim ties into the Papacy's view of itself. The book is well done and informative, for me especially in the period from 1790 to 1850, where the papacy went through its toughest struggle, losing all of its temporal power, only to gain new respect in the spiritual field.

Collins maintains a good even tone throughout, treating the subject evenhandedly, and sceptically (when needed), showing how various policies were (and weren't) reactions to the times. His final thoughts on the papacy are, "The papacy in the twentieth century was more defensive on its impregnable rock than at almost any other time in its past, and more disturbed by changes in human society and in thought than at any previous period, at least since the Reformation. The latter remains the great turning point in its history. Recent decades have, on the other hand, put the person of the pope at the forefront of the Catholic sense of identity to an unparalleled degree, and focused popular piety upon it. At the same time there have been losses, both of vocations and of faith, more in some parts of the world than others, as expectations of change, reform and leadership have been disappointed. The papacy may need to adapt to the changing circumstances and demands of the new millennium, but if its history suggests anything, this will be done slowly, reluctantly and with a firm denial that anything of the kind is happening."
