



The Oxford Dictionary of Popes

J. N. D. Kelly

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This biographical dictionary is an unrivalled source of information about the astonishing succession of churchmen who have loomed large on the world scene for almost 2,000 years.

The Dictionary contains concise accounts not only of all the officially recognized popes from St. Peter to John Paul II, but also of all their irregularly elected rivals, the so-called antipopes; it also has an appendix recording the once generally credited but long discarded, tradition that at some date in the ninth, tenth, or eleventh century there was a femal pope called Joan. Each pope and antipope is assigned an entry which covers, except where (as in the early centuries) no information is available, his family and social background and pre-papal career as well as his activities in office, and each entry has its separate select bibliography, usually including references to the primary source for the pope's life and his official acts.

The popes have been deliberately arranged in chronological rather than alphabetical order so that each can be studied in his own historical context. The arrangement also means that the book is in effect a continuous history of the papacy. Based on careful research, but eminently readable, it provides revealing vignettes of the extraordinary variety of men who have claimed to be successors of St. Peter, and their varying involvement on great power politics, personal or family aggrandizement, theological controversy, or spiritual leadership. It also presents a graphic and moving picture of the fluctuating fortunes of the Christian church centered in Rome, sometimes submerged by secular forces, but at other times, under popes of determination and vision, staging a spectacular revival and confronting the world (as today) with a daunting challenge.

About the Author:

J.N.D. Kelly is formerly principal of St. Edmund Hall, Oxford.

Features:

A matchless resource on the history of the Papacy

- Chronologically arranged and fully indexed
- Filled with compelling vignettes and portraits

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