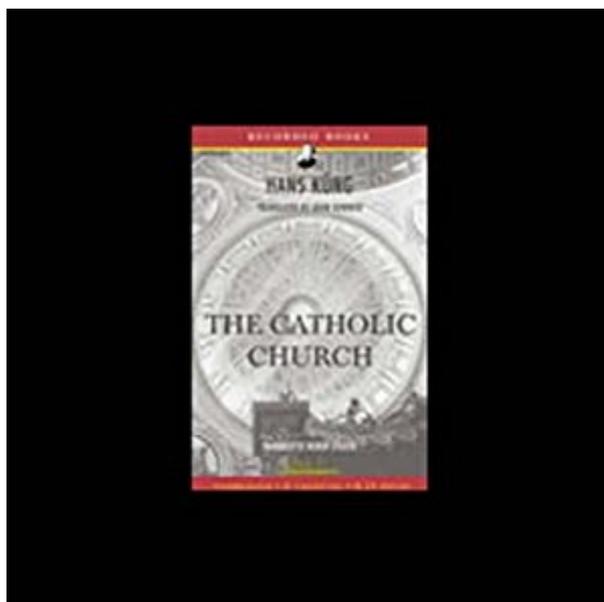


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The Catholic Church [Modern Library Chronicles]



Synopsis

Hans Kung describes the history of the Roman Catholic Church from its origins in St Paul's Rome, through the disputes of the medieval era to the modern world. He examines the historic tension in the Church between pluralism and exclusivity; how the role of the Pope has changed; the motivations of the great reforming pontiffs; the evolving functions of the bishops and cardinals; the church's enthusiasm for missionary activity; the origins of the Marian cult; and how the shock waves of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation can still be felt today. The book concludes with a searching assessment of how the Catholic faith confronts the immense challenges - from science, from the empowerment of women, from those seeking reform of the Church's strictures against abortion and contraception - in the new millennium. 'The sweep is vast and the tale told with pace and passion' Financial Times --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When I purchased Hans Kueng's concise history of the Catholic Church, I was skeptical about whether 2000 years of history could be reasonably compressed into a volume as short as this. Yet as a Protestant from a family with a long Catholic heritage, I was eager to try it, and I do not for a moment regret reading this pithy, informative gem. Kueng really does trace Catholic history from the time of Christ--exploring what the church actually constituted in the early days of Christianity, how the church and its governing structure including the Papacy evolved, why the great schism between Eastern and Western Catholicism occurred, the historical frauds perpetrated by some medieval Popes in their efforts to consolidate power, the merits of the case of the Reformation leaders like

Luther and Calvin, and the emergence of the modern absolutist Papacy from the time of Pius IX onward, and the brief moment of reform centered in Vatican II. Predictably, Kueng presents a rather biased history, especially when reviewing recent times. (He almost categorically rules out the possibility that John Paul II has had ANY positive influence, which I find hard to accept.) But that notwithstanding, I cannot see that anyone but the most conservative Catholics would find this book anything but enlightening and worth the time spent in reading it. If this is what the Modern Library intends to do with its new Chronicles series, it should be a real boon to those who want serious history in reasonably small doses.

This is not a bad book, its just the wrong book for the purpose. When I read a "Modern Library Chronicles" book I am expecting a good introduction to a subject by an accomplished author. I think the editors picked the wrong person to write this book. Kung simply has too much baggage and personal feelings about the Catholic church. This is not so much a history of the Catholic Church, but Hans Kung's criticisms of the history of the Catholic Church. I am a Protestant, so I don't necessarily disagree with many of Kung's criticisms, but I just wanted a history, not Kung's constant criticisms of Catholic history. He could have included a lot more history into the 200 pages if he spent less time telling us how the Catholic Church would be perfect if it just listened to him. Again, its not a bad book (Kung has been a very important theologian in the 20th century and his criticisms of the Catholic Church should be read), its just not the right book for the series.

Brilliant, forceful, authoritative - what else would you expect from Hans Kung? However, this book is not so much a history of the Catholic Church as it is an anti papal polemic. Kung glosses over or ignores much of church history while he develops his major theme, the rise of the papacy and its corrosive influence on the Church. For those who actually want to read a short history of the Catholic Church (short being a relative term when dealing with a 2000 year old institution) I recommend the following: Concise History of the Catholic Church by Thomas S. Bokenkotter. Available from this site. For those who are interested in the rise of the papacy, Kung's book is a must read.

This short book provides a very readable and helpful overview of the history of the Catholic Church, and particularly the Papacy, from the Apostle Peter to the current Pope, John Paul II. As a Protestant without a lot of background in Catholic history, I thoroughly enjoyed the book and learned a lot from it. But as other reviews have noted, it is hardly an unbiased account. It presents the very unflattering story of a power-hungry papacy that has decreed itself infallible out of whole cloth,

discriminates horribly against women, insists against all reason and Biblical authority on the celibacy of the clergy, and is simply hopelessly mired in the Middle Ages. Because I lean liberal, I found myself agreeing with Kung at every turn. But I have the distinct feeling that I've heard only one side of the story--that there must be another more devout and wholesome side to the story of the Catholic Church that Kung did not see fit to dwell upon. I'd like to know the rest of the story.

While I agree with the first comment that this isn't exactly a "history" of the Roman Catholic church, I would like to see the conservative Roman Catholics simply refute his claims instead of just saying their "wrong" or "lies." *An example of this (as a historian myself) would be to look at what we know of Jesus of Nazareth and look at the 1st century church of ACTS, and compare it with many of Roman Catholic teachings. Sadly, I have found that most Roman Catholics (even Christians as a whole), simply do not know the Scriptures or what they say. They simply look to traditions/the church culture and accept it as fact. Instead of attempting to explain all of the Papal and church atrocities through the centuries, or how one can become a saint and then we can pray to them to "carry" our prayers, or by a priest earning his way to be able to "forgive" us of our sins on behalf of God, they simply ignore the questions. Looking back on church history we see the Papacy confirm that the Roman Catholic church is above Scripture; if one accepts this, then they can easily accept anything the church says. This is called Church-ianity and should not be confused with Christ-ianity. While I have no problems with someone claiming to follow church-ianity, it should not be confused with Christ-ianity as the two are night and day different.--My advice is to simply read the Scriptures for yourself with a exegesis/herenutical mindset in mind, and ask yourselves if this book is that wrong? *If it is, then it should be easy enough to refute its points. Not a bad book; worth reading. (IntelligentWonders dot com)

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