

The University of Oxford: a history

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Deskripsi Lengkap: <https://lib.ui.ac.id/detail?id=20470150&lokasi=lokal>

Abstrak

The book is a history of the University of Oxford from its beginnings in the late eleventh century until the present. Emphasis is placed on the fact that Oxford's history has been one of discontinuity as much as continuity by the division of the book into four parts. Part I, The Catholic University, explores Oxford in the centuries before the Reformation when it was principally a clerical studium serving the western church. Part II, The Anglican University, covers 1534 to 1845, when Oxford was confessionally closed, trained the next generation of Church of England ministers, and acted as a finishing school for sons of the well-to-do. Part III, The Imperial University, traces the emergence of a new Oxford over the next hundred years which was still elitist but now non-confessional, open to women as well as men, took students from all round the Empire, and was held together at least until 1914 by a novel concept of Christian service. Part IV, The World University, takes the story from 1945 to the present, and charts Oxford's development as a modern meritocratic and secular university with a commitment to high-quality academic research. Throughout the book, Oxford's history is placed in the wider context of the history of higher education in Britain, Europe, and the world. This shows how singular the University has been in many regards for most of its history, and how it has had to negotiate creatively with outside forces, especially the state, to be master of its own destiny.