
When British writer Samuel Johnson wrote, “No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail; for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned,” he left out other characteristics of life at sea so horrible as to make drowning an attractive alternative. Kevin Brown fills the gap in an extremely well researched examination of how sailors were kept healthy at sea. Brown’s expertise is reflected in previous works on the discovery of penicillin and the history of syphilis. In *Poxed and Scurvyed*, he offers a vivid and detailed explanation of the centuries-old problem of sickness at sea and attempts to diagnose and overcome the maladies common to sailors.

Although exploration may have been instrumental to colonization, Brown points out that shipboard conditions during the age of sail could derail any country’s imperial designs. Squalid living conditions, crowded decks, poor food, and harsh weather rendered ships floating Petri dishes for pathogens. Advances in sails, hulls, and navigation pushed ships even further out to sea, increasing the likelihood of sickness as well as the prospect of exchanging diseases with natives in the New World. Consequently, ships became more than tools of empire. They also became an avenue for invasion of the plague, cholera, and syphilis to European ports.

As ships could not sail without sailors, nations with maritime aspirations recognized the importance of keeping sailors healthy. So the ship’s surgeon became central to health at sea. Though ignorant of the causes of infectious diseases, surgeons nevertheless made significant strides in improving living conditions, developing clinical trials to identify the cause of scurvy, and helping to establish shore-based hospitals for sailors. War provided an additional catalyst for improving the health of sailors. The Anglo-Dutch Wars raised the specter of dealing with mass casualties at sea, leading to the foundation of the English system of naval medicine. Even Horatio Nelson’s own injuries keenly informed his concern for hygiene and health, which was lacking in his French and Spanish adversaries.

Brown extends his research to include the plight of emigrants and slaves. Both groups suffered on sea voyages. Surgeons were charged with keeping human cargoes alive in horrifying conditions, often to the neglect of the crews of the slave ships. Although free, huddled masses looking for opportunity abroad fared only slightly better. The lack of food, contaminated water, and inadequate means of disposing of human waste made ships breeding grounds for cholera and typhus.
By the late nineteenth century, technology had improved conditions to the
point that traveling at sea became increasingly seen as a healthy experience for
the affluent, while improved means of preserving food, water distillation, and the
adoption of standard uniforms improved regular sailors' living conditions. The
sea would remain a dangerous place, as survivors of the Titanic and Andrea Doria
would attest. But Brown's exceptional work illustrates that most of the maladies
that existed during Samuel Johnson's time were by the twentieth century recog-
nized and treatable.

US Naval Academy

Craig C. Felker

Ten Popes Who Shook the World. By Eamon Duffy. (New Haven, CT: Yale University
Press, 2011. Pp. 151. $25.00.)

The history of the papacy often attracts those whose historical acumen is sec-
dary to their ideological agenda. It is refreshing to see a book that combines
scholarly integrity with faith and a conviction that these ten men were, indeed,
among the shepherds that Christ appointed to feed his sheep, without either
idealization or condemnation. To write a history of the papacy in under 150 pages
is a courageous act. Eamon Duffy's Ten Popes who Shook the World originated as
a series of lectures given for the BBC Radio in 2007. When making a selection as
rigorous as this one (ten pontiffs from a list of over 260), one is prone to encounter
critics who maintain that this or that pope should have been included.

Yet, with this selection, Duffy highlights not only those popes who stood out
for their personal achievement but also those whose pontificate represents a
period of significant development in the history of the Catholic Church. The list
includes Saint Peter, Leo the Great, Gregory the Great, Gregory VII, Innocent III,
Paul II, Pius IX, Pius XII, John XXIII, and John Paul II. Duffy succeeds in
capturing the importance of each pope in resounding one-liners: Leo the Great
"invented the papacy as we know it," and Gregory the Great is the aristocratic
Roman monk who "unwittingly invented Europe" (47, 57). Under the aegis of
Gregory VII, an "overbearing autocratic pope, human freedom took one small,
uncertain step forward," and Innocent III, in his meeting with Francis of Assisi,
"was no saint, but he knew a saint when he met one," and "just for once, absolute
power had been wielded to make room for visionaries" (69, 79).

Duffy treats these men as neither saints nor sinners but more often, paradoxi-
cally, as both at the same time. Pius IX, for example, was a truly likeable man,
devour, humble, and uncomplicated; yet, by the end of his pontificate, the papacy
wielded more authority than ever before. He started out as a modernizer of the