Despite a long history of external threats and internal strife, the Roman Catholic Church remains a vast and influential presence in our modern world. But what were its origins, and how has it changed over the centuries? Catholicism: A Very Short Introduction covers the history of the Catholic Church and considers some of the key issues facing Catholicism today, such as the recent clerical abuse scandals and the impact of the growth of Islam. It also shows how Catholics are being increasingly challenged by tensions between their traditional Christian values and rights endorsed by the secular world, and considers the future for the largest and oldest institution in the world.