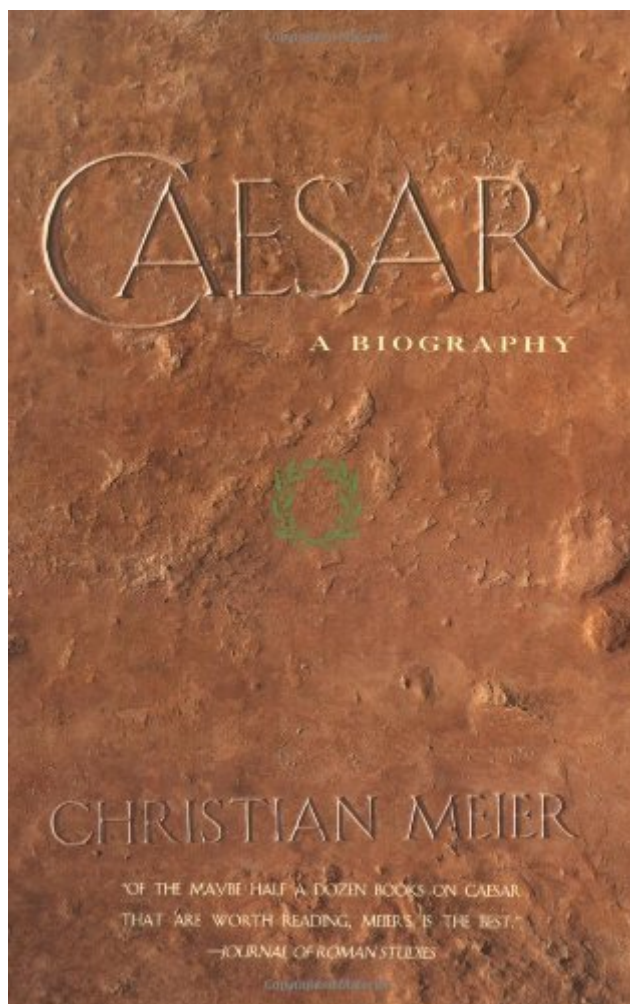


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Caesar: A Biography



Synopsis

As politician and diplomat, writer and lover, but above all as a military genius, Julius Caesar is one of the perennially fascinating figures in history; Boswell called him "the greatest man of any age." Christian Meier's authoritative and accessible biography is the definitive modern account of Caesar's life and career, setting Caesar's life story against the rich political and social background of the Late Roman Republic.

Book Information

File Size: 6591 KB

Print Length: 544 pages

Publisher: Basic Books (March 18, 2008)

Publication Date: March 18, 2008

Language: English

ASIN: B0028QGPYY

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #520,404 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #132

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Italy & Rome

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Customer Reviews

Meier writes a good book with, for the most part, many facts about JC and Rome and that era. However he goes off on these tangents where he wants to prove some points. He declares that JC was an outsider and the republic was bound to fall. Yet he does not bring any proof of these 'facts' to this book. He uses the fact that the republic fell to show that what he said was true. I found this a useless part of the book and skimmed over many paragraphs of his rhetorical questions - Why would Caesar do this? Did he not know? yada yada yada. I love facts. Give me names, dates, places, events. Leave your opinions in separate sections of the book not interwoven in the bio. The main point Meier makes is that JC was an outsider to Rome's politics. While in fact he was the opposite. JC was as close to the inside as any of the others in the senatorial class. Meier fails to

show a typical insider to contrast with this supposed outsider. Cato, Cicero, Pompey were no different than Caesar with respect to any question of a right to be in Rome or in the Senate. Meier also fails to say exactly why he thinks JC is an outsider. Another thing I did not like is the fabricated scenes Meier describes. Here is a bit where he talks of Caesar crossing the Rubicon (page 3 already) "There Caesar halted. He hesitated. Once again, beside the swiftly flowing river swollen by heavy rain, he reviewed the various arguments, then reiterated his decision. For a moment he once again took a detached look at the plan he had already embraced; what he had begun to set in train step by step now appeared to him as an awful vision. All the possible consequences of the enterprise presented themselves in their full horror. Contemplating them, he may have felt dizzy." I think Meier is dizzy.

First and most important- do not read this book if you haven't already read a biography on Caesar. This book skips or glosses over several sections of Caesar's life, mostly Caesar's battles and his time in Britain. To learn about Caesar's life, there are definitely better books out there (I highly recommend Goldsworthy's Caesar: Life of a Colossus). But, if you want to learn about Rome during the time of Caesar, the great personalities of the time, and what potentially made Caesar into the man that is known throughout the entire world today, then I highly recommend this book. This book isn't really a biography about Caesar, it's about the author's theory regarding what made the great personalities of the day and the fall of the Republic. To that end, the author has many sections where the "biography" (as defined by those portions of the book devoted to chronologically relating the events in the republic and Caesar's life) obviously stops and the author steps on his soapbox to discuss his theories. If this tendency annoys you, then I would not suggest reading this book. Meier's primary theory is that Caesar was an outsider to the Roman political institutions which means that he was also an outsider to the Senators themselves. Meier discusses that Caesar became CAESAR due to this outsider status- he was forced to become what he did in order to survive. But, Meier does not let Caesar off that easy. Often, Meier points out where Caesar could have compromised with the Senate, Pompey, and Cato to avoid much of the bloodshed and hardship that his decisions forced upon the world. Meier does a good job of being fairly neutral on Caesar- he honors Caesar's greatness while also recognizing the horror that befell hundreds of thousands due to his decisions.

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