

Caesar by Adrian Goldsworthy
Weidenfeld and Nicolson 2006.

Julius Caesar has an unparalleled aura, raising him head and shoulders above all other leaders of ancient Rome, both Republican and Imperial. He was a brilliant soldier, an inspired politician, a machinator par excellence, and one who inspired great loyalty and loathing.

It is hardly surprising that, in view of his extraordinary life, Julius Caesar has been the subject of many books. Most recently, Christian Meier's biography and Tom Holland's *Rubicon* portrayed their subject matter with clarity and quality.

Yet it must be said that in many ways Adrian Goldsworthy's newest book surpasses its predecessors, not just in the combination of ultra-readability with a commendable amount of detail, but in the use of contemporary sources to set Caesar in the widest possible cultural and historical context.

The book is divided into three sections, *The Rise to the Consulship, 100-59 BC*, *Proconsul, 58-50 BC*, *Civil War and Dictatorship, 49-44 BC*, and although many of the facts will be well known to amateur or professional students of ancient Roman history, Goldsworthy has a way of recounting them that gives even the most familiar detail a surprising freshness. However, Goldsworthy never succumbs to the temptation to fill in the gaps that exist about Caesar's life with conjecture, and acknowledges that there are areas which are still shrouded in mystery.

Adrian Goldsworthy remarks that his book will not be the last to be written about Julius Caesar, but this reviewer at least thinks it will long be considered to be one of the best.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh