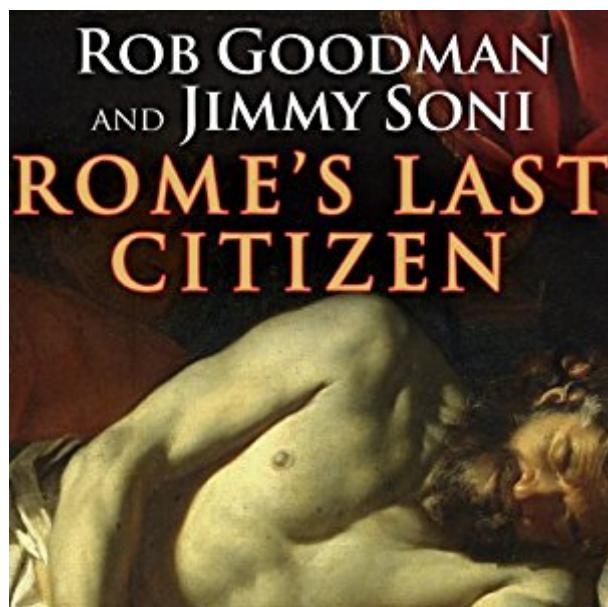


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Rome's Last Citizen: The Life And Legacy Of Cato, Mortal Enemy Of Caesar



Synopsis

Marcus Porcius Cato: aristocrat who walked barefoot and slept on the ground with his troops, political heavyweight who cultivated the image of a Stoic philosopher, a hardnosed defender of tradition who presented himself as a man out of the sacred Roman past-and the last man standing when Rome's Republic fell to tyranny. His blood feud with Caesar began in the chamber of the Senate, played out on the battlefields of a world war, and ended when he took his own life rather than live under a dictator. Centuries of thinkers, writers, and artists have drawn inspiration from Cato's Stoic courage. Saint Augustine and the early Christians were moved and challenged by his example. Dante, in his Divine Comedy, chose Cato to preside over the souls who arrive in Purgatory. George Washington so revered him that he staged a play on Cato's life to revive the spirit of his troops at Valley Forge. Now, in Rome's Last Citizen, Rob Goodman and Jimmy Soni deliver the first modern biography of this stirring figure. Cato's life is a gripping tale that resonates deeply with our own turbulent times. He grappled with terrorists, a debt crisis, endemic political corruption, and a huge gulf between the elites and those they governed. In many ways, Cato was the ultimate man of principle-he even chose suicide rather than be used by Caesar as a political pawn. But Cato was also a political failure: his stubbornness sealed his and Rome's defeat, and his lonely end casts a shadow on the recurring hope that a singular leader can transcend the dirty business of politics. Rome's Last Citizen is a timeless story of an uncompromising man in a time of crisis and his lifelong battle to save the Republic.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Cato the Younger was a pivotal figure in the history of ancient Rome, as well as a Stoic philosopher who is still looked upon as a role model by many. This biography is well written and fairly balanced. The authors refrain from indulging into the usual stereotypes about Stoicism, and get most of the major points about the philosophy right (unlike the author of a recent biography of Marcus Aurelius, for instance). They also provide a critical yet sympathetic portrait of Cato himself, and discuss his influence through the centuries up to modern times. That latter part comes across as a bit incomplete and aphazard, with some noticeable holes throughout here and there, but it still is a welcome addition to the book. Cato himself was a man of high principles, who rarely failed to uphold them. And yet perhaps because of this he ultimately did not succeed in his quest to save the Roman Republic from the tyranny of Julius Caesar (and eventually from its devolution into empire). He just couldn't bring himself to compromise with potential politically allies, and when he did, it was too little too late. One wonders if modern politicians and citizens of 21st century democracies couldn't learn a thing or two from the successes and failures of the ancient Romans, and of Cato in particular. I have published a six-part commentary on this book, entitled The Cato Chronicles, at my blog, howtobeastoic.org.

I was introduced to Cato the Younger earlier this year while reading Plutarch. Few other "heroes" affected me as profoundly as Cato the Younger. Almost immediately upon finishing Plutarch's Cato, I went searching for more material. The two additional sources I ended up purchasing were Joseph Addison's play and Rob Goodman's book. I'm no Cato scholar, so I can't speak to the accuracy or nuances of his history compared with any other historian -- but as far as an extremely insightful and entertaining read, Rob Goodman captured exactly what I was hoping for. Not only did he give me a detailed perspective of Cato's life, he also filled it in with the legacy of Cato down through the ages. I could feel my mind exploding as I uncovered the juicy details that Plutarch only brushed upon -- I wanted more, and here I found it. Cato as the man, Cato as the politician, Cato as the Stoic, Cato as the paragon of virtue, Cato as a real flawed character, Cato in his own time and Cato as we have demonized and idealized him since. Dante asked, "What man on earth was more worthy to signify God than Cato?" I ask: what man on earth was more mythologized over and over again to fit and inform the zeitgeist of the times? While I love the historic Cato with all his flaws and contradictions, I can't help but feel a special affinity to the Cato of the revolutionary war -- the Cato of George Washington. How could this Cato not inspire dedication to Stoic virtue and gentle enlightenment? I found myself, like George Washington wanting to BE this Cato. This Cato, unlike Seneca or

Epictetus, comes with a special weight of actually having lived his Stoic virtues as a politician, inspiring us to this special possibility. Who doesn't love the story of the virtuous standing up to the tyrant -- and though he loses his life actually wins? Cato, Jesus, Socrates, we love them all! For it tells us there is something greater to die for, and something greater to live for. What would the revolution war be if we didn't have this mythologized Cato? Would its possibility still be a possibility? Though a majority of people now days don't even know who Cato was, I can't help but think how we as a people in this post-revolutionary era have both been created in his image and he created in ours. Rob Goodman is not only brilliant in bringing all the pieces of Cato to perspective but brilliant in bringing this superb history to a modern audience in a simple and necessary way. I'm with Seneca on this one -- "Choose Cato" and there is no better way to start than here with Rob Goodman's book.

If you have seen the 6 or so 5 star ratings and beaming reviews for this book, ignore them ignore peoples worries about this not being a good book. This is a good book. If you are a professor or a scholar, or something to that effect, in Roman history no this may not be for you, but for the average person that has heard of Cato the Younger and want to know more about who he is or enjoy learning about early Roman Republic history and its people, this book is both. While it focuses on Cato, it does deal with people and their stories, and how their story interacts with Cato, not just a name. the biography begins with how Catos early life most likely went, being their are no known records of it, and continues on through his life and how his life intersects with the greats of Roman history. My only problem with this great book is the part I would call the epilogue part is 2 chapters and about 30 pages of how his life and death still effects us today, but I still enjoyed the book tremendously.

After what feels like a slightly hesitant start, this great book gets into its stride and provides a magisterial overview of the slide from Republic to Principate seen through the lens of one of the great political and moral figures of the age. Cato, so often depicted as a maddeningly obstinate reactionary, emerges here as a far greater man: brave soldier, wise administrator, forgiving friend and above all astonishingly brave and prescient politician. The fall of the Republic feels throughout like an avoidable disaster, and like the best history books, this one makes you forget that you already know the end. Will the Republic prevail? Of course not. But thanks to Cato, it was a close thing.

Five stars for readability and content. Cato represented the good conservatism and diffused leadership all sustainable and flourishing societies need. A great read for all interested in biography, leadership, and the Roman precursors of the political structures and functions we have, aspire to and sometimes succeed with today.

This book is highly readable, like a David McCullough biography, but more impressive since it convincingly takes you back 2,000 years instead of 200. It excels at relating the political climate of the late Roman Republic with 21st century American politics. And it gives due focus to a fascinating character who is too often just a footnote to Caesar. And to the negative commenters... This book is a modern, popular biography, not an academic history text book, so... relax.

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