



Julius II: The Warrior Pope

Christine Shaw

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Julius II was one of the most remarkable and colourful men ever to sit on the papal throne. His vigour, determination, ambition, passion for action and notorious temper were more suited to the soldier he would probably have preferred to be, than to the ecclesiastical potentate he became under the patronage of his uncle, Pope Sixtus IV. A cardinal for 30 years, "eminence grise" to Innocent VIII, and a declared enemy of the Borgia pope, Alexander VI, long before his own election Julius was already an important figure in the political life of Renaissance Italy. After becoming pope in 1503, he revived the temporal authority of the papacy by his military campaigns, some of which he conducted in person. He was also an outstanding patron of the arts and commissioned major works from Raphael, Michelangelo and Bramante, including the Vatican Stanze and the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Many of his actions, however, compromised the papacy's spiritual authority, attracting the satire of Erasmus (who portrayed Julius arriving with his army at the gates of heaven only to be turned away by St Peter) and contributing to Martin Luther's crisis of conscience. This biography is based on extensive use of archival sources. Shaw's account includes new material about Julius' career as a cardinal, which should give fresh perspectives on his policies as pope. The reports of those who negotiated with him, those who observed him and spied on him, ridiculed him and admired him, are used to depict the vivid, powerful and humorous personality of the "papa terribile" and the impact he made on his times.

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