



Gods and Legions: A Novel of the Roman Empire

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In the year, 354 A.D., Julian, a sheltered scholar and pacifist lives in peace-until a summons from Emperor Constantine the Great changes the young man's life forever. Dispatched to Gaul to help reclaim a beaten Roman territory from German barbarians, Julian displays a surprising and brutal genius for survival against impossible odds. Emerging as an unlikely hero and adored by a legion of zealots, his untapped ambition is ignited-to reign as the new emperor. It's a position of power that'll test the loyalty of his friends, stir the ire of enemies, and cast an ominous shadow over his mad, and most magnificently impossible conquest of all...

From the author of the acclaimed *The Ten Thousand* comes a breathtaking recreation of the historic rise to power of a ruthless yet unlikely leader plunged into the chaos of war-and his shocking fall that would become one of the most fascinating mysteries of the ages. A novel of courage and conviction, of loyalty and betrayal, of personal victory and dark ambition, *Gods and Legions* is epic storytelling at its most riveting.

Gods and Legions: A Novel of the Roman Empire Details

Date : Published September 2003 by St. Martin's Paperbacks (first published November 2002)

ISBN : 9780312989408

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Format : Mass Market Paperback 446 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Roman

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From Reader Review Gods and Legions: A Novel of the Roman Empire for online ebook

StoryTellerShannon says

A take on Emperor Julian, the last Roman emperor who tried to eradicate Christianity as the main religion of the Roman Empire (then situated mostly in Constantinople, now Istanbul).

A lot of it seems to be Historically accurate though there are some areas that are considered to be questionable and the author does take liberties in certain areas where we really do not know, for sure, what happened.

Great battles and ideas, especially in the beginning against the Persian elephants and the Germanic tribes fooling the Romans along the river.

The take on Julian's reasons for having problems with Christianity were done well enough, but, for such a hot topic, they could have spent more time detailing it as we are mostly a Christian country and a superb reason is needed for people to understand why one might want to not make it the main religion.

HISTORICAL FOCUSES: B to B plus; STORY/PLOTTING: B minus; CHARACTERS/DIALOGUE: B minus to B; OVERALL GRADE: B minus to B.

Art says

Poor history, weaker fiction, esp. the 2nd half

This book is rife with problems, most importantly the narrator. Ford admits in his intro that Julian is one of history's most fascinating characters yet saddles Julian and the readers with a vitriolic, unsympathetic narrator which makes much of the book, especially the latter half, an unpleasant read.

Perhaps that was Ford's intention; by making the narrator, his cause and his viewpoint so vile that the reader would naturally feel empathy for Julian and his cause. If that is his intention it doesn't work well as the narrator becomes tedious and the reader is left wondering why Julian bothers keeping him alive, let alone in his presence. The narrator is more than a foil, he is annoying. If Ford's intention was to vilify Julian, and that is possible, he again fell flat because of the weak device of the narrator. He makes the Christian position a caricature. It reads like a shallow polemic from the 19th century.

All the characters ended up being painted with a cartoonist's touch: Christian zealot narrator; a tortured Julian in first half of book, insane Julian in the second half simply because he reverts to the religious beliefs of the majority of his subjects and ancestors. They are stock characters all of them. Maximus especially comes across as a caricature; he is depicted as an evil little dwarf, simply because he opposes the Christian position.

The world Ford creates does not feel like the 4th century, it feels like the 9th or 10th. He does not understand the ancient world-he might have a better go at the Middle Ages in future fiction because this isn't his forte. The Christianity of the 4th century was divided and turbulent and did not have the "Church is eternal" aura of the Middle Ages but that is the canvas Ford paints. Christianity was still a new, novel belief system to most

Romans in East and West. It had only been in power 30 or 40 years and it was not evident to most people of the time whether it would remain in power. One doesn't get that sense from Ford, rather it seems as if Julian has disrupted the longstanding natural order of things, which in fact it was not.

The first half of this book is its real strength and flies along as a real page-turner. While it suffers from many of the problems already mentioned, they are more in the background. The battle scenes are the strongest, most well written parts of the book. They really come to life, as do many of the scenes in Gaul. That first half of the book is what earns this work its two stars rather than one. Overall this is poor history and weaker fiction with some exciting moments in the first half.

Comment

Tom says

I had read Gore Vidal's novel of Roman emperor Julian, and this is a good account for comparison. Ford delivers the goods with descriptions of Roman battles, bizarre feasting rights, and lots of pagan rituals.

MrsER says

This was the first of Mr. Ford's books I read and I found it easy to read, a real pleasure. His style is straightforward and the story flows unencumbered. It was interesting to read his interpretation of the character of this fascinating emperor--between madness and brilliancy, repudiating Christianity and embracing the barbaric rituals of polytheism of his childhood. His depictions of battles are realistic and one gets engulfed into the mellee. Caesarius' role is quite interesting and his participation in the denouement of Julian's drama is quite interesting. It was also refreshing to find his narrative devoid of the things that plague modern writers, the "mainstream" topics that have been forced upon readers, such as the depiction of homosexuality as something normal. (Oh, yes, I expect to be attacked by the Thought Police for that.) I enjoyed his portrayal of Christians not as rabid monsters, but as humans. I highly recommend this book to people who like History and are tired of Christian bashing.

Dora (Swift Coffee Book Blog) says

Full review: <http://swiftcoffee.blog/2018/10/10/go...>

I read this book a bit slower than the first one, and because they're very similar in style, and in a way in the topic, too, I felt I had to read other types of books between the two (as it happens to me all the time). This one was more of a war story than 'The Ten Thousand', but it was also a tale of how a person who's (I can't find a better word) completely normal at the beginning gets crazier and crazier when power has reached him. I mean, psychologically, I'm pretty sure he went insane, and it was thoroughly and enjoyably demonstrated.

I also enjoyed the banters between the Julian and Caesarius regarding religion, it was interesting to see, how everybody thinks that they're beliefs are the truth, and nothing else. It was both scary and raised a smile.

I can't say I liked any of the characters, but that doesn't mean they weren't good ones. I just couldn't particularly associate with any of them. This may be because my thinking is pretty far from ancient roman, and even farther from being religious (which makes a huge part of this book). Taking the historical period

the novel is set in, the characters behaved believably. I thought this strong bigotry started later with Christians, though. Sometime more into the dark Middle Ages...

Those who like ancient roman history will probably like this book very much.

Tom says

A pretty good rendition of the degenerate Roman empire. The novelization follows closely Julian's actual life, so - kids - get over it - yes, the actual life was not all that Hollywood, though it had its moments.

I love the characterization of Emperor Constantius. The other characters are drawn fairly well, and the action pretty good. The conceit of the narrator I thought worked OK, but could have been better.

Roman History buffs will like it, others, maybe not so much.

Richard says

This is technically brilliant historical fiction. Like Ford's earlier novel, *The Ten Thousand*, it was a laborious but ultimately worthwhile read. It is crowded with actual historical figures who are brought to life in vivid detail. The dialogue, much of which is derived from classical sources, rings true. The details of daily life, travel, politics, warfare and religious rituals are also given painstaking attention.

From the point of view of a trusted court physician, this novel narrates the reversion of the Emperor Julian from Christianity to a fervent and fanatical paganism. But in spite of this he emerges as a likeable and serious soul pulled in different ways by opposing forces and finally dominated by a sort of frenzy.

Paulo Goulart says

Muito bem escrito, belas descrições e caracterização dos principais personagens e da vida do império naqueles tempos tão conturbados...

Laurence says

Abandoned. Could not get into the characters or writing style.

Josh Hale says

A great book that puts you in the time when the Roman Empire was divided into the western and eastern empire. Ford chronicles the brief stint of Emperor Julian, the ruler of the western empire while he was constantly watched and suspected by his rival Constantius II, ruler of the eastern empire in Constantinople.

Ford puts us beside Julian as he campaigns against the Franks in western Europe and later against the Sassanid (Persian) Empire in the East. We see how the Caesar of the western empire strives to bring Rome back to her former glory as he tries to reunite the eastern and western parts of the empire, amidst the clashes of the Roman pagan and newly formed Christian sects, conspiracy within the senate, and barbarians threatening Roman peace.

José Carlos says

Novela histórica centrada en la figura del emperador Juliano "El Apóstata" y en las tribulaciones por las que atravesó el Imperio Romano tardío mientras se iba imponiendo el cristianismo como religión dominante. Asistimos al surgimiento inesperado de un líder cuando más lo necesitaba el Imperio para, a medida que avanza el relato, verlo apagarse paulatinamente.

Nathaniel says

Not bad, but doesn't come close to "I, Claudius" by Robert Graves.

Mona Randall says

Wow! An incredible story; great details and descriptions. Highly recommended

Paul Callister says

You are tempted to admire the rise of an unlikely Roman emperor and military general, but in the end you just can't stomach the guy.

Ariana says

I really enjoy reading historical fiction because I get to be entertained and educated at the same time and this book didn't lack in either department. It was a good read and I'm glad I got to learn more about a Roman figure because I really enjoy that historical period yet don't find myself reading in it often. It took me a while to get used to the letter "framing" narrative of the novel, but although I find it unbelievable that letters would've been quite so detailed I got used to it and ignored it for entertainment's sake. Other than that, the characters were all really strong and it was a good ride from the rise to the fall of a Caesar - I just wish we didn't get a glimpse of the end at the start, but it was a nice preview of what was to become of two friends.

The friendship was done really well. I just wish there was more than just religious tension between the two friends, because I got tired of hearing Caesarius prattle on about his beliefs. He was a sympathetic character, but I couldn't quite find his conviction that believable considering what he did at the end (though that scene with Julian asleep and Caesarius reaching for the candlestick was well done). I understood the action at the

end, but for him to do it I felt like there needed to be a bit more reason - especially considering their mutual appreciation for one another.

It always makes me wonder what is historically accurate and what is filled in in a historical fiction, which is another reason I like the genre. This book made me want to learn more about the figures in it, and I really want to read more in that era, too. The language may have felt a bit "outdated" sounding at times, but I was able to get into the story quick enough and I didn't find it a bore to read through. I think I'll check out other novels by this author soon.
