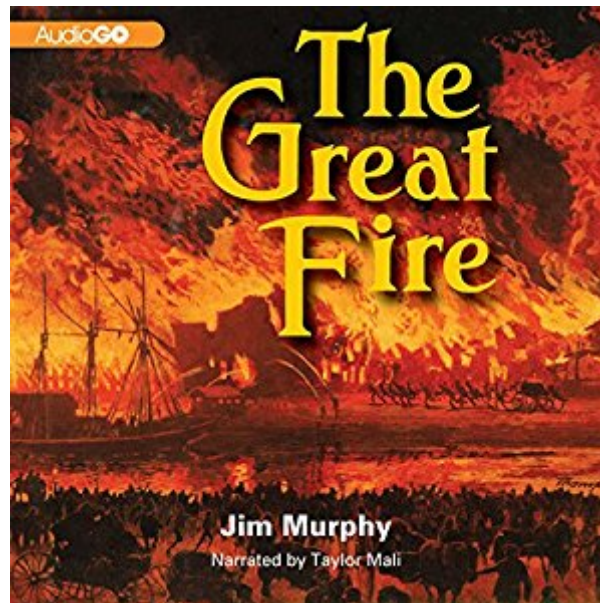




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The Great Fire Of Rome: The Fall Of The Emperor Nero And His City



Synopsis

In A.D. 64, on the night of July 19, a fire began beneath the stands of Rome's great stadium, the Circus Maximus. The fire would spread over the coming days to engulf much of the city of Rome. From this calamity, one of the ancient world's most devastating events, legends grew: that Nero had been responsible for the fire, and fiddled while Rome burned, and that Nero blamed the Christians of Rome, burning them alive in punishment, making them the first recorded martyrs to the Christian faith at Rome. The Great Fire of Rome opens at the beginning of A.D. 64 and follows the events in Rome and nearby as they unfold in the seven months leading up to the great fire. As the year progresses we learn that the infamous young emperor Nero, who was 26 at the time of the fire, is celebrating a decade in power. Yet the palace is far from complacent, and the streets of Rome are simmering with talk of revolt. Dando-Collins introduces the fascinating cavalcade of historical characters who were in Rome during the first seven months of A.D. 64 and played a part in the great drama. Using ancient sources, as well as modern archaeology, Dando-Collins describes the fire itself, and its aftermath, as Nero personally directed relief efforts and reconstruction. The Great Fire of Rome is an unforgettable human drama which brings ancient Rome and the momentous events of A.D. 64 to scorching life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Dando-Collins is always an amusing read. He tells an entertaining story and I have occasionally recommended his books for airplane reading. That said, of all of D-C's works, The Great Fire Of Rome has some of the worst, most dishonest citation I have ever seen. Using his depiction of Nero's last words is a small, nitpicking example: "Too late!" Nero gasped, looking up at the centurion

with bulging eyes. "Is this your duty?" he asked. [11]This doesn't sound right to me, so let us take a look at [11] and see where Dando-Collins got this quotation. Notes 8-11 are sourced as Suetonius 6.47. Okay, let's find what translation D-C has used. Hmm. The Bibliography doesn't even list Suetonius' *The Twelve Caesars*, in my copy. That seems like an impossible mistake. I suppose we could blame the editor. Fine, we will check his quotation against both Robert Graves (Penguin Classics), J. C. Rolfe (Loeb Classical Library) and, heck, we'll even check it against the Latin. Graves translates the final lines: Nero muttered, 'Too late! But, ah, what fidelity!' Rolfe's translation is: He was all but dead when a centurion rushed in, and as he placed a cloak to the wound, pretending that he had come to aid him, Nero merely gasped: "Too late!" and "This is fidelity!" The Latin: "Sero," et: "Haec est fides." Even for a beginner in Latin, this phrase is simple and its meaning clear - and the translations both get it right - Nero is speaking of the Centurion's futile attempt to save his life as fidelity, he is mistaken that this is a demonstration of loyalty. He is contrasting this "fidelity" against the "infidelity" of the Guardsmen, bodyguards, and everyone else that has recently abandoned him. What he isn't doing, is asking the Centurion any rhetorical questions about duty or purpose. D-C removes Suetonius' final example of Nero's confusion and replaces it with perception. There are a plethora of quotes that D-C provides citation for that the source cited doesn't feature at all. As with the example I've provided, if the quote is even "sort of" there, D-C often reverses its meaning or takes it completely out of context. This is unacceptable. Ironically, several of the "positive" editorial reviews that are quoted in 's product description of the book, are taken completely out of context, too. For example: Bookviews.com, October 2010 "Heavily researched" What the review by Alan Caruba, a blogger on science with casual interest in history, actually says, is: It is not that the book isn't heavily researched. It is that every single bit of research finds its way into what would otherwise be expected to be a fairly riveting story of a major historical event. The result is a story bogged down in minutia. Dishonesty aside, if D-C's books were in the historical fiction or alternate history category, where they belong, I would gladly rate most of his books four and five stars. But I cannot get behind a "history book" that has worse scholarship than Wikipedia. I highly recommend anyone interested in The Great Fire and Nero's reign to read the contemporaries, keeping in mind that they are uniformly hostile (whereas D-C seems to think he's a decent guy).
• *The Twelve Caesars* (Penguin Classics) by Suetonius is a sensational, gossip-filled biography that discusses the fire and is all we have on Nero's death (Tacitus' version is lost to us).
• *Annals* (Penguin Classics) by Tacitus gives a more fair and reserved biography, and slightly different view of the fire and Nero's response. On the city of Rome, and the ease with which an accidental fire could (and on occasion did) consume it completely, see
• *The Ancient Roman City*

(Ancient Society and History) by Stambaugh.

some speculation not really supported but over all an excellent picture of Rome at the time of Nero and a more sympathetic view of this teen who ruled the most powerful nation in the world.

This is another superb book by Stephen Dando-Collins. I have enjoyed his series on famous Roman legions, and was anxious to read this when I saw that it was available. It did not disappoint. His narrative is based on ancient sources and speculation is well-controlled and useful. Dando-Collins is a fine stylist and a serious researcher. His portrait of Nero is the most well-balanced that I have tread in years. I strongly recommend this book.

This book has almost 0 to do with the great fire of Rome. 2 chapters give or take a few fleeting mentions. The rest was OK but not exactly the subject I was looking for.

Once again this author trumps himself with each book. Very informative and actually gives you a better idea on the rule of Nero.

Stephen Collins does it again. Another great book from his line. Lots of detail and keeps you wanting more.

This is a pretty good account of the decline and fall of Nero; unfortunately, it is NOT really about the Great Fire of Rome. I think the fire is covered in only about two chapters before the author moves on to Nero's stunted singing (!) career and the assassination plots against him. One might call this a revisionist biography, as Dando-Collins argues that Nero wasn't that bad a guy, or at least no worse than any of the other Roman emperors. Dando-Collins makes the argument that Nero did NOT persecute Christians after the Great Fire. He believes some chronicler substituted "Christians" for "followers of Isis." I am intrigued by this idea, but I don't like it how Dando-Collins just took his theory and ran with it, treating it as fact for the rest of the book. I don't mean to sound overly critical. I did enjoy the book. I just think there are some aspects of it that are wide open to debate.

When the book arrived - my wife perused it for less than 5 minutes. She then handed the book to me and said, "This author is an apologist for Nero." After reading the introduction she was right. He discredits the most quoted historians of that period and then starts his revisionist dialog. I guess

there is a niche for revisionists in the book world. I doubt that I will read much or any of this book because it is anti-Christian. I don't have the time or interest to try to sort through his biases in search of useful information. I bought this book because I thought it was about the fire of Rome in 64AD - in my view it is mistitled. I was looking for additional background material about this historic event. The author does not recognize the fact that there was a pro Christian eyewitness of that very fire. He also had privy to all of the secret communication of that event. And there is a copy of his view in about every home in America. He informs us...1. Nero was without a doubt the one who set fire to the city of Rome just like Suetonius and Cassius Dio reported.2. Unknown to history is that Nero colluded with some members of the equestrian class of leadership in Rome to burn the city.3. He stated that the fire was the judgment of God on this corrupt city. He says that God put it in their hearts to burn the city.4. Nero did in fact persecute and martyr Christians after the fire. He just gave us the basic information. To me this is irrefutable because it comes from an absolute source.

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