



The Last Pagan: Julian the Apostate and the Death of the Ancient World

Adrian Murdoch

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A history of Julian, the grandson of Constantine, and his failed attempt to reverse the Christian tide that swept the Roman Empire

- Portrays the “Apostate” as a poet-philosopher, arguing that had he survived, Christianity would have been checked in its rise
- Details reforms enacted by Julian during his two-year reign that marginalized Christians, effectively limiting their role in the social and political life of the Empire
- Shows how after Julian’s death the Church used paganism to represent evil and opposition to God, a tactic whose traces still linger

The violent death of the emperor Julian (Flavius Claudius Julianus, AD 332-363) on a Persian battlefield has become synonymous with the death of paganism. Vilified throughout history as the “Apostate,” the young philosopher-warrior was the last and arguably the most potent threat to Christianity.

The Last Pagan examines Julian’s journey from an aristocratic Christian childhood to his initiation into pagan cults and his mission to establish paganism as the dominant faith of the Roman world. Julian’s death, only two years into his reign, initiated a culture-wide suppression by the Church of all things it chose to identify as pagan. Only in recent decades, with the weakening of the Church’s influence and the resurgence of paganism, have the effects of that suppression begun to wane. Drawing upon more than 700 pages of Julian’s original writings, Adrian Murdoch shows that had Julian lived longer our history and our present-day culture would likely be very different.

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