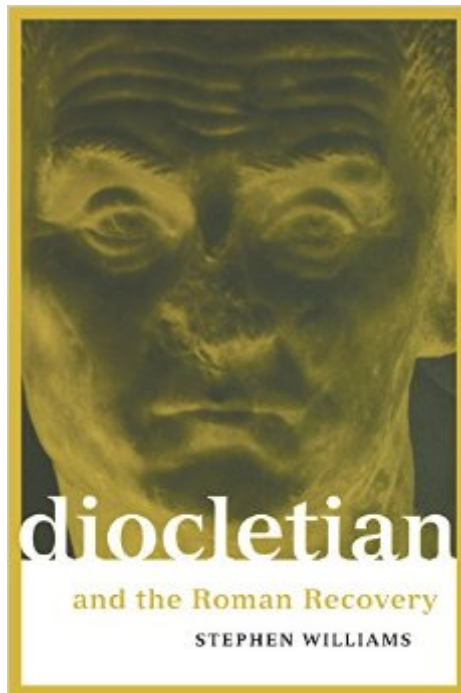


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Diocletian And The Roman Recovery (Roman Imperial Biographies)



Synopsis

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Customer Reviews

The first English language biography on Diocletian and a very well written one at that. Stephen Williams is not a professional Roman historian instead he is a professor of philosophy and therein lays the books strength. Williams writes for the enthusiastic Roman buff and the general reader. Instead of quoting ancient historians ad nauseum and going off on tangents he gets to the meat of the matter. How Diocletian and his fellow emperors were able to pull the empire back from total collapse. He gives detailed explanations as to what was occurring in the Empire during the 3rd Century and why. He isn't afraid to offer his own theories where our knowledge of events are sketchy and he always keeps the book moving along at a brisk pace. I especially enjoyed the final chapter where he covers the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century. It's well written with a detailed description of what occurred and why. He also contrast the collapse of the West with the survival of the Eastern Empire. Wonderful book for the layman, student, and perhaps

even the expert.

This is a well-written, fact-filled book that should be considered a must-read to any serious student of the Late Roman Empire. Diocletian has been given scant attention by Classical scholars but his stabilization of the Empire was vital for two reasons: it preserved the entire Empire for nearly 170 years after his retirement and laid the foundations for the Eastern Empire that survived until 1453 c.e. There is also great attention given to Diocletian's separation of himself as Emperor from the Roman Army and Roman politicians. Williams lucidly points out this is the beginning of Western Civilization's "Divine Right of Kings," and the foundation of Medieval kingship. Diocletian established this separation order to secure his personal safety. Diocletian's retirement is also given considerable attention. His retirement palace at Split is discussed in some detail. Also, the attempt of Galerius and Maximian to drag him back into politics, which he completely refused. Finally, the rather sad depiction of him as a marginalized relic who had to ask old army friends for favors in order to help secure temporary safety for his family (who were eventually murdered). This is a great book but its great detail may overwhelm the arm-chair historian. Williams deserves many cudos for his work in bringing about the first English biography of Diocletian in some time.

I read this for my History of the Roman Empire class and found to be an excellent book. Williams has an exceptionally clear writing style that is very easy to follow. He uses both modern and classical sources to bring to life the reign of Diocletian, an Illyrian general who through sheer personality and military discipline was able to restore the old boundaries of the Roman Empire. Williams' explanations of the economic reforms of Diocletian, as well as the restructuring of the old Roman provinces into military diocese that were able to contain the unromanized barbarians is the best explanation of these events I've read. I checked this book out from the library and I'm still considering buying a copy, I enjoyed it so much. If only all history books were this well written!

I enjoyed this book. I came away from it with a radically new appreciation of Diocletian's contributions to preserving the Roman empire. The structural reforms set in motion by this soldier emperor laid the foundations not only for an empire that continued until the fall of Constantinople, but for a church whose triumph absolutely depended on them. The book left me wondering who the brains behind these important constitutional, governmental, economic and military reforms were. Obviously Diocletian must be credited with approving these innovations, and for seeing them solidly put in place. However, I doubt if the emperor, busy with beating back enemies on all frontiers, is

solely responsible for such complex and far reaching reforms. Matthews ignores this aspect of Diocletian's reforms. I was turned off by the author's seeming flights of fancy regarding the inmost thoughts and motives of his hero. Matthews would have served this reviewer better by keeping to the facts and by extrapolating from them without excessive creativity. This book is well written and researched. It is not an academic exercise, but a stimulating analysis of a man maligned by christians ever since, but to whom they owe the earthly glory of their church.

I bought this book as an afterthought. I ordered the book on Septimius Severus, and something prompted me to get this one too. I must say, after trying to grind through the book on Severus, I picked this one up and flew right through it. It is well written, and easy to follow. It explains many questions I had about the later days of the Empire. I have since given it to my well read mother, and she enjoyed it as well. If you want to understand Constantine, and the start of the Roman Catholic Church, you must read about Diocletian. Diocletian was an amazing man. He was able to stabilize the Empire under the utmost strain. He really shouldn't have been successful, but through force of character, he was. He reminded me of George C. Marshall of all people. Strong, solid, wise and very well respected by all around him. A man so serious and mature, that all those around him stopped and listened. Only such a man could have done what he did. It also explains the persecution of Christians under his watch. A dark side of his rule. A very enjoyable book.

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