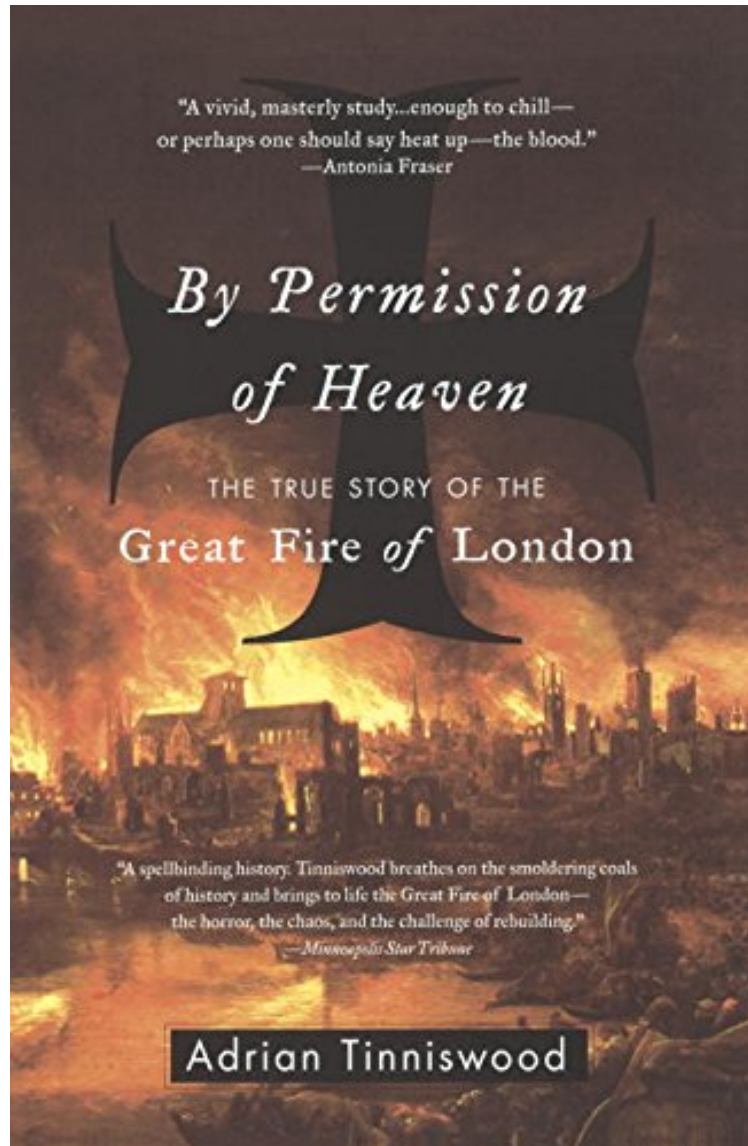


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By Permission of Heaven: The True Story of the Great Fire of London

Adrian Tinniswood

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Adrian Tinniswood's magnificent account of the Great Fire of London explores the history of a cataclysm and its consequences. A dynamic recounting of the horror that gripped London in 1666 after a small baker's fire erupted and spread, destroying 13,200 homes, 93 churches, St. Paul's Cathedral, and every administrative building in the capital. Looting, savage violence, panic, and chaos reigned, but what happened in the fire's wake was even more extraordinary.

From Publishers Weekly In this history of the 1666 fire that destroyed almost the entire city of London, Tinniswood focuses on the political, legal and cultural significance of the catastrophe. He describes the blaze through the written accounts of both London's commoners and upper crust during the three-day blaze. These excerpts from journals and newspapers aren't quite able to place the reader in the shoes of Londoners while they ran for their lives or watched all their worldly possessions get swallowed by the fire; Tinniswood's greatest achievement is his ability to re-create the wave of paranoia that engulfed London before, during and after the tragedy. Though he never compares the rumors that the fire was part of a papal plot against the king or the handiwork of Dutch arsonists to today's terrorist fears, the similarities should help keep readers interested while pushing through this meticulous collection of historical references. An architectural scholar, Tinniswood saves his best for last, outlining the myriad factors that went into creating the landscape of modern-day London, including bureaucratic decision making and the emergence of architect Christopher Wren, about whom Tinniswood wrote in *His Invention So Fertile*. Illus., maps. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist In 1666, a fire started in a London bakery, and the mayor deemed it to be so minor that even a woman could put it out with minimal exertion. The fire raged for almost a week, devastating much of London, displacing tens of thousands of citizens, and causing immeasurable financial and historical loss. Tinniswood details the start of the fire and its advance throughout the city, highlighting the shocking fact that little effort was made to control it. Much of the book is devoted to the aftermath of the fire, its impact, and the ensuing discussions. Back then, as now, people loved a good conspiracy theory, and Tinniswood relates no small number of them in his account of the fire. Others saw the hand of divine retribution: it was a warning for the king, or the Catholics, or Londoners as a whole, to reform their ways. The factual account as well as the speculation and superstition makes for fascinating (if somewhat jarring) reading. Gavin Quinn Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved. Covers the Great Fire like a blanket. -- Kirkus s, January 5, 2004 For so prominent a subject this is a relatively short book, but it's scholarly, engaging and informative. -- Orlando Sentinel, February 1, 2004 Tinniswood has done a heroic amount of research and, as the quoted extracts make plain, writes well. -- Washington Post Book World, January 18, 2004 [an] admirably brisk book, Tinniswood blends an analytical overview with the stories of individuals gleaned from records and first-person accounts. -- Miami Herald, January 11, 2004