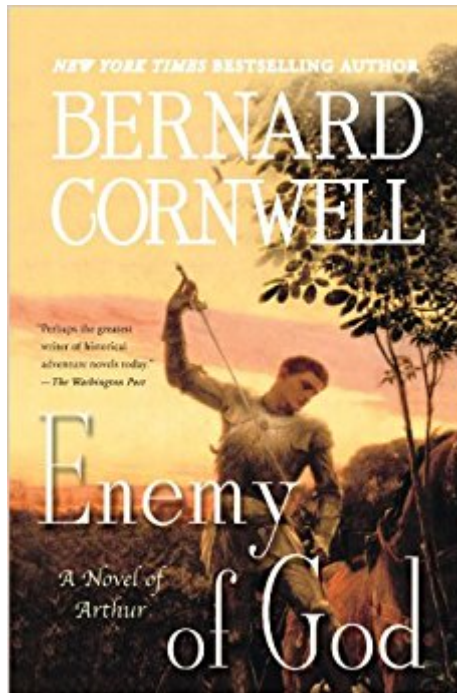




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# Enemy Of God (The Arthur Books #2)



## Synopsis

With *The Winter King*, the first volume of his magnificent *Warlord Chronicles*, Bernard Cornwell established himself as the storyteller who could reinvent the legend of King Arthur for our time. Now with *Enemy of God*, Cornwell's magical re-creation continues. Having defeated the last holdouts of civil war in southern Britain, Arthur has secured Mordred's throne. But he must still face raging conflicts between the old ways and the new, as well as foes more powerful and more dangerous--because they pose as friends. Brilliantly written and peopled with the familiar faces of legend along with new ones, *Enemy of God* is an immensely powerful continuation of a modern classic.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Cornwell furnishes a provocative look at the Arthurian legends in *Enemy of God*, the second book in the *Warlords Chronicle*. This version of the tale takes place during the Dark Ages, when even the lords of the land lived in thatched huts. Arthur, still defending Britain for his younger half-brother Mordred, faces religious uprisings, Saxon invasions, and disloyalty at the heart of the kingdom. His uncompromising belief in oaths and his optimistic blindness to human betrayal isolate him from even his closest friends. At the same time, Merlin's quest for the Cauldron (read Holy Grail) also becomes entangled in treachery. Cornwell's writing skills have continued to evolve since his journeyman Sharpe series, and *Enemy of God* combines intriguing descriptions of Druidical magic with the war-ravaged landscape of Dark Ages Britain, without holding back on the brutality of vengeance and war. The Matter of Britain always commands interest, and Cornwell invests the usual splendor and

tragedy with the human squalor of the times. --Blaise Selby

Historical novelist Cornwell continues his lively retelling of the Arthurian legend, begun in *The Winter King* (LJ 5/15/96). Having secured the throne of Dumnonia for the infant King Mordred, Arthur seeks to bring peace to the kingdom by uniting the various rival Celtic factions into the "Brotherhood of Britain." Derfel, one of Arthur's warriors and the book's narrator, sardonically notes that "the Round Table, of course, was never a proper name, but rather a nickname." But Arthur's good intentions are gradually undone: by Merlin's quest for the Thirteen Treasures of Britain; by Lancelot's and Guinevere's ambitions; by Mordred, now an unpleasant young man incapable of wise rule; and by the growing conflict between the old Druid religion and the new Christianity. To the fanatical Christians, the pagan Arthur is the Enemy of God. Despite the overabundance of confusing Celtic and Saxon names (there is a list identifying characters), this is an entertaining read, a fresh look at an old story. --Wilda Williams, "Library Journal" Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I've read the entire Sharpe series, the Archer series and the Grail Quest series, along with this one. I've thoroughly enjoyed them all. For what it's worth, the main character in each of these stories seems to me to be pretty much the same person. That's not unusual in fiction. For example, in Robert Heinlein's works, the protagonist in all of his stories strikes me to be the same person as well. That being said, there's not a great deal of character development, per se, but the protagonists are easy to like and the antagonists are easy to despise. Merlin is a little hard to figure out as you're never really sure who's side he's on. As a matter of fact, at one point he even states that he's NOT ON ANYBODY'S side and that he has his own agenda and everyone else in England is just playing a role as far as he's concerned. Still, if you like historical fiction or you're looking for a story that will totally consume you for a week or two, go with Bernard Cornwell. You won't be disappointed.

Cornwell continues the story of Arthur in this second book of *The Warlord Chronicles*. This is certainly a unique view of Arthur's story as opposed to the legends of Camelot normally available. I expect Cornwell captures a more realistic view of early England, and it shares similarities with other medieval period stories. I was uncertain about the story being narrated by one of the characters (later in life); however, it is well done and I enjoy the brief glimpses of the narrator's present time when writing the story. I would warn the story is more about the life of Derfel, friend and servant of Arthur's. Derfel's character is more fully developed than Arthur's. Nonetheless I have enjoyed both

books and just started the third and last.

This is the second in the Arthurian trilogy as written by Bernard Cornwell. This is a must read for anyone interested in Arthurian lore; it is quite possibly the best rendition of Arthur I've ever read, and I've read more than a few sagas featuring Arthur. Most people, when they think of Arthur will either reference the Chretien de Troyes work (which did serve to revitalize interest in Arthur, and he took his inspiration from the older Welsh traditions) or the John Boorman movie, *Excalibur*, which was partially based on de Troyes' work. I read de Troyes' work as a kid, and then years later as an adult, I picked up a more literal translation. If I could sum that up in one word, it'd be "flowery". Small wonder that the concept of chivalry should be born from it as it tells tales of impossible feats by impossibly courteous and solicitous men who are also trained killers. Still, since the age of ten I've always wanted to be a knight and who better than a knight of the Table Round? Anyhow, as I've gotten older, my taste in literature has made a predictable curve toward more realistic fare- that is not to say that I do not love fantasy because I do- whether it is in games, movies or books, but I appreciate books (and the authors who wrote them) that at least make the attempt to tell the story from a more realistic point of view. Arthur, and his warriors, as depicted here are not the paragons of virtue as described in the aforementioned book and movie. These men are much more realistic; at times plagued by doubt and fear, they live, they love and they make war but it is the way that they do it that grabs the reader. There are no stock characters here save one, and even that one has realistic motivations and sensibilities, albeit of the bad variety. The trilogy is set during the beginning of the 5th century (which is not arbitrary as there has been some evidence and loads of conjecture about a time in history that Arthur might have existed in; some scholars argue that he was a Romano-Brit cavalry officer with a foot in both camps. I happen to like that assertion as it makes a sort of sense to me as there is absolutely no record of Arthur in 12th century England (or Wales where the tales first originated) and certainly not in any later period as the film would suggest (with the use of full plate harness armor which would not become the norm until the 15th century). This Arthur is a seemingly-simple character, slow to anger, quick to laugh; commands the respect of his troops and any soldiers who first meet him. He is also a consummate warrior and leader, but anyone familiar with Arthur already knows that. So what sets this book apart, besides the referential timeline? The supporting cast. One of the things that I look for in a book is how strong are the other characters- are they stock, two dimensional, essentially blah? If that's the case, I'll still read, but I probably won't enjoy it as much. So not the case here; the book is written from the perspective of a displaced Saxon youth who will eventually prove himself worthy of Arthur. In addition to a strong

supporting (well written) cast, Cornwell's depictions of battle are truly worth reading, then re-reading to absorb all of the layers he gives you. Most books of this genre will feature battles, and usually there's one or another hero who is focused on but even then, you don't get the impression of actual battle. You read it, you process it mentally, then you move onto the next portion of the story.

Cornwell gets down to the nitty gritty; the horror of the shield wall, where heroes are made, but even more are killed. When the shieldwalls of opposing armies meet, it is a loud reverberating clash, followed by the ring of metal weapons on wooden and leather shields, metal helmets and armor, the smell of the warrior across from you trying his damndest to kill you while you return the favor as strongly as you might. His breath, mead-soaked (since it takes a lot of courage to charge a shield wall, most warriors prefer to do so after getting drunk) and rank, the stench comes off in waves from the unwashed bodies of everyone around you- including and not limited to the smells of urine and feces for those who couldn't hold their water or their bowels. Blood...blood everywhere; no one's clean after a battle. The heroes, the great slaughterers are usually covered in it from head to toe! Ok, I won't give anymore of the story away - suffice it to say, all three books are superbly written, I've read them multiple times and in fact, I've just finished reading the trilogy and that prompted me to revisit the Saxon Tales saga, written by the same author.

Derfel continues his story. This is the second in the Arthur series and I found it very enjoyable. The story line is interesting and yet confusing to me so I purchased a nice historical map book of Britain and now I am not confused..... I just really have never studied the lay of the land as it relates to Britain so I needed a little help. This author is one of my favorites for his efforts at making his characters live. I love the first person narrative approach. It seems like I know old Derfel and have just one more book to find out how he ended up where he is because it seems VERY much our of character.

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