

The History Of The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire 8 Vols

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Gibbon offers an explanation for why the Roman Empire fell, a task made difficult by a lack of comprehensive written sources, though he was not the only historian to tackle the subject. Most of his ideas are directly taken from what few relevant records were available: those of the Roman moralists of the 4th and 5th centuries.

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The fame of Gratian, before he had accomplished the twentieth year of his age, was equal to that of the most celebrated princes. His gentle and amiable disposition endeared him to his private friends, the graceful affability of his manners engaged the affection of the people: the men of letters, who enjoyed the liberality, acknowledged the taste and eloquence, of their sovereign; his valor and dexterity in arms were equally applauded by the soldiers; and the clergy considered the humble piety of Gratian as the first and most useful of his virtues. The victory of Colmar had delivered the West from a formidable invasion; and the grateful provinces of the East ascribed the merits of Theodosius to the author of his greatness, and of the public safety. Gratian survived those memorable events only four or five years; but he survived his reputation; and, before he fell a victim to rebellion, he had lost, in a great measure, the respect and confidence of the Roman world.

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The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire[a] is a six-volume work by the English historian Edward Gibbon. It traces Western civilization (as well as the Islamic and Mongolian conquests) from the height of the Roman Empire to the fall of Byzantium. Volume I was published in 1776 and went through six printings. Volumes II and III were published in 1781; volumes IV, V, and VI in 1788-1789. The original volumes were published in quarto sections, a common publishing practice of the time. The work covers the history, from 98 to 1590, of the Roman Empire, the history of early Christianity and then of the Roman State Church, and the history of Europe, and discusses the decline of the Roman Empire in the East and West. Because of its heavy use of primary sources, unusual at the time, its methodology became a model for later historians. This led to Gibbon's being called the first "modern historian of ancient Rome".

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