

NAXOS
AudioBooks

NON-
FICTION



Edward Gibbon

The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire – Part II

Read by **Philip Madoc**
with **Neville Jason**

NA612212D

1	Odoacer, the first barbarian king of Rome – AD 476	1:43
2	The Visigoths rule all the Roman conquests west of the Alps	2:08
3	Clovis establishes the French monarchy in Gaul	10:52
4	The struggle of Britain	9:28
5	'The decline of Rome was the natural and inevitable effect of immoderate greatness'	5:23
6	Theodoric the Ostrogoth	9:53
7	Theodoric ...'sheathed his sword' in the pride and vigour of his age	4:08
8	Justinian ascends the Byzantine throne AD 527, and shares supreme power with Theodora	14:46
9	Belisarius, a loyal and proved commander	12:34
10	Belisarius, cursed in love in his marriage to Antonina	13:54
11	The Gothic courage revives	10:11
12	The games of antiquity – the struggle of the green and the blue factions	7:49
13	The Festival of the Ides of January in the fifth year of Justinian's reign	10:27
14	The end of Belisarius	8:10
15	The new emperor – Justin, nephew of Justinian	9:00
16	The virtues and merits of Tiberius	3:32
17	The emperor Maurice	7:50
18	The fate of Rome at the close of the sixth century and the rise of Pope Gregory the First	11:00
19	Maurice abdicates and is succeeded by Phocas	10:35
20	The victory of Heraclius against the Persians	13:21

21	A melancholy task	7:47
22	Martina, Constantine III, Constans II, Justinian II – in quick succession	7:49
23	Justinian returns with vengeance	8:01
24	Leo IV, the son of the fifth Constantine, and father of the sixth	4:34
25	Leo V and Michael II, Michael III	3:25
26	Basil the Macedonian, Leo VI, Constantine, John Zimisces	1:57
27	The rise of the Comnenian dynasty	6:44
28	Manuel I reigns for 37 years	4:43
29	Andronicus rules, firstly from behind the emperor, and then with the sceptre	10:20
30	Six hundred years filled with sixty emperors	5:23
31	The rise of Islam	2:59
32	The concept of the holy war	9:22
33	A sinful and a fanatic world	5:41
34	The departure of the pilgrims	7:03
35	The effect of the crusades	8:05
36	The Palaeologi dynasty of the early 14th century	6:50
37	The rise of Genghis Khan and the Mongol empire in the East	9:05
38	The Mongol invasion of the West	4:31
39	The rise of Timour – Tamerlaine	7:47
40	Timour turns his eyes towards the Ottomans	11:53

41	1422 – Constantinople once more under siege by Turkish armies	3:36
42	Mohammed II, ‘The Great Destroyer’ and the final act of the Byzantine empire	4:45
43	The response of Christendom	3:02
44	A city of 13 miles defended by 8,000 soldiers	4:31
45	The great cannon of Mohammed	6:48
46	A siege of 40 days, breaches on all sides	7:01
47	29th May 1453	8:38
48	Fleeing to the church of St Sophia	6:02
49	The legitimate reward of the conqueror	6:20
50	The fate of Constantine	2:41
51	The incomparable position, a new future	4:17
52	The effect on Christendom	5:24
53	The religious schism in the Christian church	16:51
54	Reflections of Pope Eugenius IV and the learned Poggius on the top of the Capitoline Hill in 1430	6:12
55	The four principal causes of the ruin of the Roman Empire – 1) The injuries of time and nature	2:29
56	2) The hostile attacks of the barbarians and Christians	2:56
57	3) The use and abuse of materials	2:10
58	4) The domestic quarrels of the Romans	3:37
59	Rome in the days of Gibbon	5:57

Total time: 7:10:30

Edward Gibbon

The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire

Part II

'At the outset all was dark and doubtful: even the title of the work, the true era of the Decline and Fall of the Empire, the limits of the introduction, the division of the chapters, and the order of the narrative; and I was often tempted to cast away the labour of seven years. The style of an author should be the image of his mind; but the choice and command of language is the fruit of exercise.'

Thus in his *Memoirs of My Life* (published posthumously in 1795) does Edward Gibbon hint of his nervous anticipation concerning the undertaking of his life's central labour, the composition of his massive, magisterial *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, published between 1776-88.

This recording is an abridgement of that work's final three volumes, a previous Naxos AudioBooks issue having covered the first three, up to the collapse of Rome and the Western empire, and the accession of the first barbarian king of Italy, Odoacer, in

about AD 480. It thus covers the vast scope of almost 1,000 years, and focuses on the moral, political and military decline of the Byzantine empire, the empire of the East, and in particular its capital city, Constantinople. The final three volumes are rather more discursive and digressive than the first: there are moments where the complex narrative threatens to come apart, bulging as it does with a vast array of embryonic nations and ethnic groups, all squabbling among themselves like dozens of cats in a sack. This abridgement is aimed therefore at conveying the core narrative line that Gibbon traces.

What became known as the Byzantine empire was in fact the eastern half of the Roman empire. It survived for a thousand years after the collapse and fragmentation into assorted petty feudal kingdoms of the western half. The empire of the east finally succumbed to Turkish onslaughts in 1453, when the last emperor, Constantine XI, died, fighting on the battlements of Constantinople, the capital city of the

empire. Constantinople – originally named Byzantium – had been an ancient Greek colony, founded on the European side of the Bosphorus. When the Roman emperor Constantine I took it over in 330 he decided to name this ‘New Rome’, capital of the eastern half of his empire, after himself.

The eastern part of the empire was very different from that which came under the sway of Rome, being very Hellenistic in outlook and culture, much more commercial and cosmopolitan, and ultimately a far richer place than the original seat of empire. Despite their separation from Rome in both space and time, the Byzantine emperors nevertheless spiritually considered themselves Romans. But they were considerably more gifted than their Roman forebears had been at resisting the diplomatic blandishments and military batterings of outsiders. In the case of Byzantium, as the eastern empire also came to be known, those would-be intruders predominantly derived from nations owing allegiance to Islam. The same emperors also felt that it was their duty to be devoted to the ideal, if not the reality, of retaking Rome from the various barbarian armies that followed in the footsteps of Odoacer.

Since Gibbon, historians have concurred

in his judgement that the greatest of the Byzantine emperors was Justinian I, who reigned between 527-565. Justinian attracts Gibbon because he was both a noble statesman and also a successful warrior. Gibbon is further enchanted by Justinian’s obvious interest in that very eighteenth-century obsession, social and legal reform. But, as ever with Gibbon, the nature of man is to be imperfect: Gibbon gives a very balanced final assessment of Justinian I; his equally powerful wife, Theodora, lets him down, as we hear in this recording.

But beyond Justinian are many other equally colourful characters, and events of great – and low – magnitude. Those listeners who are more familiar with the history of the western empire, of Rome proper, will not be disappointed with the events covered by Gibbon in his final three volumes. The mendacity, brutality, lust, corruption and much else enjoyed by the Roman emperors did not escape those of their successors in Constantinople.

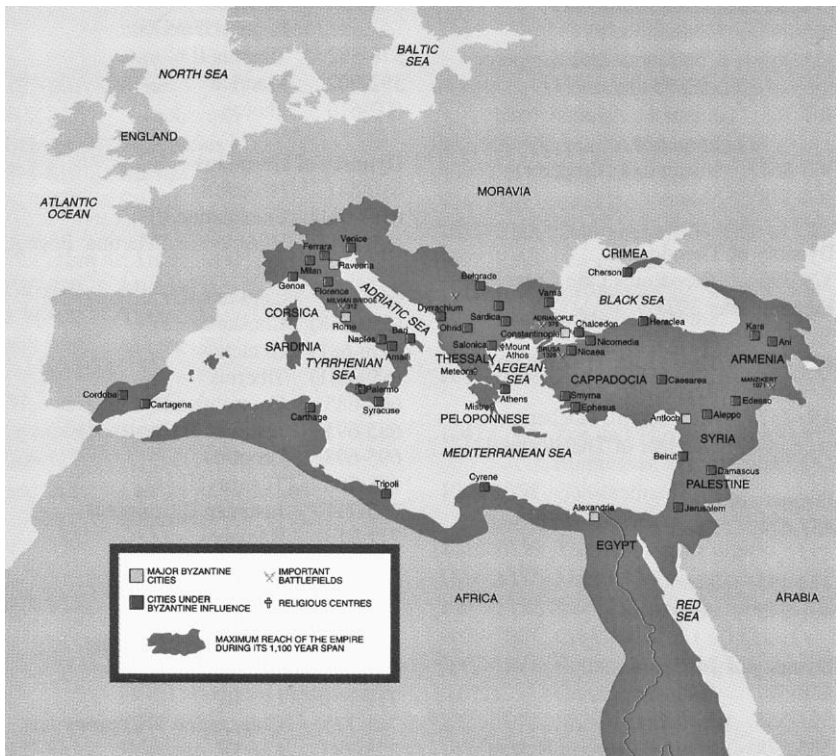
Gibbon writes in his *Memoirs* at the end that ‘twenty happy years have been animated by the labour of my history,’ adding that the ‘freedom of my writings has indeed provoked an implacable tribe; but as I was safe from the stings, I was soon

accustomed to the buzzing of the hornets.' It could be argued that, besides the sheer glory of his panoramic depiction of some of the most important characters and events in the sweep of humanity, the greatest contribution of his *History* is that it teaches us all we ever need to know about the workings of the human heart. Gibbon was a true Augustan, wedded to the values of dispassionate commonsense, rationality above all things, and a refusal to be swayed by the meretricious. His *History* instructs us (an entirely different process from being lectured to) on the method of achieving the kind of Zen-like indifference to both good and ill fortune that Gibbon himself appears to have embraced towards the end of his life. Here he is in his *Memoirs* again:

'At the age of twenty, one year is a tenth perhaps of the time which has elapsed within our consciousness and memory; at the age of fifty it is no more than a fortieth, and this relative value continues to decrease

till the last sands are shaken by the hand of death...' The warm desires, the long expectations of youth are founded on the ignorance of themselves and of the world. They are generally dampened by time and experience, by disappointment or possession; and after the middle season, the crowd must be content to remain at the foot of the mountain, while the few who have climbed the summit, aspire to descend or expect to fall. In old age, the consolation of hope is reserved for the tenderness of parents, who commence a new life in their children; the faith of enthusiasts who sing hallelujahs above the clouds; and the vanity of authors who presume the immortality of their name and writings.' Many of the emperors and empresses who pass before our view here have long been forgotten, perhaps undeservedly in some cases. But Edward Gibbon is a name that has survived them all.

Cover picture: Icon painting c.1260, Christ the Saviour, Mount Athos, Serbian Monastery of Hilan. Courtesy AKG, London.



Roman Emperors in the East

- 306-337 Constantine I
337-361 Constantius (sole emperor after 351)
361-363 Julian the Apostate (sole emperor)
363-364 Jovian (sole emperor)
364-378 Valens

Dynasty of Theodosius

- 379-395 Theodosius I the Great (sole emperor after 392)
395-408 Arcadius
408-450 Theodosius II (Anthemius: Regent 408-414)
450-457 Marcian (m. Pulcheria, daughter of Theodosius II)

Dynasty of Leo

- 457-474 Leo I
474 Leo II
474-491 Zeno
491-518 Anastasius

Dynasty of Justinian

- 518-527 Justin I
527-565 Justinian I
565-578 Justin II (Sophia: Regent)
573-574 Tiberius: Regent 574-578
578-582 Tiberius II
582-602 Maurice
602-610 Phocas

Dynasty of Heraclius

- 610-641 Heraclius
(613-641) Constantine III
(638-641) Heraclionas (Martina: Regent 641)
641-668 Constans II
(659-668) Constantine IV
(659-681) Heraclius
(659-681) Tiberius
668-685 Constantine IV
685-695 Justinian II (banished)
695-698 Leontius
698-705 Tiberius III
705-711 Justinian II (restored)
711-713 Bardanes
713-716 Anastasius II
716-717 Theodosius III

Syrian or Isaurian Dynasty (the Iconoclasts)

- 717-741 Leo III
741-775 Constantine V Copronymus
775-780 Leo IV
780-797 Constantine VI (blinded and murdered by mother Irene, wife of Leo IV)
797-802 Irene
802-811 Nicephorus I
811 Stauracius
811-813 Michael I
813-820 Leo V

Phrygian or Amorian Dynasty

820-829 Michael II
829-842 Theophilus
842-867 Michael III

Macedonian Dynasty

867-886 Basil I
886-912
and 913 Leo VI the wise and Alexander
912-959 Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus
919-944 Romanus I Lecapenus (co-emperor with Constantine VII until 944. His son Constantine (VIII) attempted usurpation in 924)
959-963 Romanus II
963 Regency of Theophano, widow of Romanus II for her infant sons Basil II and Constantine VIII (IX). Theophano married:
963-969 Nicephorus II murdered by:
969-976 John I Zimiskes
976-1025 Basil II
1025-1028 Constantine VIII (IX)
1028-1050 Zoe married:
1028-1034 a. Romanus III Argyrus
1034-1031 b. Michael IV the Paphlagonian
1041-1042 Zoe adopted Michael V Calaphates

1042 Zoe and Theodora, joint empresses. Zoe married:
1042-1055 Constantine IX (X) Monomachus
1055-1056 Theodora, sole empress
1056-1057 Michael VI Stratioticus
1057-1059 Issac I Comnenus (abdicated)
1059-1067 Constantine X (XI) Ducas
1067-1071 Romanus IV Diogenes
(1071) Constantine (XII)
1071-1078 Michael VII Ducas
1078-1081 Nicephorus III Botaniates

Dynasty of the Comneni

1081-1118 Alexius I Comnenus
1118-1143 John II Calojuhannes
1143-1180 Manuel I Comnenus
1180-1183 Alexius II Comnenus
1183-1185 Andronicus I Comnenus

Dynasty of the Angeli

1185-1195 Isaac II Angelus (dethroned)
1195-1203 Alexius III Angelus
1203-1204 Isaac II (restored) with Alexius IV Angeli
1204 Alexius V Ducas Murtzuphius
1204 Capture of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade and establishment of Latin emperors in the city

Eastern Roman Emperors in Nicaea

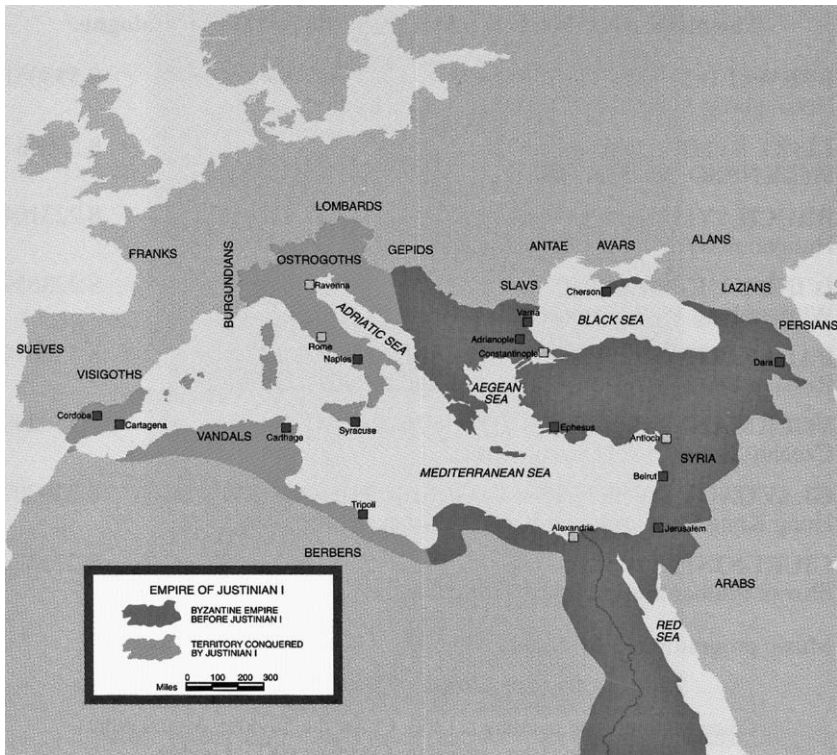
- 1204-1222 Theodorus I Lascaris
- 1222-1254 John III Ducas Vatatzes
- 1254-1258 Theodorus II Lascaris
- 1258-1261 John IV Lascaris
- 1259-1282 Michael VIII Palaeologus
- 1261 Recapture of Constantinople
and re-establishment of the
Eastern emperors there

Dynasty of the Palaeologi

- 1261-1282 Michael VIII Palaeologus
- 1282-1328 Andronicus II
- 1328-1341 Andronicus III
(1293-1320) Michael IX
- 1341-1391 John V Cantacuzenus
- 1341-1354 John VI Cantacuzenus
- 1376-1379 Andronicus IV
- 1379-1391 John V (restored)
- 1390 John VII
- 1391-1425 Manuel II
- 1425-1448 John VIII
- 1449-1453 Constantine XI (XIII) Dragases
- 1453 Capture of Constantinople by
Mahomet II

End of the Roman Empire

Notes by Gary Mead



The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

BERWALD SYMPHONY NO. 1 Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra, Okku Kamu	8.553051
LISZT SYMPHONIC POEMS Polish NRSO, Michael Halasz	8.550487
BRUCH SYMPHONY NO. 3 Hungarian Symphony Orchestra, Manfred Honeck	8.555985
D'INDY L'ETRANGER Wurttemberg Philharmonic, Giles Nopre	8.223659
BALAKIREV SYMPHONY NO. 1/ISLAMEY ETC. Russian State Symphony Orchestra, Igor Golovschin	8.550792
VOLKMANN OVERTURE TO RICHARD III Czecho-Slovak RSO Ondrej Lenard	8.550230
GLAZUNOV OVERTURE ON GREEK THEMES NO. 1 ETC. Hong Kong Philharmonic, Kenneth Schermerhorn	8.220309
CIURLIONIS THE SEA Slovak Philharmonic, Juozas Domarkas	8.223323

Music programming by Nicolas Soames



The two-headed Imperial eagle was the emblem of the Palaeologus family, the last Byzantine dynasty

Edward Gibbon

The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire

Part II

Read by **Philip Madoc** with **Neville Jason**

Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* occupies an immortal place in the pantheon of historical masterpieces. This six-disc recording covers the final three volumes of Gibbon's work, tracing ten centuries in the life of the eastern half of the empire, whose capital city was Constantinople. Among the many figures who stride across Gibbon's stage here are the emperor Justinian I, a noble statesman and successful warrior, brought low by his lascivious wife, the former prostitute Theodora; the murdering Basil I, a peasant who nonetheless proved himself a worthy figure upon which to drape the purple; and the final emperor of all, Constantine XI, who died in 1453, valiantly fighting a losing battle to prevent the Turks from gaining a city they had craved for centuries. It is still the work that sets the standard for all histories of the period.



Philip Madoc's extensive theatre work includes the roles of Othello and Iago, Faust and Macbeth and recently, with the RSC, The Duke in *Measure for Measure* and Professor Raat in *The Blue Angel*. TV roles include Lloyd George, Magua in *The Last of the Mohicans* and the defence lawyer in *Brookside*. He also stars in his own detective series, *A Mind to Kill*. He also reads *The Death of Arthur*, *The Canterbury Tales* and *The Arabian Nights* for Naxos AudioBooks.

Neville Jason also reads Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* and Tolstoy's *War and Peace* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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