The historian as moralist: a study of Edward Gibbon and The decline and fall of the Roman Empire

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SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works of Edward Gibbon

The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. London, W. Strahan & T. Cadell, 1776-88, 6 volumes, 4to.

Other editions consulted and referred to are:

London, 1783-91, 12 volumes, 8vo.


London, 1853-5. With variorum notes including those of Guizot, Wenck, Schreiter and Hugo, edited with further illustrations from the most recent sources, by An English Churchman (Henry G. Bohn), 7 volumes.

Chandos Classics, Verbatim Reprint (Frederick Warne & Co. London and New York), 4 volumes, 1873, reissued 1887, 1893-4; and in a 3-volume large cr. 8vo. edition, undated. It is stated to be a reprint of the 3rd edition, London, 1788. References to the Warne editor in Chapter Ten are to the 3-volume edition.

Edited with Introduction, Notes and Appendices by J.B. Bury. London, 1909, 7 volumes. This is the edition cited throughout the thesis, unless otherwise stated.

Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, for the use of Families and Young Readers, with the careful omission of all passages of an irreligious or immoral tendency, by Thomas Bowdler. London, 1826.

(This work Bury listed among 'mutilations' rather than editions)

Other editions, such as the Everyman Edition or abridgements, such as those by Low and Trevor-Roper, where the main interest was in the editor's introductory essay, are listed under the name of the editor.


The same, 'A New Edition with Considerable Additions'. London, 1814, 5 volumes. References are to this 2nd edition unless specified.


Le Journal de Gibbon à Lausanne, 17 Août 1763 - 19 Avril 1764, ed. C.A. Bonnard. Lausanne, 1945.


Memoirs of My Life, ed. G.A. Bonnard. London, 1966. All quotations and references, unless otherwise noted, are from this edition.


Manuscript and Typescript

The remaining English writings, after the publication of the autobiography and journals, was included in Patricia Craddock's volume above. However, there are still Gibbon's comments and notes on his reading in his 'Commonplace Books'. These and the already edited material held by The British Library (BM) as 'The Gibbon Papers' repay study because they bring the student closer to the historian at work. The care, the lay-out, the emendations and the marginal notes are all revealing. The papers are listed as Add. MSS. 34875-9 (Journals &c., including that of the Swiss journey) and 34880-2 which include the Commonplace Book, 1755.

The Sheffield Papers used for the Editions of Gibbon's Miscellaneous Works, a catalogue of a collection of hitherto unpublished papers and documents once in the possession of Mrs. Dorothea Gibbon, step-mother of Edward Gibbon, the Historian containing parts of letters to him and many references to him and his affairs. (Typescript carbon copy in The British Library, and dated January 1928.)

Bibliographical

Contemporary Criticism of The Decline and Fall


Chelsum, J., *Remarks on the two last Chapters of Mr. Gibbon's History &c*. Oxford, 1778.

--- *A Reply to Mr. Gibbon's Vindication of The Decline and Fall Containing a Review of the Errors still retained in these chapters*. Winchester, 1785.

Dalrymple, D., *Lord Hailes, An Inquiry into the Secondary Causes which Mr. Gibbon has assigned for the rapid Growth of Christianity*. Edinburgh, 1786.

Davis, H.E., *An Examination of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Chapters of Mr. Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire &c*. London, 1778.


-------- *A Short Appeal to the Public. By the Gentleman who is particularly addressed in the Postscript of the Vindication &c*. London, 1779.

Loftus, S., *A Reply to the Reasonings of Mr. Gibbon in his History ... which seem to affect the Truth of Christianity, but which have not been noticed in the Answer which Dr Watson hath given to that Book*. Dublin, 1778.


Priestley, J., *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*. Birmingham, 1787, 2 volumes. Part ii contains 'Animadversions on the two last Chapters of the first Volume' of The Decline and Fall. Priestley's History of the Corruptions of Christianity, 1782, whose title might have aptly fitted sections of The Decline and Fall, influenced Gibbon's reference to the unitarian writer in that work.


(All of these, except Porson's reply to Travis, are republished in the Garland Series 'Gibboniana')

**Sermons and Lectures**

The following may be cited as examples of those referred to:

Disney, W., *Sermon preached before the University of Cambridge, 28th June, 1789; with some strictures on the licentious notions avowed or enumerated in Mr. Gibbon's Roman History*. Cambridge, 1790. Disney's treatment of Gibbon's last three chapters was reviewed in the *Monthly Review* of that year (Vol. III, series 2, pp. 114-5).

Kett, H. *Sermons preached before the University of Oxford in the year 1790. A representation of the conduct and opinions of the Primitive Christians, with remarks on certain assertions of Edward Gibbon and Dr. Priestley.*

Nisbett, N., *A Concise and interesting View of the Objection of Mr. Gibbon that our Lord foretold His Second Coming in the Clouds of Heaven in the Generation in which He lived. &c.* The author noted that he had preached on this subject in 1791 and 1802, though this sermon is dated Tunstal, 1805. Nisbet also expanded the subject into three books which broadened the scope of his examination: *The Scripture Doctrine concerning the Coming of Christ...in answer to the Objections of Mr. Gibbon and Dr. Edwards upon this Subject*. Canterbury, n.d. [1792]; *The Coming of the Messiah the True Key to the Right Understanding of the Most Difficult Passages in the New Testament and particularly in the Evangelists...in answer to some Objections of the Historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Canterbury & London, 1800; and *The Triumphs of Christianity over Infidelity displayed or The Coming of the Messiah the True Key &c. Being a full Answer to the Objections of Mr. Gibbon that our Lord and His Apostles predicted the near Approach of the End of the World in their own Time.*

**Journals and Magazines**

There is a wealth of notices, extracts, critical comments and replies to be found in the *Gentleman's Magazine, Monthly Review, Critical Review &c.*, particularly in the years in which Gibbon's separate
Volumes appeared. In the Monthly Review see in particular:
Vols. LIV, 1776, pp. 188-195, 388-393; LV, 1776, pp. 41-50;
LVII, 1777, p. 346; LVIII, 1778, pp. 242, 414; LX, 1778, pp. 199-206;
LX, 1779, pp. 108-119, 237; LXIII, 1780, pp. 235-236; LXIV, 1781,
pp. 223-228, 357, 442; LXV, 1781, pp. 29, 66, 459; LXVI, 1782, p. 457;
LXVIII, 1783, pp. 112f.; LXXVIII, 1788, pp. 383-387; LXXX, 1789, p. 84;
Second Series III, 1790, pp. 114-115; VI, 1791, pp. 68-75; VIII, 1792,
pp. 575-576; XVI, 1795, pp. 218-219; XX, 1796, pp. 77-84, 279-280,
XLVIII. 1778, pp. 315-316, 464-465; LI, 1781, pp. 184-185, 328-329,
519-522; LII, 1782, pp. 66-68, 181, 278-279, 330, 519-524;
LV, 1785, pp. 1025-1027; LVI, 1786, p. 919; LVIII, 1788, pp. 476-478,
599, 700-702, 1157; LIX, 1789, pp. 609-610, 707-710, 1202; See also
Vol. XXX, 1788, 2nd Pt., 198-208.

Later Works on Gibbon

Badian, E., Gibbon et Rome à la lumière de l'historiographie moderne:
dix exposés suivis de discussions par E. Badian et al. Université de

Badian, E., 'Gibbon on War' in the above collection, pp. 104-130.

Bagehot, W. 'Edward Gibbon' in Literary Studies. 3rd ed. London,

Baridon, M., Edward Gibbon et le Mythe de Rome. Histoire et Idéologie

Baridon, M., 'Le Style d'une Pensée' in E. Badian, Gibbon et Rome à la
lumière de l'historiographie moderne, pp. 83 - 98.


Birrell, A., 'Edward Gibbon' in Selected Essays, 1884-1907. London, 1908,
pp. 60 - 84.

Black, J.B., The Art of History. A Study of Four Great Historians of

Memorial Lecture delivered in the University of Bristol, 15. 2. 35).


Bonnard, G.A., 'L'importance du deuxième séjour de Gibbon à Lausanne'
in Mélanges d'histoire et de la littérature offerts à M. Charles
Gilliard. Lausanne, 1944.

Bonnard, G.A., 'Gibbon's "Essai sur l'Etude de la Littérature" as
judged by contemporary reviewers and by Gibbon himself.' English
Studies, XXXII, 1951, pp. 143 - 153.

The volume is cited below and in the notes as Bowersock. The papers were delivered in Rome in January 1976 and first published in that year in Daedalus, as Vol. 105, No. 3 of the Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, ed. G.W. Bowersock and John Clive.

Bowersock, G.W., 'Gibbon on Civil War and Rebellion in the Decline of the Roman Empire', in Bowersock, op. cit., pp. 27 - 35.

Of particular value are the sections on Clarendon and Bolingbroke, pp. 14 - 30, Hume, pp. 31 - 90, and Gibbon, pp. 213 - 271.


Chadwick, O., 'Gibbon and the Church Historians', in Bowersock, op. cit., pp. 219 - 231.


Furet, F., 'Civilization and Barbarism in Gibbon's History', in Bowersock, *op. cit.*, pp. 159 - 166.


Gay, P., *Style in History*, N.Y., 1974, especially chapter 1, on Gibbon, pp. 21 - 56.


Jordan, D.P., Gibbon and his Roman Empire, University of Illinois, Urbana, 1971.


McCloy, S.T., Gibbon's Antagonism to Christianity...and the Discussions it has provoked. University of North Carolina Press, 1933.


Momigliano, A., 'Gibbon from an Italian Point of View', in Bowersock, op. cit., pp. 75 - 85.


Runciman, S., 'Gibbon and Byzantium', in Bowersock, op. cit., pp. 53 - 60.


To include references to other works consulted would simply extend this list proportionately increasing its value. This, from the eighteenth century, James Hurdis' *Vindication of the University of Oxford against Gibbon's aspersions* (1797) would perhaps contribute little more than a smile. From the following age, we have brief comments such as that in Coleridge's *Table Talk* for 15 August, 1833, which does not represent his criticism at its best and which, like Belloc's longer essay, possibly says more about the writer than about Gibbon. The Royal Historical Society's Proceedings of the Gibbon centenary commemoration in November 1894, on the other hand, have a real historical interest, as to some extent do lectures like Clodd's Conway Memorial Lecture of 1916. Then from more recent works, should one include such books as M.W. Croll's *Style Rhetoric and Rhythm* (1960), L.M. Angus-Butterworth's *Ten Master Historian* (1961), R.S. Crane's *The Idea of the Humanities* and J.R. Hale's *The Evolution of British Historiography* (1967)? The answer is that a line must be drawn somewhere, though this is not to imply that the relevant pages have no interest for the student of Gibbon, even if some do not add anything very new.
A Selection of Ancient and Medieval Sources and Significant Writers.


Boethius, Trinitas Unus Deus ac non Tres Dii, and other theological tractates; and Philosophiae Consolationis. With English translations by H.F.Stewart and E.K.Rand. Loeb Classical Library, 1918. Both his apologetic works and the Consolation receive significant mention in DF (xxxix, IV, 212-6), though only the latter was in Gibbon's library.


Otto, Bishop of Freising, Chronica sive Historia de duabis Civitabus. Translated by C.C. Mierow as The History of the Two Cities. N.Y., 1928.


William, Archbishop of Tyre, A History of deeds done beyond the sea. Translation of Historia Rerum in Partibus Transmarinis Gestarum, by E.A. Babcock and A.C. Krey, N.Y. 1943. 2 Vols. The Old French version is in Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Historiens Occidentaux, I, 1, 2. Gregg reprints, 1967. William was acclaimed by Gibbon when considering a work on Richard I and was used in the sections on the Crusades (see, e.g. DF, lix, VI, nn. 10, 13, 43, 45, 52).

Modern Works on the Ancient World and the Middle Ages


Boak, R., Manpower Shortage and the Fall of the Roman Empire. Westport, Connecticut, 1974.


Chapters V and VI, on 'Anna as Historian', 'Filial and other Prejudices' and on Anna's style help to balance the impression found in Gibbon.


Carney, T.F., Systems Analysis and the Fall of Rome. Duplicated typescript, Department of History, University of Manitoba, n.d. (Discussion of the debate on the fall of Rome, feasibility of models and the shaping of our views as to what constitutes evidence.)


(Another corrective study as the author states: 'The Alexiad has been gaining recognition until now it has come full circle to fill a gap in Byzantine history and correct a distorted perspective of the history of Byzantium, created largely by Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*...', p.149.)


A Few Renaissance and Modern Works of Special Significance

Bayle, P., Dictionnaire historique et critique (1697). One can follow Gibbon's directions to many an article from the footnotes of DF. He owned a 1740 edition of the work. I have quoted from the English edition of 1734, 5 Vols.


Bossuet, J.B., Histoire des variations des églises protestantes, 1688. I have used the Oeuvres choisies de Bossuet, Versailles, 1821 in which it forms tomes XV - XVII. It is not certain which English edition was put into Gibbon's hands at Oxford. Bonnard refers in his notes to the Memoirs to a translation from the 6th edition made at Antwerp in 1742. This is the edition I have consulted. Gibbon's library contained the French edition, Paris, 1718 - 30.

Encyclopédie; ou dictionnaire raisonné des arts, des sciences, et des métiers. Paris, 1751 - 65. 17 Vols. folio. Some of the articles Gibbon consulted or is thought to have consulted are referred to in the thesis text and notes.

Gaillard, M., Histoire de Charlemagne. Paris, 1782. In the writing of DF it was a work, he wrote, 'which I have freely and profitably used.' (xlix, V, 303, n.100). The edition is in 4 volumes, 12° and the preface to Vol. I contains remarks on philosophic history and the lessons of history.

Giannone, P., The Civil History of the Kingdom of Naples...Written in Italian by Pietro Giannone,...and publish'd Anno 1723. Translated into English by Captain James Ogilvie. London, 1729. In the list of subscribers at the beginning of the work appears the name of Edward Gibbon, Esq., so that the English translation was in the library of the historian's father, though only the Italian (Hague, 1723) is included in the catalogue of his own. Gibbon first read the work in a French translation (see my chapter III, p.82, n.5). Bonnard's notes to the Memoirs refer to a French translation by P. Desmaiseaux, published at Geneva in 1742. That I have consulted, Histoire Civile du Royaume de Naples, is dated A la Haye, 1742, but does not bear the translator's name.


Machiavelli, N., History of Florence and of the affairs of Italy from the earliest times to the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Translated with introduction by H.A.Rennert. London, 1901. There were two English translations available when young Gibbon began to read the history of Florence.
Montfaucon, B. de, *L'antiquite expliquee et representee en figures...* Paris, 1719. 10 Vols. folio. A perusal of this work makes it easy to understand what treasures it held for the budding historian.

Montfaucon, B. de, *Les Monumens de la monarchie francoise.* Paris, 1729 – 33. This also was in Gibbon's library. I have seen only an English version, *A collection of regal and ecclesiastical antiquities of France &c.* London, 1750. 2 Vols. folio.

Mosheim, J.L., *An Ecclesiastical History Ancient and Modern from the Birth of Christ to the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century.* Translated from the original Latin..., by Archibald Maclaine. This work, which appeared in 1782, was in Gibbon's library together with the Latin original of which he made such great use in DF. I have consulted the English edition in a reprint at Berwick, 1819. 6 Vols.


Poggio, Bracciolini, *Historiae de varietate fortunii libri quatuor.* This is the only work of Poggio listed in Gibbon's library and is in the Paris edition of 1723, 'the complete and elegant edition' of this 'elegant dialogue' which he praised in DF (lxv, VII, 65 & n.59). There is also Jean Lenfant's *Poggiana: ou la vie, le caractère, les sentences et les bons mots de Poggio Florentin,* 6c Amsterdam, 1720, which Gibbon may have consulted. It is not in the catalogue of his books but he had two editions of each of Lenfant's works on Church Councils and made use of them in DF. The edition of Poggio's work I have cited is: *Poggius Bracciolini. Opera Omnia. Con una premessa di Ricardo Fubini, Scripta in editione Basilensi, anno MDXXXVIII collata.* Bottega D'Erasmo. Torino, 1964.

La Curne de Ste Palaye, J.B., *Memoire sur l'ancienne Chevalerie.* A Paris, 1759-81. 3 Vols. This is another rare work which Gibbon must have relished and which he later added to his library. He refers to Ste Palaye amongst the eminent scholars of Paris (Memoirs, p.126) and both this and his other works would have supplemented those of Mabillon and Montfaucon in laying the foundations of Gibbon's scholarship. For Ste. Palaye see also under Gossman below.

An Universal History from the earliest Accounts to the Present Time. Compiled from Original Authors. Illustrated with Charts, Maps, Notes. The Ancient Part, that on which Gibbon cut his teeth, appeared first in folio and was reprinted in 21 volumes 8°, 1747 – 54. The edition I have used is dated in Vol. I, London 1779. The Modern Part in 43 volumes, 1759 – 66, contains amongst other things of interest in Gibbon's reading, the chapter on the life of Mohammed (Vol. I). The edition I have consulted is that of 1780.

Eighteenth-Century Historical Works consulted for this thesis


Blair, H., *Lectures on Rhetoric and Bekles Lettres.* Edinburgh, 1783. 2 Vols. Lectures XXXV, XXXVI are on 'Historical Writing'.


L'Englet du Fresnoy, *Méthode pour étudier l'histoire*, avec un catalogue des principaux historiens, &c. Paris, 1729 (Gibbon's set was that of 1772, 12°).


Heron, R., *A New General History of Scotland from the Earliest Times to...year 1748.* Perth, 1794-9. 3 vols. Vols. I & II on the Roman occupation, Germanic invasions and life in the Middle Ages are of interest.


Hurd, R., *An Introduction to the study of the prophecies concerning the Christian Church, and in particular, concerning the Church of Papal Rome.* London, 1772. These Warburton Lectures, which involved Gibbon in an anonymous dispute with Hurd, were nevertheless in his library.


Middleton, C., *'A Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church from the Earliest Ages through succeeding Centuries.'* Miscellaneous Works. London, 1752, Vol. I.


Moreri, L., Le Grand Dictionnaire Historique, ou le Melange curieux de L'Histoire, Sacre et Profane, &c. Paris, 1759. 10 Vols. (This work I have only sampled)

Newton, I., A Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended, to which is prefixed a short chronology from the first memory of things in Europe to the Conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great. London, 1728.

Pinkerton, J., An Enquiry into the History of Scotland preceding the Reign of Malcolm III or the year 1056, including the authentic history of that period. London, 1789. 2 Vols. Of interest both for itself and for the fact of Gibbon's admiration of Pinkerton's historical abilities and his recommendation of him as a person qualified to carry out the publication of 'our Latin Memorials of the Middle Ages.' Pinkerton's Dissertation on the origin and progress of the Scythians or Goths, London, 1787, also has its interest as showing current ideas about this people.

Prideaux, H., The Old and New Testament connected in the History of the Jews and Neighbouring Nations from the Declension of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah to the Time of Christ. 3rd ed. London, 1717. (Gibbon had 1718 and 1749 editions of this work which he respected and drew upon, and also a copy of Prideaux's work on the 'imposture' of Mahomet.


Robertson, W., The History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V. With a View of the Progress of Society in Europe from the subversion of the Roman Empire to the beginning of the sixteenth century. London, 1769. 3 Vols. (The celebrated 'View' is the most significant part for the student of The Decline and Fall.)

Russell, W., *History of Modern Europe, with an Account of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire and a View of the Progress of Society from the Rise of the Modern Kingdoms to the Peace of 1763*. Grays Inn, 1786.

Russell, W., *The History of Ancient Europe from the Earliest Times to the Subversion of the Western Empire. With a Survey of the most important revolutions in Asia and Africa. In a Series of Letters intended as an Accompaniment to Dr. Russell's History of Modern Europe*. London, 1793. 2 Vols.


Stuart, G., *A View of Society in Europe in its Progress from Rudeness to Refinement or Inquiries concerning the History of Law, Government and Manners*. Edinburgh, 1768. (Of interest for its account of the barbarian nations, of feudalism, and of the corruption of morals in the breakdown of societies.)

Stuart, C., *An Historical Dissertation concerning the Antiquity of the English Constitution*. Edinburgh, 1778. (The work headed by a quotation from Montesquieu concerning Tacitus on German manners, develops the parallel between Germanic customs and British.) Gibbon owned three of Gilbert Stuart's works, including the 'View', but not this 'Dissertation'.

Tillemont, L.S. Le Nain de, *Memoires pour servir a l'histoire ecclésiastique des six premiers siecles, justifiez par les citations des auteurs originaux*. Paris, 1701 (Tome 16, 1702). (I have looked at but not studied this interesting work. Gibbon had a 10-volume 12° edition dated Brussels, 1706.)


Warton, T., History of English Poetry. London, 1774-81. 3 Vols. (Its appreciation of the Middle Ages is of significance. Gibbon valued and made use of this work.)

Whitaker, J., The History of Manchester in four Books. London, 1771. 2 Vols. (Perhaps the main interest of the work is that it comes from Gibbon's correspondent and bitter opponent, but it can also be read for its treatment of the Roman and Saxon periods in Britain (Books I & II.)

Works on the Eighteenth Century


Butterfield, H., The Whig Interpretation of History. London, 1968. (Apart from the general usefulness of the work, chapters 4 & 6 deal with 'History and Judgments of Value' and 'Moral Judgments in History'.)


Cobban, A., Edmund Burke and the Revolt against the Eighteenth Century. 2nd ed. London, 1960. (especially Preface and chapters 1-3; 8,9)


Green, V.H.H., *A History of Oxford University*, London, 1974. (Chapters 6, 8 are relevant.)


Knowles, D., *Great Historical Enterprises: Problems in Monastic History*. London, 1963. 'The Bollandists', pp. 1 - 32, 'The Maurists', pp. 33 - 62. ('The work of the Maurists remains and may well remain for centuries to come, the most impressive achievement of co-operative, or at least co-ordinated scholarship in the modern world', p. 61; Gibbon's estimate of the labours of the Benedictines was rather similar, *Memoirs*, pp. 52, 131.)


Lanson, G., *Voltaire*. English translation by R.A. Wagoner, introduction by Peter Gay. N.Y., 1960. (Chapter 6: 'Voltaire the Historian')


Manuel, F.E. (ed.), *The Enlightenment*. New Jersey, 1965. (Useful throughout; there is also reference to Gibbon in chapter 5.)


