

Koncepcja historii Edwarda Gibbona

Edward Gibbon's conception of history

SUMMARY

The major work of Edward Gibbon was "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire". The work took Gibbon 25 years to complete and in it he presented the history of the Roman Empire, beginning with the reign of Trajan and Hadrian, and ending with the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453. The main objective of the work was to show the reasons and the processes which led to the decline and ultimately the fall of the Western Roman Empire and later also of Byzantium. Apart from the rich factographic layer of the work, based on an enormous amount of source materials, one can discern a historiosophical layer in the work. Gibbon, however, was not a typical academic philosopher-writer who would embark on complex philosophical excursions. What is manifest in the work is Gibbon's deep respect for the ideals of liberty and tolerance. Gibbon refrained from making categorical judgements in his book. Throughout "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire", there is a clear influence of French philosophical and historical thought, above all that of Montesquieu, and to a smaller degree that of Voltaire. Gibbon believed in man's potential for development. He also saw the mutual dependence of individuals on history and of history on individuals. Unlike Voltaire, for example, Gibbon focused on political and military history rather than on economic or cultural history.

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