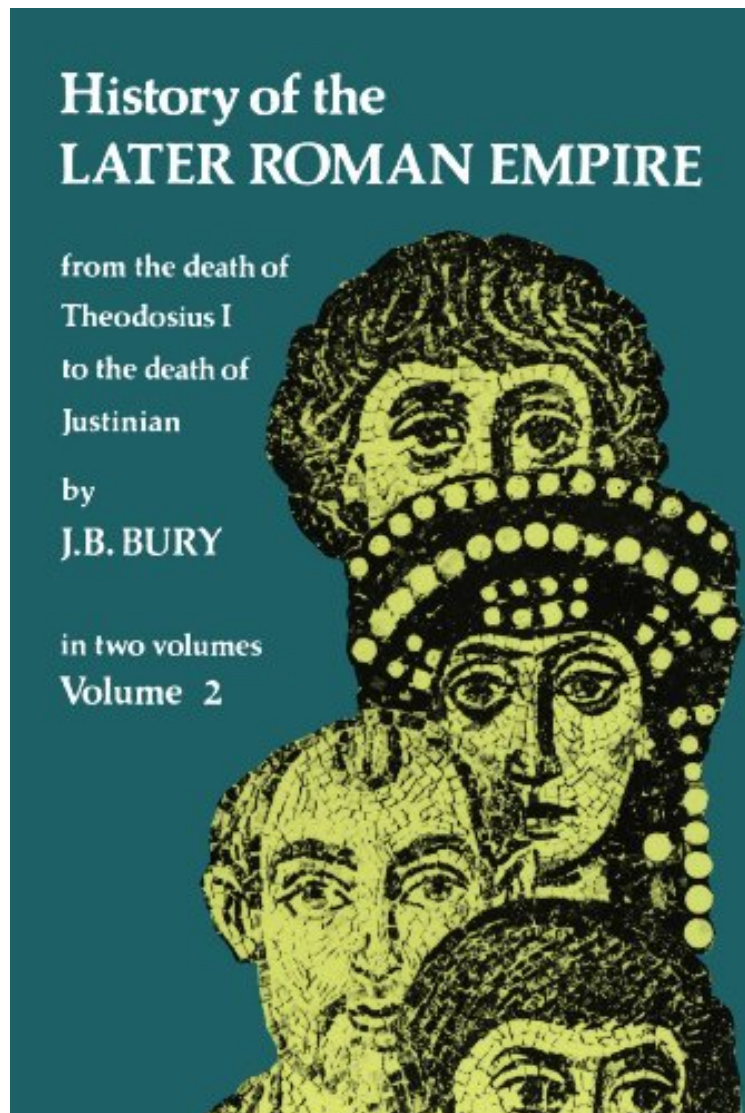


[Mobile ebook] History of the Later Roman Empire, Vol. 2: From the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian

History of the Later Roman Empire, Vol. 2: From the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian

Von J. B. Bury

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Von J. B. Bury : History of the Later Roman Empire, Vol. 2: From the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised History of the Later Roman Empire, Vol. 2: From the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian:

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Justinian period Von Fr Kurt Messick This second volume of Bury's work is a good stand-alone volume about the history of the Justinian period, but really belongs with the companion first volume, which when taken together forms a comprehensive view of the Late Roman Empire to the time of its final, irrevocable split. J.B. Bury was an historian of note in the early part of the twentieth century. Educated at Irish universities, he ended up as a professor at Cambridge. He did much to expand the historical horizons of students and scholars in the English-speaking world, whose focus had narrowed into distinctly Western emphases. This volume on the Late Roman Empire is one such work - not content to explore the Roman Empire as centred wholly upon Rome (or, as was often the case with British historians, a Rome-Canterbury axis), his interest in the histories further afield is evident by his concentration on 'barbarian'/Germanic influences, Eastern Roman Empire and Byzantine events, and courses of history outside of those that led in a linear fashion to the modern British nation. Quite often, histories written in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries suffer from several deficiencies, the bias described above being but one of them. Lack of reference to archaeological and documentary evidence (some of which was not available) is often the case, and a cultural influence perhaps described as 'Christendom-centric' is usually evident, if not blatantly then at least in implied and undergirding assumption. Obviously, Bury's text cannot benefit from the archaeological and methodological developments of the twentieth century, but it does stand the test of time fairly well in terms of being broader in approach, less judgemental in analysis, and fairly close in using original source material and primary documents whenever possible. One of the comments that Bury makes regarding the times of the Late Roman Empire (which he dates from the death of Theodosius I in 395 to the death of Justinian in 565) still rings true today - we often know far more about the events and details of life in Egypt of the Pharaohs thousands of years prior than we do about the events, or even the leading figures, of the time sometimes referred to as the beginning of the Dark Ages (Bury himself rarely uses this term in the text as part of his own descriptions). His selection of Theodosius and Justinian look to periods of unification in the general trend of disintegration of traditional Roman authority. The centre of power had already shifted during the period of Diocletian and Constantine away from the actual city of Rome; Theodosius I was emperor of both East and West prior to his death in 395, and Justinian was the last of the emperors of the East to have any hegemony or real authority in the West (the official line of Western emperors ended with Julius Nepos and Romulus Augustulus nearly a hundred years before the time of Justinian). Some of Bury's insights into the period dispel typical notions of the pattern of history - Bury points out that most of the so-called pagan invaders were in fact neither pagan nor invaders. The Germanic 'barbarians' were less waves of invaders, as often popularly thought, but more of the nature of longer-term settlers, who over time shifting the demographics away from Roman/Mediterranean to Northern European stock. Battles were frequently, but rarely large and long-lasting. As for being pagans, it is true that most were not orthodox/catholic Christians, but many if not most were Arian Christians, something that the more orthodox patriarchs in Rome, Constantinople and other leading centres of Christendom found to be even more of a threat. The second volume covers about 50 years, less than half the period of the first volume, a period of much greater clarity, relatively speaking, in the historical record. Recreation of the historical record is still a matter of fragmentary reconstruction, but there is much more documentary data from the period of Justinian, whose reign represented a window of stability in administration for both East and West. Consolidation of the church in many places, and reinstatement of the last of Roman authority in the West, which then served as the foundation for later kingdoms and cultures, took place during this time. Bury's balanced text is perhaps exemplified in his treatment of Theodora, a controversial figure in her own time and every time thereafter. Bury is careful to balance political rumour and social innuendo from verifiable fact, and discusses not only the motivations of the Empress and Justinian, but also the people around her. Particularly with regard to differences between Justinian and Theodora (for example, the Monophysite controversy), he is good at navigating an even-handed course in his discussion. Bury's text is interesting and lively, not at all the dry and dusty tome of typical of many nineteenth century academic writers. Bury is a good corrective and addition to Gibbons, adding detail in his balanced treatment of East and West. Bury includes several genealogical tables, interesting in that they still retain blank spaces where people's names in the charts remain unknown to us (while some have since been filled in by more recent scholars, some remain a mystery). There are also useful maps. There is a helpful index and bibliography, but this is found only at the conclusion of this second volume.

Kurzbeschreibung Generally acknowledged to be Professor Bury's masterpiece, this panoramic and painstakingly accurate reconstruction of the Western and Byzantine Roman empire covers the period from 395 A.D., the death of Theodosius I, to 565 A.D., the death of Justinian. Quoting contemporary documents in full or in great extent, the author describes and analyzes the forces and cross-currents that controlled Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, the Persian and Teutonic regions; the rise of Byzantine power, territorial expansion, conflict of church and state, legislative and diplomatic changes; and scores of similar topics. Detailed coverage of such important figures as Belisarius, Justinian, Procopius, Alaric, Attila, and many others is given as well as a complete contemporary account of a visit to Attila's court. The Vandal empire, the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Lombards, etc., are given extensive treatment. Professor Bury

investigates the literary, cultural, and religious history of the period in great detail and relates it to the organization and development of the Eastern and Western empires and the diffusion of Byzantine culture into Italy. An important and valuable contribution to our knowledge of a period the history of which has been too much neglected. Classical .