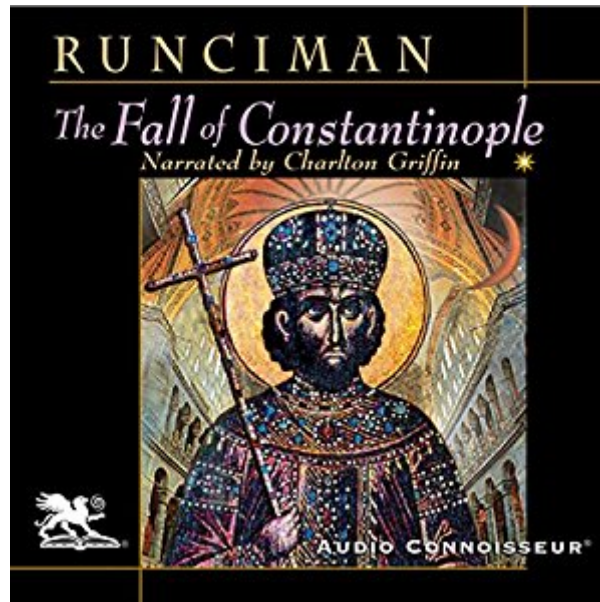




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The Fall Of Constantinople



Synopsis

First published in 1965, this is a scholarly and highly accessible study of Constantinople's fall, an event which had tumultuous repercussions across both East and West. Runciman demonstrates the inevitability of the Turkish conquest and the impotence of the Byzantine Empire which, at the time, comprised only one ineffectual city. This vivid account reconstructs the dramatic events which won the Turks an imperial capital, with a vital geographical location, and examines how the Greeks reacted to this devastating blow. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Runciman delivers a fair and detailed account of the fall of Constantinople. Many say that his writing and work is very anti-west. I didn't see that in this book. He was fair to both sides of the story, but didn't fail to criticize characters in history that he found flawed. I'm ok with an author throwing in his opinion it is not always a bad thing. Overall I would say it was very well written and worth the read.

There are few historical events that conjure up the adventure, drama and pation of the fall of Constantinople; Barbarian hordes, age old empires, tremendous siege engines, feuding merchant states, conflicted religious leaders, age old prophecies of doom (or victory depending on your view), naval battles and finally a philosopher emperor who having failed to get the outside support his city needs to survive, dies at the hands of the enemy while defending the city's walls, his body never to be found. This book tells the story of the final empire of the Greeks, as if told by a story-teller rocking in a chair by a fire. The story is that good, the characters, their motives and actions are all

that good, and they are all true. Some of my favorite parts were the descriptions of the Sultan's Janissaries, and the work of Urban, the canon builder that Constantine turned away, and who Mehmet was only too eager to hire. If you enjoyed any of Norwich's books on the rise and fall of Byzantium, then this book serves as an excellent conclusion. The author, Mr. Runciman, does a fantastic job of detailing the story, placing it in its appropriate historical time frame and setting the record straight on many elements. One of his central tenants is the arbitrary nature of defining Constantinople's fall as the 'end' of the Dark Ages, and he does a convincing job of making his point that many of the effects often ascribed to the fall had long been in process. First published in 1965, this is by no means the latest re-telling of this event, but its ability to stand the test of time certainly reinforces that it is one of, if not outright, the best. The only disadvantage that may be age related is that it would be nice to have a few more, and perhaps better organized maps and figures that went along with the text. I highly recommend this book, it would be of interest to anyone wanting to learn more about Constantinople, Greek history, Turkish history, Islamic history, the early Renaissance, and the intricacies of Papal, Venetian and Genoan relations. This is also a great book for anyone who is just looking for a good book.

Sir Steven Runciman had a unique talent for conveying historical information with a flair. He did not convey history as a collection of unrelated facts to dates but instead provided all the color and nuances behind those facts and dates which gave them life. Only a few historians write in a way that transports the reader to the subject time, place, and people the way Sir Runciman has in this little volume. The book is organized by describing the background and focusing on the last Emperor and Sultan Mehmet II as the key individuals in that background. It continues with a description of the weaknesses that prevented the west from providing efficacious help to Constantinople. Attention then turns to the siege and fall followed by an overview of the exodus of learned Byzantines to the west which helped to spark the renaissance. A map of Constantinople and a pictorial depiction of the disposition of troops during the siege provides some detail for context. I would have liked more maps of the other geographical areas mentioned to provide the greater world context and that is my single critical point on this volume. That so much information could be conveyed in so few pages with such brilliant flair is testament to his reputation. This is still the definitive work on the last years of Constantinople and the final fall of the Byzantine empire. It is a must have for ancient history libraries and a must read for historians wishing to communicate historical lessons in writing.

Post-modernist historians will tell you that there are no such things as historical turning points but

(as in so many other things) they are mistaken, and one of history's great watersheds is the the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks. This was the final chapter of classical European civilization and the beginning of the greatness of the Ottoman Empire. Certainly those who witnessed or were contemporaries thought this event an earth-shattering occurrence, for good or ill. And who better than to tell this epic story than Steven Runciman, an old-school historian and writer of the first rank. Even though you know the outcome, you are swept up in his flawless narrative. Runciman was a classicist and a philhellene, so the Byzantines are definitely the good guys in this book, but no matter, for their fate was cruel. The historical background and the fates of the survivors are also covered. A very very good history book indeed.

This was the first book I read by Runciman and I was immediately enamored with his style. He conveys both the strategic and human elements well with sprinklings of the concurrently developing subplots throughout. While the title itself leaves no doubt as to the outcome of this tragic tale, the reading is an engrossing story and you are left spellbound as history unfolds through the pages. I have used this book to introduce friends to medieval history(although it takes place towards the end of that period) and have then had them come back to me to suggest other books in this field of study with intrigued interest. An epic tale of the final winking out of the glory that was the Byzantine Empire presented by a master storyteller.

It's a great story and this book tells it well, with particularly good attention on the background. The events are told thoroughly but without losing the narrative thread of a good story. I found it quite gripping.

The print is too small - not comfortable to read!

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