**UNIVERSITY OF 8 MAI 1945, GUELMA**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**Lecture in Culture and Civilization**

**First year, LMD**

**The Byzantine Empire**

The Byzantine Empire preserved much Roman culture. However, another branch of Christianity developed in the Eastern Roman Empire.

**A Continuing Empire**

Constantine moved the capital of the empire to Byzantium and renamed the city Constantinople. It became the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. Because of the city’s original name, historians call the Eastern Roman Empire the **Byzantine Empire**.

The Byzantine Empire continued for about 1,000 years after the Western Roman Empire fell. The emperor of the Byzantine Empire was an **absolute ruler**. That means he had total power. Like the emperors of the Western Empire, Byzantine emperors struggled to keep Germanic peoples and other invaders out of their lands. Despite their efforts, much Byzantine land was lost.

**Justinian:** A powerful ruler named **Justinian** was able to regain control over some of the land Rome had lost and expand the Byzantine Empire. Justinian ruled from 527 to 565.. Justinian’s armies reconquered lost territories, including Italy, northern Africa, and the southern coast of Spain.

**Rebuilding Constantinople:** Justinian also began to rebuild Constantinople, which had been damaged during a revolt. He rebuilt the city walls and constructed schools, hospitals, law courts, and churches. The most famous church was Hagia Sophia. Its name means “Holy Wisdom.” Constantinople once again became a glorious city.

**Preserving Roman Culture:** Justinian is best remembered for the legal code developed during his rule. He appointed a committee to create a legal code based on Roman law. These experts dropped outdated laws and rewrote others to make them clearer. The new uniform code of law was called the **Justinian Code**. It included laws on marriage, slavery, property, women’s rights, and criminal justice.

Although they spoke Greek, Byzantines thought of themselves as part of the Roman cultural tradition. Byzantine students studied Latin, Greek, and Roman literature and history. In this way, the East preserved Greek and Roman cultures. In the former Western Empire, the Germanic peoples blended Roman culture with their own. However, they lost much of the scientific and philosophical knowledge of the Greeks and Romans.

**Differences Divide Christianity**

The division of the empire also affected Christianity. Different religious practices developed in the Christian churches in the East and West. Cultural practices and limited contact between the two regions caused these differences.

**The Church Splits:** One difference had to do with the authority of the emperor over church matters. In the East, the emperor had authority over the head of the church. In the West, there was no emperor. As a result, the pope began assuming more responsibilities as the leader of the former Western Empire.

Problems between the two churches began to grow. The pope claimed authority over the churches in both the East and the West. However, Byzantine emperors considered themselves the final authority on religious matters. **Delegates** of the pope attempted to remove the Eastern head of the church. The Eastern Church responded by refusing to recognize the authority of the pope.

Finally, in 1054, the Christian church split in two. The church in the West is known as the **Roman Catholic Church**. The branch of Christianity that developed in the Eastern Roman Empire is known as the **Eastern Orthodox Church**. *Orthodox* means “holding established beliefs.” Over time, the split led to the development of two separate European civilizations, one based in the East and one in the West.

**Two Branches of Christianity**

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| **Roman Catholic** | **Similarities** | **Eastern Orthodox** |
| • The leader, called the pope, has authority over the bishops.  • Pope has authority over all kings and emperors.  • Priests may not be married. | • Faith is based on Jesus and the Bible.  • Leaders are priests and bishops.  • Both churches want to convert people to Christianity. | • The leader, called the patriarch, and the bishops run the church as a group.  • Emperor has authority over officials of the church.  • Priests may be married.  . |

**Religion and Government:** After the split, the pope claimed authority over Christian emperors and kings. howver, the emperor of the Byzantine Empire was the absolute ruler. He had power over the church as well as the government. This meant that the emperor ruled over the patriarch, the leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Overall, Byzantine emperors had greater power than the emperors or kings in the West.

**The Byzantine Empire Collapses**

After Justinian’s death in 565, the Byzantine Empire suffered many setbacks. There were street riots, religious quarrels, battles over the crown, and disease. In addition, the empire faced constant threats from foreign enemies.

Attacks came from all sides. Slavic peoples made frequent raids on the northern borders. Slowly, the Byzantine Empire shrank under the impact of these attacks.. Finally, in 1453, the Byzantine Empire ended.