

CHAPTER 16-THE TWO WORLDS OF CHRISTENDOM

With the end of the Roman Empire order, both political and social issues became a major concern. As the western half of the empire declined, the eastern half survived, despite facing challenges from the growing Muslim world. The west also suffered from Germanic invaders, especially the Franks, who took control of a large part of Western Europe.

Early Byzantium, built up by Constantine in the 330s C.E., was a wealthy, cosmopolitan city, due in part to its location. It contained baths, palaces, and public theaters and fancied itself the “New Rome.” The government was a civil and religious mix known as caesaropapism, in which the emperor had divine favor and played an active role in church affairs. The best known of these emperors was Justinian, along with his wife Theodora, was responsible for codifying civil law and attempt to reconstruct the old empire.

In the west, the Germanic Franks, notably the Carolingians, exert influence over Western Europe and under Charlemagne create a new empire. However, with the death of Charlemagne, the empire was divided and was vulnerable to invasion by the new threat, the Vikings.

Economically and socially there were vast differences in the east and west. Constantinople was a powerful and cosmopolitan city at the center of a vast trade network, while the west was experiencing reduced food production and, in urban centers, reduced population. The Byzantine Empire had silk, a banking system, and its coin, the bezant, was the standard currency for a large portion of the Mediterranean world. The west was still suffering invasions at this time. However, a new heavy plow and the use of horse-power increased food production, and by 900 recovery had begun. Trade was also growing slowly: the Italians from the south and Norse merchants began following the old Viking routes.

The west also saw the development of feudalism, a system of local organization. Goods and services were exchanged at all levels within the organization, the peasants producing most of what was needed. With the introduction of new foods and farm technologies, the west began to see an increase in population.

The two halves of Christendom continued to argue over theology and organization. The west had a pope and the east a patriarch. In the west, Gregory I made the church the only unifying force but the patriarch continued to struggle with the friction caused by caesaropapism. Both churches reach out with both missionaries and use monasteries to both help people and create religious communities. In the end, the differences could not be overcome, and in 1054 the schism in the church developed, a division that continues into the twenty-first century.

Key Concept 3.2. Continuity and Innovation of State Forms and Their Interactions

- I. Empires collapsed and were reconstituted; in some regions new state forms

emerged.

Key Concept 3.3. Increased Economic Productive Capacity and Its Consequences

- II. The fate of cities varied greatly, with periods of significant decline, and with periods of increased urbanization buoyed by rising productivity and expanding trade networks.