

Eastern Orthodoxy

The Byzantine Empire of Eastern Europe was centered around the city of **Constantinople** which existed nearly 1,000 years after the collapse of Rome. As the heir to Rome, it promoted a brilliant civilization that blended ancient Greek, Roman, and Christian influences with other traditions of the Mediterranean world. The Byzantine Empire was united by their own form of Christianity, **Eastern Orthodoxy**. The roots of this form of Christianity originated from the earliest church established by St. Paul and the Apostles. These Christians believed in the teachings of Jesus, the Bible, the sacraments, a church hierarchy (patriarchs, bishops and priests), proselytizing, and intolerance toward other non-Christian religions.



The cultural diversity in the region in which Eastern Orthodoxy developed can be seen in its symbolic characteristics. For example, the E. Orthodox Christians were especially known for their colorful mosaics, religious paintings of Jesus, Mary, and other saints, and architectural styles using domed ceilings. The Church of **Hagia Sophia** is an example of such art and architecture. Other defining characteristics included the ability of priests to marry, let their beards grow long, and their use of the Greek language as the official E. Orthodox Church language.

Spread of Eastern Orthodoxy

Аа	Бб	Вв	Гг	Дд	Ее	Ёё	Жж	Зз
a	b	v	g	d	e	jo	z	z
[a]	[b]	[v]	[g]	[d]	[ye]	[yo]	[z]	[z]
Ии	Йй	Кк	Лл	Мм	Нн	Оо	Пп	Рр
i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	r
[i]	[y]	[k]	[l]	[m]	[n]	[o]	[p]	[r]
Сс	Тт	Уу	Фф	Хх	Цц	Чч	Шш	Щщ
s	t	u	f	x	c	č	š	šč
[s]	[t]	[u]	[f]	[x]	[ts]	[tʃ]	[s]	[c]
Ъъ	Ыы	Ьь	Ээ	Юю	Яя			
'	y	''	è	ju	ja			
silent	[ʏ]	silent	[e]	[y]	[ya]			

E. Orthodox Christianity was able to spread through the use of such missionaries. E. Orthodox missionaries traveled throughout the Balkans and Russia, and developed an alphabet known as **Cyrillic script** that made it possible to translate the Bible and other literature into Slavic languages. Slavic-speaking peoples in the Balkans and Russia therefore were able to read religious scripture and this helped in the process of conversion.

Who's Who in the Church

Unlike Roman Catholicism, E. Orthodox Christians did not recognize the Pope as the head of their Church. This disagreement caused a schism between the two empires. Instead, they had their own **Patriarch**, or highest church official, which was appointed by the Emperor (each main center of the Eastern Church had its own patriarch who saw himself as equal to the pope). The Emperor also made decisions about church laws, called church councils into meetings, and generally treated the Church as a department of the Byzantine government. Because of the Emperor's power in the Church, E. Orthodox Christians rejected the Roman Catholic Pope's claim to authority over all Christians. The E. Orthodox Church also justified the supreme and absolute rule of the emperor making him a God-anointed ruler. A network of bishops and priests spread the message of the Church to every corner of the empire and carried out day-to-day church services, while numerous monks were highly influential with the elite and ordinary people.

Powers of the Church & Government Influence

The E. Orthodox Church was responsible for carrying out the sacraments while monasteries also cared for the sick and poor. The Church was also heavily tied to the government and this connection can be seen in **Justinian's Code**. Emperor Justinian collected all of the existing Roman laws and organized them into a single code of law. This code had specific laws related to religion where it even required all persons in the empire to belong to the E. Orthodox Christian faith.

