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## The Dark Age Church Period of Barbarian Invasions

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### 3

## The Dark Age Church

### Period of Barbarian Invasions

### AD 500—1000

#### Introduction

With the endorsement of the Emperor and obligatory church membership for all Roman citizens across the empire, Roman Christianity continued to change the nature of the Church, in stead of visa versa. The humble beginnings were soon forgotten in the luxurious halls and civil power of the highest courts and assemblies of the known world. Who needs spiritual power when you can have civil power?

The transition from being the persecuted to the persecutor, from the powerless to the powerful with Imperial and divine authority brought with it the inevitable seeds of corruption. Some say that Christianity won the known world in the first five centuries, but a closer look may reveal that the world had won Christianity as well, and that, in much less time.

The year 476 usually marks the end of the Christian Roman Empire in the West. That is the year the long line of emperors inaugurated by Augustus (27 BC – 14 AD) ended, and the undisguised rule by German leaders began (Shelley, 1995, p. 153).

For the next five hundred years the church (500-1000) was externally struggling for universal acceptance as an authority figure in a divided empire, while internally arguing for how to define what the Church believes.

Should the bishop in Constantinople, next to the emperor, have the maximum authority, or the bishop of Rome where the church was first founded under Peter's supposed apostolic authority? Does Christ have two natures or one? These and other questions would never be resolved; rather they will culminate in a major split of the Catholic Church into the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Western Roman Catholic Church in 1054. Leaving churches to decide on their own, only invited a myriad of divergent views and heresies. A powerful, authoritative figure would be necessary.

For example in 567 the Patriarchate of Alexandria was split into two rivals: the Coptic (Monophysite) and the Greek (Byzantine or followers of the Council of Chalcedon which held to the two natures of Christ). The Byzantines persecuted the Coptics worse than they were treated by the Muslim Arabs 60 years later. Christians in these days were confused, terrified, fanatical and so involved in doctrinal disputes that evangelism meant winning someone to your side of the argument. The focus was on getting Christianity right. There is always an issue that keeps the church from its purpose.

In the sixth and seventh centuries the Roman Empire was in a state of decay and deterioration. The western empire was being overrun by tribal attacks and immigrations totally changing the balance of powers. Within a few centuries there were more disadvantages to being identified with the decadence of "Christian" Rome than attempting to remain independent. When Christianity meant being Roman, then by

association the Church was too identified with the moral deterioration of the empire to have any impact.

The Dark Ages refer to the period in W. Europe that describes the transition from the decay of the classical (Greek) culture to the beginning of the medieval culture in the eleventh century (the Renaissance). As the Roman Empire deteriorated into a collection of “barbarian” states with some form of Christian awareness, there was little loyalty to a Roman church authority and even less knowledge of the Bible. Roman “civilization” deteriorated into an unorganized power struggle between tribal territorial chiefs, forcing the Church to make its priority that of survival instead of global expansion.

The term *Christianity* had incorporated many concepts of the paganism that it sought to eradicate or Christianize. Syncretism became a pragmatic and irresistible trend in the obligated assimilation of hundreds of pagan cultures. The evolving Roman-Germanic culture became inseparable to the culture of the Church. To become a Christian you had to become a Roman citizen culturally. Thus the Christianizing of a nation became the civilizing of a people.

As the fifth century came to a close it had been 16 generations since the Ascension. Barnett and Johnson estimate that the world is 19.9% Christians and 31.2% evangelized. The Scriptures had been translated into 13 languages. The total martyrs since AD 33 are estimated at 2,102,00, that is 0.8% of all Christians since the Church began, which translates into 5,600 per year.

Much of the knowledge of the Scriptures and the biblical basis of faith were lost in the pomp and ceremony of cultural and traditional religion, not to mention the intrigue and power manipulations to keep and expand the church’s authority in a morally decaying world power struggle. There was no emperor in the West, the army was drafting every available man to battle the invading marauding tribal raiding armies, which forced people out of the urban cities into an isolated rural existence. Throughout the period of 500-950 the majority of Europe moved to the village and towns. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century there would be a revival of urban development.

As the Church of Rome consolidated its authority in the absence of imperial powers to govern in civil affairs in Italy and in the face of religious schisms, a significant authority was necessary to avoid the disintegration of the whole Church. Circumstances forced and justified a centralization of authoritative decision-making.

This age will be divided into two sections: 500—1000 AD called the **Barbarian or Viking Age**, and the next chapter, which will cover 1000—1517 AD called the **Roman Catholic Age**.<sup>1</sup>

### **First Period: Barbarian Age**

Just as the Church gained official sanction and freedom from persecution within the empire, invading enemies brought terrible destruction and death to many more Christians than before. The challenge of survival became the main issue in this period. Against risks that we cannot even imagine, a handful of stalwart soldiers of the cross, bearing no arms, launched counter offensives into the pagan invaders territories.

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<sup>1</sup> This was the age of the Inquisition, Crusades and Papal power at its peak.

## Christianization of Europe and Viking Invasions in the West (500—1000)

With the invading barbarian hordes from the north and north-east, much of the educational and religious centers were destroyed. Only in the far western part of the empire, in modern day Ireland, could one find monasteries that were dedicated to the best education of that day. Were it not for these educational monasteries learning would have been erased from Western Europe.

### *Irish Peregrini*



Throughout mainland Europe invading barbarian tribes swept across Europe destroying monasteries, towns, and any leadership. Europe was plunging into chaos. Beginning in 510 the Irish *Peregrini* [Irish Pilgrims], who were an unorganized wandering groups of hermits and preachers who had been trained in Irish monasteries, began to migrate across Europe and would do so for the next 300 years.

The *Peregrini* were a combination of asceticism, adventure, and mission practiced by monks who were led only by the Spirit without a pre-planned strategy. They walked across the Alps, Germany, Danube, Italy, as well as all the northern Scottish islands of Orkney (70 islands), reaching all the way to Iceland. Wherever they landed they established a new community like the one they had left behind. They were volunteer exiles like Abraham who would only know where they were going after the journey had begun, as a life-long commitment for the love of God.

Europe was in shambles at this time. It was said that no one living could remember the Roman Empire. The continent had been decimated by unending waves of attacks by the barbarian tribesmen. Corruption and moral decadence amid general chaos were the norm and Christianity was on the verge of dissolving into a syncretistic religion of Christianity intermingled with paganism. They would turn abandoned Roman army forts into monasteries, all the way to Italy. They preached publicly of the “salvation in Jesus, served oppressed, cultivated the life of the mind, and established several monasteries in the area, to which thousands flocked” (Warner 2000, p. 492).

They used an Irish writing-tablet called *pugilatores scotorum* as their main tool. With abundant sheep, whose hides were the source of the pages of written texts, copies of Scriptures were made available. Scriptoriums were established for the copying of Scriptures in Ireland.

The Irish “minisule” was some of the earliest use of small letters in writing, which became an instant attraction. In a world desperate for basic education these Irish “scholars” transformed Europe. They produced thousands of Christian scholars all over Europe. The conversions acquired in this extended evangelistic effort would make it one of the great missionary feats of all time.

However, they were spreading a Celtic Christianity, which was independent of the Roman Catholic Church and all of its power structure. The Celtic Christianity had to be transformed to submission to Rome.

By 545 the Irish monasteries at Clonard has 3,000 monks and at Belfast over 3,000. For a considerable time these missionaries were sent back to the mainland to evangelize the unreached tribal groups and areas devastated by the plagues and marauding wars of barbarian conquests.

Anyone interested in following Christ seriously would go to a monastery to be trained in godliness, disciplines, general education and how to organize other monasteries. Wherever they went this would be the cycle: evangelize, build a monastery, recruit candidates for the monastery, educate them for the ministry then send them out to evangelize and start more monasteries.

In the second half of the sixth century and 7<sup>th</sup> century Irish monks, filled with missionary zeal swept across Europe. **Columba** (521-597), a man of royal birth, was trained at Clonard. It was said that twelve students who studied in Clonard became known as the Twelve Apostles of Ireland and Columba was one of these. His noble end had an ignominious beginning. While copying manuscripts in a scriptorium, he made a copy of a psalter, or copy of the Psalms. Columba intended to keep the copy, but his superior disputed his rights, resulting in a battle in 561 in which several were killed. Columba was to be excommunicated for these deaths, but instead he was to be exiled. He volunteered to work as a missionary in Scotland/Britain.



How interesting that it was Britain that first gave the gospel to Ireland, now Irish missionaries spearhead the gospel back into Britain and Scotland who had been overrun by the savage Angles and Saxons destroying all forms of Christianity in the British Isles.

Columba, at 42 years of age, and his twelve companions traveled through Scotland. He converted the king of the Picts<sup>2</sup> and the new king of the Scots in 574 came for his blessing. He was eventually given land on the island of **Iona**, off the west coast of Scotland, which he used as a base of operations and perhaps the most famous missionary training center of all time. Iona became the only center for literacy in that region. Men would give up their lives of worldly pursuits to learn the disciplines necessary to withstand the rigors of missionary work among the unsaved. When they learned the skills, attitudes and maturity, they were sent out to take the gospel where it had not yet been announced. His model became the catalyst for the revitalization of monasticism and became the “apostle” to Scotland. For over two hundred years the monastery at Iona continued to send out missionaries to all parts of Europe.

**Columbanus** (540-615) left an Irish monastery in his mid-40s with 12 companions for the European continent, which had been overrun for years by barbarian tribes. He likewise traveled with twelve companions, establishing monasteries in Gaul (France), Switzerland, Burgundy and N. Italy. Other Irish missionaries went to Iceland, England, up the Rhine into Hungary and Italy. The primary evangelistic expansion during this early period came from Isles back to the mainland. He taught a Celtic monastic rule and Celtic penitential practices for those repenting of sins, which emphasized private



**Columba at Bridei's fort**

<sup>2</sup> A confederation of tribes in central and northern Scotland until the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

confession to a priest, followed by penances as sentence for reparation for the sins. He instituted a perpetual service of praise, one choir following another, non-stop day and night. His zeal and commitment attracted many to follow his strict monastic rule.

Clifton Warner of Regent College writes, “Celtic Christians knew of no other way of being a Christian but to be a Christian living in community. *Peregrini* were sent from a community, with others, to form the nucleus of a new community” (Warner 2000, p. 493).

Their lifestyle was four-fold: (1) robust, with a great love for life and creation; (2) ascetic, because they voluntarily deprived themselves of many comforts for the love of God; reflective, giving serious attention to reading, study and the development of the mind (music, art, and worthy books); (4) contemplative, practicing solitude and prayerful meditation (McNeill 1974, p. 157).



As Columba and his teams were evangelizing in the north, Pope Gregory the Great sent **Augustine** (530?-604) to Britain in 597, along with 40 Benedictine monks. However, when they heard of the savagery of the Anglo-Saxons, Augustine turned back to Gaul. When he communicated this to the Pope, he was ordered to return to Kent, in Britain, no matter what. Only seven of his monks were will to join him now that they knew what they were facing.

However, they were welcomed by King Ethelbert, who had some knowledge of the Christianity from his wife, Bertha, who was a Frankish (Gaulic) Christian. A condition of his marriage was the presence of a bishop (as a “confessor”). They had restored a church that dated from Roman times (pre-400).

The king listened to the gospel but initially he was not persuaded; however, he granted them liberty to preach the new religion, providing food and build a monastery outside the city walls in Canterbury. Within a year the king is converted, then, as was the custom of the time, his parliament adopted the new faith and in a single day Augustine baptizes the king and 10,000 Saxons at Canterbury by 598. The Canterbury Cathedral was founded and Augustine became the first of a long line of archbishops of Canterbury. These conversions were superficial at best, and practically were only maneuvers that were politically expedient.

Kane quotes Gough Meisser in his book *A concise History of the Christian World Mission* who describes the courageous missionary work of these Irish missionaries:

What is the debt the world owes to primitive Celtic Christianity? The answer is that it produced the greatest missionary effort the world has ever seen; that when Europe was overrun by the barbarian hordes, these wandering Irish saints pushed their settlements right into the heart of European heathendom, and from the North Sea to the Lombardic plains, from beyond the Rhine to the border of Brittany, Ireland kept the lamp of learning alight in those dark days, and not only made possible the Christianization of barbarian Europe, but educated and supplied the greatest teachers down to the time of Charlemagne” (Kane, p. 38).

Notwithstanding, the free Irish Christianity and Roman Catholicism came to a number of confrontations<sup>3</sup> that led to a meeting in NE England with King Oswy of Northumbria at a Synod at Whitby in 663. The Roman Catholics won the presentation forcing the Ionian Irish monks to withdraw. King Oswy said, “I dare not longer contradict the decrees of him who keeps the doors of the Kingdom of Heaven, lest he should refuse me admission” (referring to the Pope).



With the Celtic bishops in the north refusing to submit to Augustine’s authority and the papal archbishop in the south, a conflict was inevitable. With coordinate effort, mainly by the Celtic bishop Aidan (600-651) at York, the northern Celtic Christians were converted to Roman Christianity. By the end of the seventh century the conversion (“Christianizing”) of England had been completed. England inherited the missionary spirit of the Irish Celts and would produce some of the world’s greatest missionaries for over a thousand years.

By the conversion of the king, the peasant and rural population were automatically considered of the same religion, whether they knew anything about it or not. The King’s School at Canterbury claims Augustine as its founder and likewise to be the world’s oldest existing school.



The south of Ireland had already submitted to Rome (636) and the north yielded to Rome’s authority in 697. The primitive British Christianity withdrew to the mountains of Wales and the highlands of Scotland and offshore islands for centuries.

### *Dynastic Marriage Brokering Tactic*

As the Huns invaded from the East, large tribal groups were pushed westward. The East German Arian Burgundians settled North of Italy and South of Gaul, cutting off the Soissons of Gaul, who were Trinitarian Roman Catholics, from Rome. In a world made up of mostly Arians and pagans, the Roman Church had to secure allies or they would be over-run.

Rather than constantly going to war to expand the Church, a new tactic was developed. Arranged marriages have been the custom throughout history, so the Catholic hierarchy would find a Catholic princess, the broker a marriage between the head of the Germanic people. Though the warring chief might never convert to Christianity, the bride would arrive with her entourage, which included a “confessor” priest or bishop to this people, whose task would be to raise up the offspring of the king in the Catholic faith.



In 516 the Burgundians had converted to an Arian form of Christianity, then under king Sigismund, to Roman Catholic Christianity. They were an East Germanic tribe,

<sup>3</sup> The primary issues were the rules that would govern the monastic life, the tonsure (bald head) haircut and the date of Easter.

which had migrated from Scandinavia.

The influence of women in the spread of the gospel is nowhere more evident than in the marriage arrangement between Clovis, king of the Franks, in 493 who married a 17-year old Burgundian princess Clotilda, who converted him to the Catholic faith. In turn, her daughter was married to the king of the Visigoths.

There would be an unbroken repetition of arranged Christian marriages with pagan or Arian kings, whose descendants would be brought up as Roman Catholics loyal to Rome. Little concern was focused on the peasants and plebs since they were obligated to follow whatever the religion of their king. Thus, little by little, Europe was converted to Roman Catholicism.

Burgundy would become allies with the Franks, then absorbed into the Frankish kingdom.

In the East the doctrinal divisions forced the emperor Justin I to dispose of church leaders who accepted the Monophysite doctrines, arresting their bishops and clergy and killing many accused of heresy. Soon such persecution spread throughout the eastern Roman Empire with 55 Monophysite bishops being expelled from their dioceses.

Meanwhile, in 520 the Nestorians (Syriac evangelists) were reported reaching Ceylon, India with many converts, also among the Huns, Turks, Ulghurs (Mongolia) and in Tibet and Sumatra, Indonesia.

By 525 Christianity was firmly established in the Arabian Peninsula until the Islamic conquest in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Roman Catholic Monasticism***

In 529 an Italian monk, **Benedict** of Nursia (480-547) founded a monastery at Monte Cassino, Italy (the first of twelve) and established a Rule of daily life for the monks that he learned from John Cassian. Benedict is considered the father of the Western Christian monasticism. One of the objectives of these monasteries was to create a scriptoria for mass Bible production by monks and lay artists. Benedict became so upset with the immorality in Roman society that he quit his studies there and chose the life of an ascetic monk in the pursuit of personal holiness, living as a hermit in a cave.



**Benedict monastery Mte Cassino**

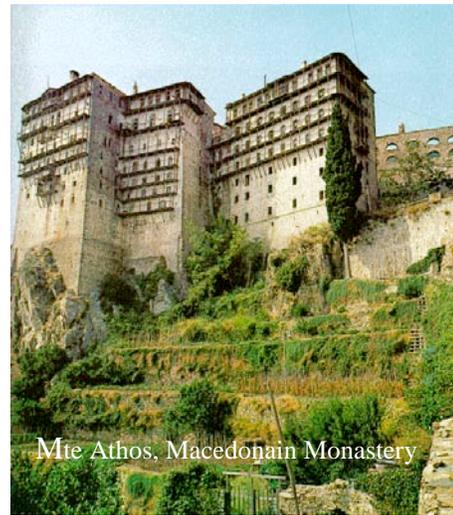
The basic objective of the monastic life was to renounce one's own will and acquire the "strong and noble weapons of obedience to the true King, Christ the Lord." By learning the "way of salvation," which is seen as a series of acts of obedience, then persevering in the monastery till death his disciples may "through patience share in the passion of Christ, that they may deserve also to share in his kingdom." Thus the primary objective was to earn the right to be accepted in heaven if they persevere to the end. It was a protected, disciplined world where a person could avoid the

corruption and temptation of the world and hopefully be accepted as worthy by God.

The Rule of the Benedictine monasteries could be summed up in the daily activities of the monks:

In Benedict's rule the monk's entire waking day, roughly seventeen hours, was divided among three activities: manual labor, the prayerful reading of Holy Scripture (*lectio divina*), and choral prayer, especially the praying of the Psalms. Even while the monk ate his sparse meals each day, he listened to one of his brothers reading Holy Scripture.

The monks and nuns pursued their goals – purity of heart and the gift of constant prayer – by ingesting massive daily dosages of Scripture. They gave themselves total to God not only by denying themselves and serving others, but by allowing themselves to become saturated in and absorbed by the power of God's Word. Monks took seriously that principle of Jerome of Bethlehem (347-419) who said, "To be ignorant of the Scriptures is to be ignorant of Christ"



In 535 a massive eco-catastrophe of lengthy sub-freezing weather (even snowing in the summer months), resulting in famines, plagues, and other hardships related to inclement weather. Barely six years later (542) a contagious bubonic plague sweeps across the Byzantine Empire for 2 years. The plague began in Egypt, reaches Italy, Africa, killing 45% of Constantinople, then across European Western Empire killing half of the population by 594. This devastation of old Europe gave the opportunity for the eventual rise of new world leaders in Spain, Portugal and Britain.

By 578 the Nestorians gave Christianity the first recorded Chinese Christians who were converted by immigrant "tentmakers" from Persia that traveled along the Old Silk Road and based in Lintao in Kansu province, China. Christians were spreading out throughout the known world. The fact that they were few and often from a questionable Christianity, yet it was the love a Savior however He is defined that drove them to the ends of the world. Why were the orthodox Christians not as concerned for the pagans?

China was the most civilized and wealthiest nation in the world at this time. The first resident Nestorian (Assyrian Church) missionary to China arrived in China in 638, or perhaps earlier. He was welcomed by the Tang emperor Kao-tsu, who issued an edict of universal toleration and approval for propagation of Christianity throughout the empire. The first Christian church in China was then built, with 21 Persian monks in the work. This toleration would last until the Tang dynasty adopted anti-religious laws in 845.

By the end of the first millennium, Christianity had reached Mongolia, Tibet, Korea and Japan. Later under the Yuan or Mongol dynasty (1271-1368) Christianity would return under the Franciscans Roman Catholics and the Assyrian Church as well.

Rome made some fatal mistakes in their accommodation of masses of pagans quickly forced into Christianity:

From the sixth century, the church and the imperial government as well encouraged the development of both Christian icon-making and the honoring of monastic holy men. They did not realize that the uncontrolled multiplying of icons and holy men would make people confine their Christian devotion to local shrines and figures. Most ordinary Christians failed to distinguish between the holy object or holy person and the spiritual reality it stood for. They fell into idolatry (Shelley, 1995, p. 147).

In 589 the Arian Visigoths in Spain converted to Catholicism, as it became the state religion at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Council of Toledo.<sup>4</sup> As the tribal barbarians converted to Roman Catholicism, largely because of political expediency and marriage alliances, instead of any doctrinal conviction, fewer and fewer groups were holding on to the Arian views.

Terry quotes E. A. Thompson who stated that “none of the Germanic tribes, with the exception of the Rugi wer converted while still living beyond the Roman frontier. It would seem to follow that the act of crossing the imperial frontiers and settling down on Roman soil necessarily and inevitably entailed the abandonment of paganism and conversion to the Roman religion” (Terry 1998, p. 181).

By 600 there had been 19 generations since Christ and the world is 20.8% “Christian,” and 33.2% evangelized, with Scriptures translated into 14 languages. The total martyrs since Christ is estimated at 2,197,000 (about 0.5% of all Christians), which is about 1.000 per year average.

The Christian message reached Turkestan by 600 through the Nestorian (Persian) Church, which would congregate over 8 million followers by 760, before Islam brought an end to Christianity in these regions. In 612 the Nestorians sent the first Christian mission to China. Earlier pioneer missionaries had pleaded for a team of reinforcements.

The Nestorian church is often referred to as the “missionary church par excellence.” Though they expanded for 6 or 7 hundred years they eventually were slowed by the Mongol invasions of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Terry reports, “Although their austere monastic nature prevented them from identifying with the Chinese culture, and contributed to their demise, they deserve a special place in missionary history” (Terry 2000, p. 185).

In 612 an Irishman named Gallus, disciple of Columbanus, began to Alemanni, founds the Swiss church, freeing Columbanus to move on to Lombards in Milan, where he starts the Bobbio monastery

In 617 in the West one of the earliest **Viking** sea raiders landed on an island south of Iona where 54 Celtic monks were massacred, followed by a similar fate on other small island monasteries in the Hebrides.

By 621 **Buddhism** becomes the state religion of **Japan**.

By 670 the earliest Old English (Anglo-Saxon) Bible translation was completed by various contributors.

By 680 the first translation of the Scriptures in Arabic, thought the whole Bible was not complete until 750.

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<sup>4</sup> There will be a total of eighteen Councils of Toledo by 702, each dictating a series of laws and liturgy.

## Unholy alliance between church and state

By 690 the Frisians and Netherlands (the resistant northern tribes) were evangelized by Willibrord (658-739) from Ripon, England. Willibrord had spent 12 years studying at the Abbey of Rathmeisigi, which was the center of European learning in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. He, and 12 other colleagues were sent to the Frisians, at the request of Pepin, Christian king of the Franks, to Christianize the pagan North Germanic tribes. He built a monastery at Utrecht and several others. Such construction was only possible with the highest authority of a foreign power. Such support was in the hope that by converting the Frisians to Christianity, the Franks could gain control of the important port of Dorestad. In 716 the king of the Frisia, burnt the churches and killed many missionaries. At the death of king Radbod, Willibrord returned with Boniface, under the protection of Charles Martel, until his death.

The Germans would finally come to know Christianity by way of Irish and English monks, notably by the most renowned missionary of the Dark Ages, **Boniface** (680-754), whose career lasted over 40 years, earning him the title of Apostle to the Germans. Boniface was from a well-to-do family, but devoted himself early to training in discipleship and theology. While a teacher in England as a teacher he wrote the first Latin grammar published in English.

In 722 Pope Gregory II commissioned him as a bishop of the German frontier. This meant that there were virtually no believers among the German people and it was Boniface's task to change that statistic. In a bold attempt to demonstrate the powerlessness of the pagan god, Boniface takes an ax to the sacred oak tree of Thor. He boldly called on Thor to strike him dead, if he were there. When nothing happened to him, the people were amazed and yielded to Christianity.

The support of the Frankish mayors of the palace and the rulers of the Pippin and Carolingian rulers was essential to Boniface's success. He was under the protection and financial support of Charles Martel from 723 on. Boniface provided education for the Carolingian kings. The destruction of the animistic Germanic religion was likewise beneficial to the Frankish campaign against the Saxons (Germans). The political favor and support was contingent on the conversion of the Saxons and other Germanic tribes to Christianity so as to incorporate them into the growing Frankish empire. Thus the missionary became an agent of the state.

Boniface was killed on one of numerous attempts to convert the Frisians. On one trip several had been converted and baptized. Later he was meeting with them for confirmation, but an armed band took the law into their own hands and killed him and fifty other Christians in 755 for destroying a shrine years before.



**Boniface Bishop and Martyr**



The conversion of the Saxons, a confederation of old Germanic tribes, had a number of contingencies worth noting to get a realistic picture of the time.

Their conversion during the reign of **Charlemagne** (771-814) was effected more by military conquest and intimidation than by moral or religious persuasion. The association between missionary efforts and military tactics to accomplish their dominion had disastrous effect.

Charlemagne was the first ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, which would last over a thousand years. He mixed religion and politics manipulating them for his objectives. Stephen Neill wrote of his tactic, “Once a German tribe had been conquered, its conversion was included in the terms of peace, as the price to be paid for enjoying the protection of the emperor and the good government that his arms ensured” (Neill, p. 79).

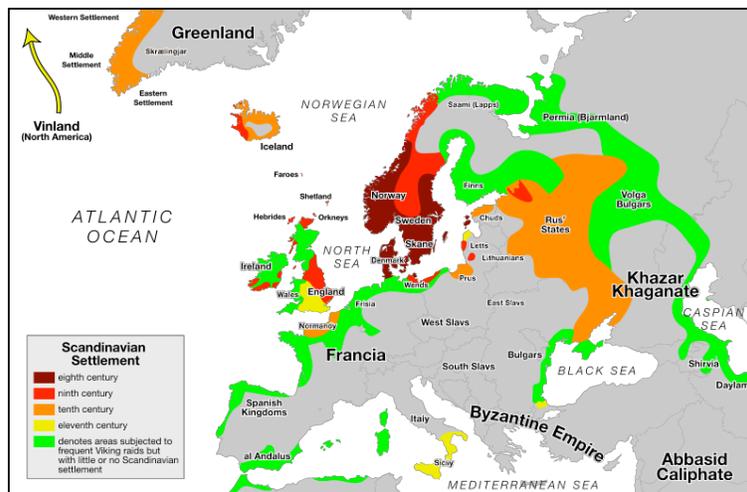
It was no surprise when the Saxons wanted neither Christianity nor Roman civilization. Both had to be forced on the Saxons by military conquest and tortures. The Saxon wars lasted between 772-804.

Kane describes an occasion when 4,500 Saxon men, women and children were massacred; whole communities were wiped out in an effort to impose Christian civilization on this pagan people.

The Saxons rebelled and retaliated especially against the defenseless missionaries. It was said that for every one missionary who was killed, two quickly replaced him or her. Gradually, through much sacrifice and patience, prayer and persistence, the missionaries won their hearts. Christianity finally prevailed by the death of Charlemagne.

### Beginning of the Viking Age

Meanwhile, by 699 the Irish Monks sail northward to Faeroe islands in the North Atlantic, half way between Scotland and Iceland, a most difficult mission. However, soon thereafter the Vikings would destroy the earlier Christianity until they themselves would be Christianized centuries later. As the Viking age was beginning in the North, the South and East was being devastated by a new religion that would change everything.



### Encounter with Islam in the South and East (622—1215)

Meanwhile in the East, the greatest threat to Christianity was beginning: in 622 **Mohammed** (570-632) made his famous move (*Hegira*) from Mecca to Medina in the first step of his conquest and teaching. Kane quoted Will Durant saying, “The explosion

of the Arabian peninsula into the conquest and conversion of half the Mediterranean world is the most extraordinary phenomenon in medieval history” (Kane, p. 49). This militant-missionary religion, Islam, has always been the greatest danger to Christianity and the world to this day.



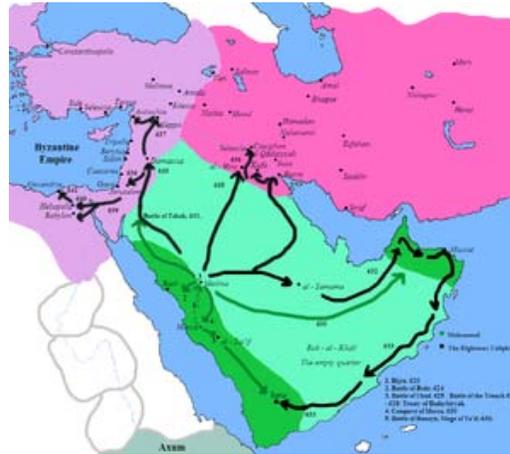
**Cave of  
Mohammed's  
revelations**

Mohammed was orphaned at six and raised by his uncle in Mecca, a caravan town between India and Egypt. He was an illiterate member of the Quraysh tribe, the ruling tribe in Mecca. Discontented with life in Mecca, he lived in a cave in the surrounding mountains dedicating himself to meditation and reflection.

At the age of 40, in the month of Ramadan, he saw his first revelation of the angel Gabriel who supposedly called him to his life's work saying: "O Mohammed! Thou art the messenger of Allah, and I am Gabriel." Three years later he started preaching these revelations publically. He developed a theology borrowing from Judaism, Christianity and Arabian folklore. He taught that "God is One" and that complete "surrender" or "submission" to Him (meaning of *islam*) is the only way to be acceptable to God.

He was rejected and persecuted in Mecca so he fled to Medina in 622, the *Hejira*. This event would mark the beginning of the Islamic calendar. In Medina, Muhammad was able to unite disgruntled tribes with whom he began an 8-year battle with Meccan tribes. Meanwhile his army had grown to ten thousand. By the time of his death in 632 he had united all the tribes of Arabia into a single Muslim religious army on a mission.

Mecca (now called the *Kaaba*) had housed the statues of 360 idols of local tribal deities where pre-Islamic faithful made an annual pilgrimage. Above these tribal deities there was a supreme deity, Allah ("the god") who was remote from daily concerns, thus not an object of worship. Three monotheistic communities existed in Arabia: Jews, Christians and *Hanifs*, a pre-Islamic monotheists. According to Muslim tradition this was belief from the descendants of Ishmael, son of Abraham, from which Muhammad belonged.



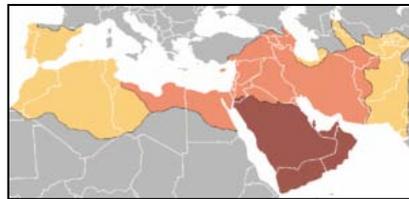
He injected a fanaticism into the religion that was to conquer the world that through a series of rapid military victories in all directions out of modern Saudi Arabia until it became a world religion. By 635 they conquered Damascus; 636, Antioch; 638, Jerusalem; 640, Caesarea, and 642, Alexandria. They swept across N. Africa taking Carthage in 697 and by 715 had conquered half of Spain. As they crossed the mountains into France Charles Martel stopped them in a decisive battle in 732 in Tours, France. In the meantime, further in the East, the Muslims were entering Punjab, India and Central Asia. By the end of the eighth century a five hundred year period of non-aggression existed until thirteenth and fourteenth century following the Crusades.

### *Spread of Islam*

Several factors within and without of Islam motivated its unusual expansion:

1. A simple, monotheistic theology that gave hope of wealth, leadership and a sensual salvation for the men with 70 virgins for those who participated in their world conquest, especially if they died in a “Holy War.”
2. The Roman Empire was virtually defenseless due to its multiple-front wars draining its resources as well as those of the Persian Empire during the reign of Emperor Heraclius (610-641) creating a power vacuum just as Islam was beginning. Neither the Persians nor the Byzantines<sup>5</sup> were able to stand against the fanatical Muslim Arabs.
3. The Byzantines alienated most of their provinces by demanding high taxes to finance the Persian wars and excommunicating them for heretical religious views.
4. In the East many Semitic people groups in the Byzantine provinces had more in common with the Arab invaders (also a Semitic people) than they did with their Byzantine (Greek) overlords.
5. The Muslims did not destroy everything, as did the Huns. They kept the social infrastructure, only replacing the top leaders. Initially only the non-Muslims had to pay taxes. It was obviously advantageous to maintain a prosperous economy in their conquered territories.
6. The use of statues and images in worship of the Catholic Church made Christianity appear polytheistic to both the Muslims and many Catholics of its day. Islam with its strict monotheistic emphasis seemed superior (Vos, 1994).

It was nearly a 100 years of victorious conquest before Islam could be stopped. Mohammed conquered most of western Arabia before he died in 632. Abu Bakr (632-634) succeeded him conquering the rest of the peninsula and sending volunteers into Syria and Persia. Omar (634-644) began a conquest of the Byzantine provinces defeating Damascus (635), Jerusalem (638), Alexandria and Egypt (640), meanwhile



**Caliphate and Islamic Civil war 650-750**

the Persian Empire surrendered to Islam. Various leaders led the conquest across N. Africa from 685 to 705. In 711 the Muslims with an army of only 20,000 defeated the Arian Visigoths in Portugal, then invaded and defeated them in Spain in 715, continuing into France. It seemed that Europe and Christianity was doomed, while in the East Islam was spreading to India and Indonesia. After the defeat by the Muslims, the population of the Iberian peninsula is about 4 million Spaniards and 50,000 immigrant Arabs.

In the East, a Muslim state was established in India in 712, in 741 threaten Tibet; in 751 defeat the Chinese Army in Kirghizstan ending Chinese control over central Asia.

While Europe was sinking in the Dark Ages, the intellectual baton was passing to the Muslims. Kane describes Baghdad as having twenty-six public libraries with

<sup>5</sup> The Eastern Empire based in Constantinople became Greek in language and culture (whereas the Western Empire remained Latin) after the decay and fall of the West to the barbarian tribes that immigrated and changed the culture of the West.

numerous private ones. One prince like Sahib ibn Abbas in the tenth century is said to have owned more books than could be found in all the libraries of Europe combined!

Although numerous bands of Christians were killed in their conquests, most were given a status of *dhimmis*, or “protected people.” They could practice their religion, but under strict conditions: heavy taxation and no converting proselytes, but generally free to practice their religion. In fact, the non-Catholic Christians (Coptics, etc.) were better off under the Muslims than under the Byzantine Orthodox Christians. Likewise, the Nestorians in Persia were better off under the Muslims than the Persian Zoroastrian rulers. The Christians shared the Greek culture by translating classical Greek writings into Arabic.

They were, however, discriminated against harshly being reduced to second-class citizens, forced to wear a colored patch on their clothing, and sometimes a heavy 3-4 lb. cross around their neck. They could not build new buildings, nor ring their bells. People could convert to Islam, but no one was allowed to convert to Christianity, under severe penalty. To be an Arab was to be a Muslim; to become a Christian was to cease to be both. There was an open license, if not obligation, to kill anyone who defected.

Muslims in Iran (formerly Persia) belong to the Shi'ites, who are more tolerant than the Sunnis. The **Shi'a or Shi'ites** are the minority denomination of Islam (but the majority in Iran, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon and Kuwait). The Shi'a follow the teaching of Muhammad, while the **Sunnis** follow the family of Muhammad (*Ahi al-Bayt*, “People of the House”), whose descendents are known as imams, with spiritual and political rule of the community.

For the Western Church, the greatest loss was N. Africa, which had large numbers of believers and had produced numerous great leaders (Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine). The N. African church had been comprised of 500 dioceses (one-fourth of all Christendom) and had a better educated and greater ecclesiastical power than either of the churches in Alexandria or Rome.

By the time of Christopher Columbus, 1492, Islam would be the largest religion in the world. Today it claims more that 20% of the world's population while aggressively pursuing world domination.

Why did the church of N. Africa so quickly disappear? Though there may be many reasons, their size may not have meant either sincerity or deep conviction. Kane summarizes four key reasons there was so little perseverance in the N. African churches:

1. It was too closely aligned with a foreign Latin culture and Roman exploitative and threatening power. Many of the people groups never embraced Christianity, such as the Punic people or the Berbers.
2. The failure to give the people the Scriptures in their own language. No translation was ever made in the Punic or Berber languages.
3. The theological controversies absorbed all the focus of the believers, such that there were so many divisions and factions among the leaders that Christianity became too confusing a sect to follow. “They were more interested in defending the purity of the gospel than in demonstrating its power” (Kane, p. 52). It was not just that they disagreed; rather it was that the other was unsaved and still pagan, who must be persuaded by all means to change sides of the debate. There was no consensus even on who is the common enemy.

- The evangelistic zeal of the Christian churches was smothered under the sacramental system dominated by the sacerdotal control. As a result when the Muslims conquered their lands, there was neither the will nor the power to resist. In a few decades all traces of Christianity in N. Africa had disappeared. Large numbers mean very little if there is no personal value system and deep conviction of its truth by every member.

### Rise of the Papal State

At the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, or 22 generations after Christ, the world is 19.8% Christian, the scriptures had been translated into 14 languages. The believers had evangelized approximately 29.3% of the known world. The total number of martyrs since Christ was estimated to be 2,423, 000 or 0.4% of all Christians ever, which translated to an aver of 2,300 per year.

The Papal States refer to the territories over which the Pope was the ruler with civil and as well as spiritual authority. This is called the *temporal power* of the Pope. Once the Church could own property, and spiritual favors were appraised by the sacrifice of the donation, then donors quickly contributed to the Church's coffers.



When Rome fell to the Odoacers and the Ostrogoths, the Church submitted to their authority. In the sixth century the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine) sought to re-conquer Italy, which took

decades and devastated the economy; only to be succeeded by the Lombard invasion from the north.

While the Lombards<sup>6</sup> were threatening to destroy the church in Italy, with all its vast holdings and estates, Islam was advancing across Spain into France. **Charles Martel** (688-741), mayor of the palace, ruler of the Franks, and General of the Army, defeated the Muslims at the Battle of Tours in central France in 732.

Most of Europe was organized around vast city-states. It took quite a leader to organize these powerful states into a disciplined army to defeat the charging cavalry of Islam. This gave Martel the title, "Charles the Defender," and leader of Western Christendom and the founder of the Carolingian Empire (his grandson was Charlemagne), which covered modern-day France and Germany. Martel established the feudal systems that continued through the Middle Ages.

The pope in Rome, Zacharias, recognized Pepin, son of Charles Martel, as the king of the Franks in 751. The rise of the Lombards, who threatened to confiscate all the properties of the church, the Pope got safe conduct to the court of Pepin,



<sup>6</sup> Germanic people originally from Northern Europe who settled in the Danube valley invading the B

becoming the first Pope to cross the Alps into Franks. The Pope confirmed the legitimacy of their dynasty as the “Patricians of the Romans” and protectors of the Holy See.

This alliance then obligated the Franks to aid the Pope against the Lombards who were defeated in two campaigns (754, 756), forcing the Lombard king to give all his territory to the Roman church, thus forming the Papal States, making the Pope the civil and spiritual ruler until 1870.



Since the Eastern empire was unable to come to the aid of the Roman Church the Pope was forced to depend upon the Frankish court in the West. Further dividing the two Church centers. This made the Bishop of Rome the largest landowner and most powerful and prestigious person in Italy.

### *Rise of the Holy Roman Empire (of the German Nation)*

On Christmas day, 800, Pope Leo III crowned **Charlemagne (742-814)** “emperor of the Romans,” leader of Western Christendom and monarch of a new Christian empire thus was born the Holy Roman Empire, which would basically exist for a thousand years with multiple leaders attempting to become the next Caesar until Napoleon abolished the empire in 1806.

Though there would be many struggles between the Pope and the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire as to who was the final authority, the Roman church had become universal or Catholic, including everyone. Everyone born within the empire became a baptized member of the church and remained in the church throughout life.



In 785 Charlemagne forced the entire Saxon population to be baptized. There were 4,500 executed in one day for resisting, while thousands more were deported. The entire society was divided into dioceses ruled by bishops, an administration that continues to this day.

Charlemagne controlled most of Western Europe especially through the Roman church. He regulated the lives of clergy, directed the bishops to establish schools, which resulted in the Carolingian Renaissance.

Charlemagne’s son and grandsons could not hold the empire together thus splitting it into three areas (Charles took France, Louis took Germany and Lothair took an indefensible stretch of land from the Lowlands to Italy). The Carolingian reign in Germany lasted until 887 France until 936 when a new Saxon line began. By 987 the Holy Roman Empire had become essentially a German entity with kings elected by and accountable to a number of powerful nobles from a number of feudalistic and antagonistic states.

Meanwhile external attacks continued against the Empire. In the ninth century the Vikings terrorized the British Islands and Northern coasts of the empire. In 785 the

Viking Norse pirates destroyed isolated monasteries, slaughtering the monks.<sup>7</sup> Muslims attacked Sardinia and Corsica and the coasts of S. France, and western Italy. The Slavs and Bulgars attacked in the East followed by the Magyars (from Russia) invaded in the East settling into Hungary. In 825 the Muslim caliph of Cordoba (Spain) executes 2 Arab nobles, brothers Adulfus and John, because they became Christians.

This was a very difficult time to focus on evangelism yet some temporary advances were made mostly by the non-Catholic Nestorians through the ninth century.

### **Decline of the Roman Catholic Church**

From 880 to 1000 the Carolingian line (from Charlemagne) was disintegrating and the Church was too closely tied to it. The Muslim attacks along the coast of Italy forced the Pope to maintain an Army and Navy to protect the Papal States, but in order to save Rome he had to pay an annual tribute. Italy was in anarchy. Wealthy families paid to make their son the Pope (i.e. Benedict IX). At two times there were three Popes (1045 and 1046).

### ***Investiture Controversy***

The appointment of church officials was theoretically the task of the Roman Church itself, but in practice, secular and wealthy leaders made the choices. Obviously it would be important to have someone who would be loyal to the secular leaders in the spiritual and temporal leadership of the vast organization of the Roman Church. Often money and promises passed in order to secure the sale of Church offices (called *simony*). Since the emperor selected the pope, and the pope appointed and crowned the next Emperor, there is a lot of bias interest in the choices that could be persuaded with funds.

Pope Gregory VII waited until 1056 when Henry IV became the German king at six years of age to take advantage of the opportunity to liberate the papacy from the control of the emperor. In the council of 1059 they declared that secular leaders could have no part of the decision of who would be the pope, created the College of Cardinals to make that decision.

He sought to eliminate some of the corruption of simony, as well as definitively establishing compulsory celibacy among the clergy. In 1075 Gregory declared the absolute authority of the Pope of Rome as the unquestionable and infallible authority. The investment of secular and spiritual authority of the Pope and bishops had been the prerogative of the emperor, which allowed a balance of power. By now Henry IV was no longer a boy, and reacted to this declaration of Gregory by withdrawing his imperial support of the pope, calling him a *false monk* and called for the selection of a new pope.

Gregory responded by excommunicating the king and deposing him as a German king (the pope had crowned the emperor thus granting him papal authority). The nobles took advantage of the opportunity to seize the royal holdings, both peasants and property and built up localized fiefdoms to secure their autonomy from the empire. Within a short

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<sup>7</sup> In 794 Viking raiders loot Iona again; 801, burn buildings; 806, kill 68 monks; 825 all monks slaughtered; 986, rebuilt community again massacred.

time Henry IV had no backing in the rebellion. In 1077 he traveled to Canossa, N. Italy, to meet the pope apologize and reconcile the relationship.

To show his penance for his sins, he wore a hairshirt and stood in the snow barefoot in the middle of winter. Gregory lifted the excommunication. Though there would be conflicts over the investiture controversy for fifty years until the Concordat of Worms in 1122.

As the imperial power decreased, the localized rights of lordship over peasants grew increasing serfdom and resulting in fewer rights of the population. Likewise the power of the papacy gained strength, which would enable the coordination and sacrifice of the Crusades.



Inside an Eastern Orthodox

### *Great Schism of the Catholic Church*

In a time of military losses, invasions of heresies, the two centers of Christianity slowly were drifting irrevocably apart. They disagreed on words to be used in the creed, different practices for Lent, different types of bread for the Eucharist and ambitious leaders increased the differences. Vos details their major differences as:

1. Controversy over use of images/icons (statues or paintings to represent saints and Jesus)—the closer the churches to Islam the less icons were acceptable.
2. Controversy over procession of the Holy Spirit: “who proceeds from the Father” (was the statement of the Nicene Creed), later unilaterally added, “and from the Son.” The Eastern Church was never consulted. This addition was to clarify that Arian converts must profess Jesus as eternal deity. This phrase is called the *filioque*.
3. Personality conflicts between Roman bishop and patriarch of Constantinople and the authority of the Roman Catholic Pope
4. Boundary disputes
5. Cultural and linguistic differences
6. Differences in relation to political authority
7. Liturgical and social differences (Vos, 1994)

In 1054 Pope Leo IX sent the hardliner Cardinal Humbert to Constantinople to hammer out an agreement with the Eastern emperor. The emperor was willing, but the Patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius, who was equally intolerant as Humbert, “humiliated the papal party and succeeded in provoking them into bringing that notorious Bull of Excommunication to the Church of Holy Wisdom” (Shelley, 1995, p. 149).

The sacking of Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade in 1204 and the theft of relics from ancient times would worsen the relationship until a final schism in 1450.

By the late Middle Ages the Eastern Church was reduced to a minority church where she had been the only state church! Her main expansion would be in the North land of Russia. The constant wars and the Muslim conquest changed everything.

### Early Reform Movement: Bogomilism

Though there had been different sects that attempted to exist under the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox dominion of all religious activity, their treatment was even crueller than under the Muslim oppression. The constant wars destroyed the lands leaving the peasants without a livelihood. The church was corrupt, superficial, meaningless, and totally allied with the aristocrats. A social-religious movement began around 950, which was a rebellion against the state and religious oppression.

### Beginning of Dissident Groups

**Bogomilism** (meaning “Dear to God” in Bulgarian) was a combination of Gnostic emphasis that had persisted in various forms, such as Manichaeism<sup>8</sup> and Paulicianism,<sup>9</sup> for centuries. These were dualistic sects that would give birth to the Cathars and Albigensians in the later medieval period.

The common thread was the belief in two gods; equal and opposite in power. One was the god of power and matter, which was seen as incompatible with love and spirit. Everything physical was considered evil, but the god that was worshipped was disincarnate: a being or principle of pure spirit and untainted by matter. He was the god of love, order and peace. Their purpose on Earth was to transcend matter, renouncing everything connected with power, in order to be in union with the principle of love. Man is supposed to reclaim or redeem matter, spiritualizing and transforming it. These “spiritual” values and goals would influence many forms of Christianity for centuries.



<sup>8</sup> Manichaeism is an Iranian Gnostic religion from Persia, from the prophet Mani (210-276), who claimed to be the “Paraclete of the Truth” promised in the NT, the last prophet in the line of Zoroaster, Buddha and Jesus. Their theology was dualistic (no omnipotent good power, but rather two equal and opposite powers in constant battle). The evil power created the earth and human body, whereas the good power created the soul and spirit, which is incorruptible, but is under the dominion of foreign power. This explains the problem of evil. Humans can be saved from this power (matter) if they come to know who they are and identify themselves with their soul. Augustine (354-430) was a member of this heretical sect for nine years.

<sup>9</sup> Paulicians were a Gnostic and Manichaean Christian group between 650-872 from Armenia and the Eastern Church. The Evil Spirit is the lord of the present visible world; the Good Spirit is of the future world. They accepted the four Gospels and most of the epistles of the NT, but rejected the OT. They rejected the Marian title (“Mother of God”), and refused to venerate Mary. Christ came to liberate men from their body and from the world, which are evil. They rejected the outward administration of the sacraments and their places of worship were called “places of prayer.” They ascribed creation to the evil God, but held the Scriptures in high honor (unlike the Manichaeans).

It is apparent why the Catholic Church opposed and oppressed these groups. They held that Jesus had died for the material creation and man; that the creator was evil, making Jesus the god of this world. They denied that Jesus could become incarnate and still be the Son of God, thus they rejected the significance of the Crucifixion. They saw the



**Great Moravia  
800**

wealth and luxury of the Roman church as the embodiment and manifestation of the god of this world. These concepts would become the seeds for justification of the Inquisition, the only means for eradicating these heretical beliefs.



**Great Moravian  
Church bldg 800**

All of these groups were very missionary, had their own hierarchy, liturgy, doctrine (Jesus was an angel). By 1150 to 1400 they were the virtual state religion of Bosnia and Serbia; By 1200, a vast network of Paulician-Bogomil-Cathar dualistic communities from the Black Sea to the Atlantic Ocean existed, but by 1400 were dissolved, either converting to Rome or Islam.

### **Missionaries in this period**

Gripped by missionary zeal, Celtic, English, and Benedictine monks traveled over Europe winning major unreached peoples to Christ: Picts, Angles and Saxons, Frisians, Slavs, Scandinavians, nominally Christian Franks, and many others. During the period of 800 to 1073 the boundaries of Christendom grew especially in Bohemia, Moravia, Poland, Norway, Sweden, Greenland, Denmark and Russia.

**Pope Gregory II (715-731)** Born in York, England, he succeeded in planting the Roman church among the pagan peoples of Holland and Denmark.

**Boniface (672-754)** came from Dovenshire, England, became the great missionary of Central Europe and became known as the “apostle to Germany” (or Holland). Throughout the region of the Franks he reformed the churches, abolished heathen customs, systematized the church organization and brought the Frankish bishops to full support of Rome.

**Cyril (826-869) and Methodius (816-885)** were successful among the Slavs in Great Moravia (871-894) and their disciples in Bulgaria during the ninth century; in Bulgaria King Boris made Christianity the official faith of the realm. Cyril was also culturally significant because he is credited with creating an alphabet in which Slavonic languages could be written; this was the basis of the alphabets in which almost all Slavonic languages are written to this day. During the tenth and eleventh centuries Russia was won over. Following the baptism of King Vladimir in 988 the Eastern Slavs as one body turned to the Eastern Christianity-just as the Franks had at the baptism of Clovis (Vos, 1994). There are many examples of people movements to Christianity through apparently these resulted in a nominal Christianity, that is, followers who follow superficially.

### **Methods Utilized**

Their methods were simple and powerful: prayer, discipline, character, serious bible study, community service, and preaching, often accompanied by *power-encounters*. Boniface, for example, was a monk with strong convictions about reaching unreached peoples. He staged a power-encounter before a large crowd by cutting down the sacred oak of Thor the Thunder-god. German mythology fell with the oak. Then Boniface used the wood to build a chapel, resulting in thousands of Germans turning from the god of thunder to the God of grace.



St Catherine Monastery in Sinai

**Monasticism**, more than any other institution, revived the church and evangelized and Christianized the unreached peoples of Europe. Historian Mark Noll calls this powerful expression of renewal and missions "the monastic rescue of the church." Thanks to these men and women who took seriously Christ's conditions for discipleship and Christ's commission to make disciples of all peoples, there was always light in the dark ages.

**Elaborate cathedrals.** The breathtaking magnificence of Constantinople and the awe-inspiring liturgy captured the loyalties of the envoys Vladimir, ruler of the Slavs in Russia, had sent to investigate the Christian faith in New Rome.

After they had attended services in the great Church of Holy Wisdom, the envoys told their master: "We know not whether we were in Heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendor or beauty anywhere upon earth. We cannot describe it to you; only we know that God dwells there among men, and that their service surpasses the worship of all other places. For we cannot forget that beauty" (Shelley, 1995, p. 149).



Russia would convert to Eastern Orthodox Christianity as a nation with the baptism of King Vladimir in 988 and have the perspective that they were the third Rome: The first had been corrupted by pagan invaders and Catholic "heresy" and the second Rome (Constantinople) had fallen to the Muslims. They built cathedrals to rival Rome and titled their king Tsar, Russian for "Caesar."



Cathedrals were the often the largest building in a town or diocese. The more money and talents used in its building were seen as how they honored God and symbolic of their devotion and the economic status of the donors.

Cathedrals are usually built on a floor plan of a cross, each part occupied by different groups, such as clergy, choir and laity. The main part of the building is called the nave, where the members congregate. The term is Latin for "ship," thus the ship is seen as the vehicle for bearing people through the storms of

life into the eternal life.

Elements of attraction included the finest art of Biblical concepts, statues of Bible characters, awe-inspiring size and construction, with towers that reach to the heavens. Every birth, marriage and deaths were registered in the cathedrals. Life was centered around the activities of the cathedrals. It was the identity of the people.

The question remains, however, did these methods generate true “belief” or merely nominal faith? Nominalism will result from “conversions” based on false premises (intimidation, peer pressure, coercion, or an emotional experience), rather than an understanding of the truth of the gospel and a commitment to trust that biblical truth. However, in a day when everyone was obligated to hold to a faith that was the faith of your nobleman or prince, then nominal followers was inevitable. Thus nominalism breeds an adulteration of the gospel, superstition and syncretism. The only solution is an on-going “teaching to obey all things that I have commanded you...” (Matt 28:20).

### **Important dates and events during this period that would change history:**

- 593 Purgatory invented and taught
- 607 Boniface III assumes title of Universal Bishop from Emperor Phocas
- 680 Papal infallibility invoked by Agatho of Rome
- 770? East Germany is reached by the first Christians (through Charlemagne’s violent conquest of Saxons).
- 780 Peak of the Nestorian influence in China which was documented by a large Nestorian monument (9 ft. high)in Xian, discovered in 1623.
- 800 Scholasticism was the Christian philosophy of the medieval scholars, grows in importance due to the importance of the Barbarian efforts at understanding the Christian faith. This philosophy will endure for 600 years with the 13<sup>th</sup> century becoming its “Golden Age.”
- 826 The first Christians in Denmark, led by first missionary Anskar (801-865), who becomes the apostle of the north.
- 840 Severe persecution against all foreign religions. Though primarily against Manichaeism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism, Christianity was likewise expelled.
- 850 Fifty Spanish Christians were martyred in Cordoba who were of Arab-Spanish birth included zealous ascetic monks. They were executed by Muslim rulers after being provoked into attacking the prophet Mohammed.
- 860 Nicholas I reveals heretical documents including the Donation of Constantine
- 860 Vikings of Scandinavia trade and plunder as far as Russia, Constantinople, Greenland, Iceland, Iona, Ireland, and Spain.
- 861 Conversion of Slavs under way through the ministry of Cyril and Methodius, who were sent to Moravia (Bohemia) at the request of prince Rastislav. By 900, Christianity is strong in Moravia.
- 950 First Christians recorded in Poland, following the baptism of the king; the conversion the Scandinavians (Northman) was increasing across Denmark, Norway and Sweden.
- 954 The Regent of Kiev, Olga (890-969) is baptized in Constantinople, returns to Russia to spread Christianity; her grandson would eventually make Christianity the state religion. She became the first Russian saint in the Eastern Orthodox Church. The archduke Vladimir (956-1015) is converted to Christianity (allegedly because of a

- prayer for healing from Olga, his grandmother) and orders all subjects to be baptized on a particular day in 988 or they would be considered enemies of the kingdom. Thus the mass conversion of Russia begins. It is interesting that the Russian Orthodox church would spread to Alaska in 1794 and establish Orthodox churches all the way to San Francisco, before Alaska was purchased by the US.
- 962 The Holy Roman Empire is founded by Otto (912-973), the king of Germany and crowned by Pope John XII. This was seen as the embodiment of Christ on Earth, the beginning of the millennium. It included 10 million by AD 1000, 16 million by AD 1200, 29 million by AD 1800, then finally abolished in 1806.
- 969 The Fatimid dynasty begins by the conquest in Cairo, then captures Damascus in 969; by AD 1000 they rule from the Atlantic seaboard of N. Africa (Morocco) to Jerusalem and Lebanon. This conquest provokes the beginning of the Crusades by Byzantine emperors who recapture Damascus, Edessa, and Jerusalem.
- 990 “Up to now, 95% of all the families in the world produce for themselves virtually everything they need to sustain life, and only rarely other people’s goods” (Barnett and Johnson, p. 121).
- 993 First canonization of saints
- 997 The Prussians, the last remaining pagans in Europe, are evangelized.
- 996 Fatimid ruler al-Hakim, the “mad Caliph” (985-1021) began an unprecedented persecution of Christians in Syria and Egypt, destroying 3,000 churches, and forcing Christians to wear a 5-lb. wooden cross around their necks; in 1009, he tears down the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which would further instigate the Crusades.
- 999 Multitudes journey to Jerusalem to await the Second Coming of Christ in AD 1000 as they believe was prophesized in Revelation.

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Personal Response:

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