

**The Gospel's Missionary Journey: The Early Missionaries: Boniface, Cyril and Methodius, Ansgar, and Erik Thorvaldson and Leif Eriksson; Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation: Introduction, the International Impact of Martin Luther; the Development of Client Nations**

**F. Boniface \bän'e-fas\ (675-754)**

Born of a noble Saxon family in Wessex, England, in 675, Boniface was educated in England at Exeter and was ordained a priest at age 30.

From 716-722, he made attempts to evangelize the people of **Friesland \frēs'land\**, the same area which is a present-day province of The Netherlands.

He had great success in Friesland until he came into conflict with its king, **Radbod \räd'bawt\** who was at war with Charles Martel of France. Since both Charles and Boniface were Christians, Radbod decided that Boniface had to go. He tried to kill Boniface, but the missionary escaped into south-central Germany to an area known then as **Hesse \hes'ah\** (Frankfurt).

Boniface went from Frankfurt to Hamburg in the north and later southeast to Munich in Bavaria. In these areas he had great success and later founded a mission in Hesse.

Charles Martel invited Boniface to visit his castle in Austrasia, appear at court, and to preach there. This association with Charles made life easier on the mission field for Boniface.

The story is told that the people of Fritzlar, North Hesse, Germany, worshipped a giant oak tree they believed was sacred to Thor.

Boniface took an ax and began chopping it down. With some 2,000 angry Thor worshippers looking on, Boniface evangelized the group, took what was left of the oak, and used the lumber to begin a mission station in Hesse.

With the backing of the Celtic Church of England, Boniface was able to establish mission stations all over Germany: Salzburg and Regensburg in Bavaria, Strassburg in Swabia \swā'bē-a\, Cologne \ka-lōn\ in Lower Lorraine \la-rān'\, and Mainz \mīnts\ in West Franconia.

Incidentally, Mainz was the birthplace of **Johannes Gutenberg**, the inventor of printing press with movable type, who will be prominent later in our study.

Boniface died as a martyr in June 754 at the hands of pagan Frisians who murdered him while he was reading Scripture to a number of converts.

Several of his sermons are preserved revealing his orthodox understanding of the Word of God.

### **G. Cyril (827-869) and Methodius (825-884)**

These two brothers were known as the apostles to the Slavic. They were natives of Thessalonica and, as missionaries, went to areas of the Black Sea and preached to the **Khazars** \ka-zarz' (Khazaria) and the Moravians (Modern Bulgaria).

In 865, the brothers attempted to evangelize Bulgaria's **King Boris**. Boris was negative to Cyril's presentation of the gospel, so **Methodius** \me-thō'dē-us, who had great talent in art, threw in a visual aid.

While **Cyril** evangelized Boris, Methodius painted a mural on one of the large walls of the palace. It revealed the Last Judgment showing Jesus Christ on the Great White Throne with the lake of fire blazing below.

As Cyril described the fate of those who rejected Christ and the everlasting bliss of those who accepted Him, Methodius would incorporate the ideas into his mural.

It showed believers being delivered from the lake of fire while unbelievers were being cast alive into it. When the message and the mural were done, Boris believed in Christ as his Savior which led to thousands of Bulgarians being saved.

Cyril was a linguistic genius. He developed an alphabet for the Slavs based on Hebrew and Greek characters. He then reduced it to writing by translating Scripture into what is now known as Old Church Slavonic or Old Bulgarian.

In the early 1400s, Czech missionary **Jan Hus** \hüs was able to do great work in Czechoslovakia using the Bible developed by Cyril.

Hus anticipated Luther and the reformation by almost a century by being excommunicated from the Catholic Church because of his denial of the sale of indulgencies.

Hus was burned at the stake by the Catholic Church for heresy in November 1414.

## **H. Ansgar \ans'gär\ (801-865)**

**Ansgar**, who was born of Frankish parents, decided to become a missionary at age 21. He had several successes in Denmark and in Germany, but his greatest achievements were in Scandinavia.

The first door opened in 829 when **King Bjorn \byørn\** of Sweden, an unbeliever, invited Ansgar to come to his country.

Ansgar decided to take along several nice gifts for the king, but in route across the Baltic Sea he was captured by Viking pirates. They eventually dumped him on the shores of Sweden with only the clothes he was wearing.

Consequently, instead of bribing the king into accepting Christ, Ansgar was obliged to evangelize Bjorn into the Royal Family.

Things went quite well until these Viking pirates and their ilk took advantage of the situation when Charlemagne died. The Frankish kingdoms fell into a period of disarray which meant not only civil unrest, but Ansgar had also lost his political backing.

Mission stations were raided by the Vikings in Sweden, Germany, Denmark, and France. It took almost 100 years before missions opened up again in Scandinavia. The man who opened the next door was **Haakon I \hä'kon\**. He was the youngest son of Harold I of Norway and was educated in England.

Following his father's death in the year 940, the 15-year old Haakon returned to Norway and disposed of his half-brother **Erik Blōdox** who had killed 7 of his 8 brothers in order to gain the throne. Subsequently, he brought Christian missionaries from England and encouraged the building of churches.

At the **Battle of Fitjar** in 961, Haakon was killed on Stord \sturd\ Island by the sons of Blōdox. The eldest surviving son of Blōdox, Harold Greycloak, ascended the throne of Norway as Harold II.

Christianity didn't do too well in the Scandinavian countries for a while, but the missionary impact started by Haakon saw the gospel taken to the Western Hemisphere for the first time.

One of the people evangelized by English missionaries and brought to Norway by Haakon was Olaf I who ruled Norway from 995–1000. He started the conversion of the Norwegian people to Christianity.

## I. Erik Thorvaldson aka Erik the Red (late 10<sup>th</sup> century) and Leif Eriksson (late 10<sup>th</sup>–early 11<sup>th</sup> century)

Scandinavian missions improved with **Eric the Red**. He was the son of **Thorvald I** and according to Scandinavian tradition was officially named **Erik Thorvaldson**, but known as Erik the Red. When he had a son, he named him **Leif Eriksson**.

According to **Dr. J. N. Hook** in his book *Family Names*:

Even into the nineteenth century some Swedish and Norwegian families would change names from one generation to the next according to the first name of the father. Lars Olson's son Hans would not be Hans Olson but Hans Larson (Hans the son of Lars), and his son might be Nels Hanson (Nels the son of Hans). The system provides a beautiful example of patronyms but gives headaches to genealogists and government officials such as tax collectors.<sup>1</sup>

At any rate, when Eric had another son, he just started over and named him **Thorvald**.

Eric the Red grew up in Iceland because his father, Thorvald I, was exiled from Norway for manslaughter. In the year 982, Eric decided to explore the land 175 miles to the west of Iceland, which on a clear day, one could see from the mountaintops.

Having spent 4 years exploring the area, Eric returned to Iceland and very cleverly called the place **Greenland**. By the year 1000, there were about 1,000 Scandinavian settlers in the colony of Greenland.

That same year, **Leif Eriksson** left Greenland and sailed to Norway where he met with Norwegian King **Olaf I \o'lof\** who converted him to Christianity. Olaf then commissioned Leif to evangelize the Greenlanders.

On his return voyage, Leif sailed off course and landed on the North American continent in a region he called **Vinland** or present-day Nova Scotia. It was the land Leif had learned of from an Icelander named **Bjarni Herjolfsson \byarn-ē hair'yolfs-son\** who claimed he had been there some 14 years previous.

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<sup>1</sup> J. N. Hook, *Family Names: How Our Family Names Came to America* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1982), 150–51.

Herjolfsson ran supply ships from Norway to Iceland and in 985 on his return voyage he got off course. He ran into a dense fog and then a storm. When the weather cleared he saw land.

Bjarni sailed up and down the coast from Newfoundland to Massachusetts, but decided it wasn't Greenland so he left the area without landing.

**Visual #2:**  
**Brattahlid**  
**Church at**  
**Tunulliarfik**  
**Fjord,**  
**Qassiarsuk,**  
**Greenland**

When Leif returned to Greenland, he told of his exploits and then began to evangelize his fellow colonists, winning his mother to Christianity. She got busy and established the first church in Greenland at **Brattahlid**, Erik the Red's estate.

Eric the Red decided to investigate the new land to the west and to try and evangelize those living there. He found no one, but later Leif made a return trip and ran into Eskimos and Indians, but they did not respond.

The next trip to Vinland was made by Leif's younger brother Thorvald. Thorvald sailed as far south as Maryland, but his attempts to evangelize the natives earned him an arrow in the abdomen.

Once his crew returned to Greenland, the weather made one of its cyclic changes from extremely warm northern Atlantic temperatures to very cold. This shut down missionary activity to North America for over 400 years.

The natives had been offered the gospel and they had rejected it, consequently, God's weather angels adjusted the world's climate so that no evangelism could occur for almost half a millennium.

It was not until **Christopher Columbus** came in from the south that missionary activity started all over again. During that interim, several things occurred which prepared the way for orthodox truth to find a home in Client Nation, USA.

Throughout the first millennium of the Church Age, millions of people were evangelized into the Royal Family of God. Although orthodoxy suffered some severe blows through cosmic involvement by the church, the gospel survived and believers multiplied.

Although the Eastern and Western churches deteriorated into apostasy by the end of the first millennium, souls were still being saved.

The Greek Orthodox Church, due to false doctrine, lost any missionary impact it may have had in the East by allowing Islam to capture that portion of the world. The creation of the Holy Roman Empire, whereby the Catholic Church became the state, ushered in the Dark Ages in the West (800–1806).

So although there were over a thousand years of negative volition, there were functional Client Nations and a Pivot of positive believers that survived and prospered. Missionaries carried the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ all over Europe.

This evangelistic success created a cadre of believers who had a hunger and a thirst for the truth. Unfortunately due to heresy and apostasy, the Roman Catholic Church couldn't supply their needs.

Finally the demand for truth became so strong that God raised up a man who shook the established church to its very foundation, opening the door to the greatest period of prosperity experienced by the human race since Eden.

That truth has been most accurately expressed for the past 500 years by Protestant theology.

## **IV. Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation:**

### **A. Introduction.**

From Jamestown in 1607 until the birth of our nation in 1776, Protestants came to dominate the area that would become the United States of America. Neither Spain nor France had large enough populations to produce colonists in numbers that could match the teeming English.

When gold gave out, Spain increasingly lost interest in America. Both Spain and France kept a military presence on the continent and tried to expand their empires, but European ventures kept them too busy to be very successful.

For all the above reasons, the area which came to be the United States was for the most part lost to Catholic missions. But our entrance upon the international scene in 1776 as a free nation was the result of over two centuries of interrelated events which can only be explained by the fact that Jesus Christ controls history.

Unknown to Johannes Gutenberg, a major change of thought was on the world's horizon when he invented the printing press with movable type in the 1450's. From that point on, any idea, new or old, could receive the widest circulation.

The upcoming thirst to know Scripture would be enhanced immeasurably by the availability of the published canon.

Near the end of the 15th century, two seemingly unrelated events took place on the world scene which have had ramifications down to this day.

First of all, Columbus, believing that Asia could be reached by sailing westward, convinced the Spanish monarchs, **King Ferdinand of Aragon** \ar'e-gän\ and **Queen Isabella of Castile** \ka-stēl\, of the idea. The two financed several voyages, the initial one in 1492, led Columbus to the **Samana Cay** \sä-mä-nä' kē\, The Bahamas.

This discovery for the moment appeared to open new vistas for Spanish colonialism. The Spanish were presented with an entire continent to exploit; gold was the motivation and evangelism was the justification.

All the Spanish and Portuguese explorers brought with them on their voyages a troop of missionaries whose mandate from the king was to evangelize the natives of the New World into Christendom.

Columbus' discovery motivated a torrent of westward missions: The Italian **Amerigo Vespucci** \ve-spü'-chē\ was involved with Columbus on his 2nd and 3rd voyages. These two were followed by a steady flow of Spanish explorers: **Alonso Ojeda** \au-kā'-tha\; **Vasco Nunez de Balboa**; **Hernando Cortes**; **Francisco Pizarro**; and, **Ferdinand Magellan**.

As a result, Spanish coffers were bulging with American gold while Catholic membership rolls were swollen with new converts to the faith. A world dominated by Catholic theology seemed on the rise until an obscure monk in Wittenberg, Germany challenged the centuries-old order, its system, and its theology.

The result was a return to the orthodoxy which energized the powerful explosion of Christianity out from Jerusalem in the first century and which provided the momentum that carried it through the Dark Ages of the Holy Roman Empire.

This is not accurately described as a revolution, nor as a new theology. It was a return to the foundational doctrines that had for so long been ignored by the Western Church which had compromised doctrine in exchange for political power.

It is best described as the **Reformation** and those who responded to its message were called **Protestants** although those in Germany preferred the term **Evangelical** while those in France were known as **Huguenots**.

### **B. The International Impact of Martin Luther.**

**Martin Luther** was born in **Eisleben** \is'lā-ben\, Germany on November 10, 1483. At age 7, he entered the Latin school in Mansfeld, Germany, where he was taught the language of the scholars.

In 1501, he entered **Erfurt** \er'furt\ **University** where he received a law degree in only 18 months.

However, before he could set up a practice he was almost struck by a bolt of lightning. Convinced that the incident was a call from God he made the statement, "I will become a monk."

With that he entered the monastery in the city of Erfurt on July 17, 1505. For ten years he poured over Scripture, reading its contents over and over.



As his studies brought him closer and closer to conceptualizing the grace plan of God, his attention was drawn to verse 17 in Romans, chapter 1, "For in the gospel an integrity from God is revealed that is from faith to faith. Just as it stands written: The justified shall live by faith." (EXT)

What Luther had hit upon was the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ and spirituality through faith in the Word. In his writings, he is quoted as saying: "The whole Scripture revealed a different countenance to me. This passage in Paul opened for me the gates of paradise, I felt I was born again."

And this discovery of grace through faith alone flew in the face of the Roman Catholic requirements of works for both salvation and spirituality and penance for recovery from sin. Parishioners were practicing the sacrament of penance when Scripture taught the opposite.

Sins of the living and even those of the dead, in a mythical place called purgatory, could be worked off through a system of human works: Paying money to the church, performing some ritual such as a fast, repetitive recitation of assigned prayers, and even flagellation.

Once performed, the church issued an indulgence from a treasury of merits and the sins, with their punishment, were forgiven. A papal bull had taken this concept and fostered the idea that the living could buy the dead out of purgatory.

The saying went, "as the coin in the coffer rings, so the soul from purgatory springs."

By All Saints' Eve (Halloween) of October 31, 1517, Martin Luther, who was now a professor at the University of Wittenberg, had had enough.

He offered an invitation to debate the doctrine of indulgences by nailing a printed notice to the door of the All Saints' Church in Wittenberg which served as university's bulletin board.

A professor inviting his fellow scholars to a debate would naturally post his challenge there. To be debated were 95 theses which refuted the doctrine of indulgencies, the three most fundamental of which were:

- 1- Justification by grace through faith in Christ alone.
- 2- The universal priesthood of the believer.
- 3- The claim that the Bible is the only source of revealed truth.

In one of the more cutting passages in the paper, Luther wrote, "If for the sake of money the pope can free suffering souls from purgatory, why not for the sake of love empty out purgatory altogether?"

In July of 1519, Luther, in a debate with the Catholic theologian Johann Eck, denied the doctrine of papal supremacy. With that, Eck went to Rome and secured a papal bull which publically condemned Luther's theology.

Undaunted, Luther was rather inspired by the opposition. Claiming the printing press as "God's latest and greatest gift," he began a prolific outpouring of tracts and papers.

In 1520, he authored three famous papers:

**"Freedom of the Christian"** which spoke of a personal relationship with God. This was presented in opposition to a life of works, ritual, and extra-Biblical mandates from the pope.

**"The Babylonian Captivity of the Church."** Here he threw out as unbiblical all ritual for the church except baptism and the Eucharist.

**"Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation."** Luther urged the abolishment of certain things as adoration of the saints; the vow of poverty; indulgences; papal bulls, and observation of festival days. He further insisted that priests should be allowed to marry and that heretics should be debated not executed.

In other writings, Luther claimed that the pope was fallible and possessed no power to issue new articles of faith. He insisted that the office of pope was a human contrivance and that God knew nothing of it.

By 1523, Luther's writings went through 1,300 printings and over a million copies of his works were in circulation. By the time of his death in 1546, he had averaged writing a paper every two weeks.

The **Weimar \vī'mär\** edition contains 102 volumes of his works. However, the initial tracts were enough to bring down the wrath of Pope Leo X, who in 1521 issued a papal bull which excommunicated Luther from the church.

The bull allowed Luther 60 days to recant his alleged heresy. On the 60th day Luther lit a bonfire and threw upon it volumes of canon law followed by the bull of Leo X.

Canon law consists of rules and regulations developed over the centuries by the Catholic bishops under the erroneous idea that they possessed the transmitted mission of the apostles.

Luther proclaimed he regarded Catholic theology as the true heresy. With this, the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire got in on the act. Charles V summoned Luther to appear at a hearing in **Worms** \vōrms\ on August 17, 1521, where he was presented with his writings and asked to denounce them.

His response was brief and lucid: "Unless proved wrong by Scripture and plain reason ... my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant."

The following May, Charles issued the Edict of Worms which condemned Luther as a heretic and forbid his writings. Although he was a marked man the rest of his life, Luther lived to be 62 years of age, dying peacefully in Eisleben on February 18, 1546.

Although Luther went to be with the Lord, the Reformation he began lived on, gaining momentum throughout all of Western Europe.

**Huldrych Zwingli** \sviŋ'lē\ began the Reformation in Switzerland in 1522. Following closely behind was **John Calvin** who studied the writings of both Luther and Zwingli.

Whereas Luther and Zwingli served as the catalyst for the Reformation, John Calvin advanced upon their doctrines and codified the whole into a systematic theology.

This theology rushed through Europe, captured the minds of the people, and broke them free from the shackles of a legalistic and intrusive organized church.

From a fresh inculcation of orthodox truth, the peoples of Western Europe began to utilize the advantages and reap the benefits of the application of doctrine to their lives.

This body of doctrine fueled the development of several denominations, but, for the most part, all of them subscribed to the original and fundamental principles laid out by Luther in his 95 theses.

## V. The Development of Client Nations

Even negative events produced outstanding gains for the Protestant movement and moved it inexorably toward its finest hour in Client Nation, America.

In 1685, Louis XIV of France revoked the Edict of Nantes with his own Edict of **Fontainebleau** \fo-ten-blō'. Nantes had been placed in force in 1598 by King Henry IV allowing French Protestants, known as the Huguenots, religious freedom.

The primary freedom granted by the Edict was the right to public worship. Louis XIV rejected this law thus placing the large Huguenot population in danger of persecution and even execution.

These French Calvinists had formed a large pivot making France a Client Nation to God. Those Huguenots not executed left France and migrated to **Brandenburg Prussia, Holland, England, and the American colonies**, all of which either were or became Client Nations.

The elimination of the Huguenots destroyed not only the middle class in France, but the source of its economic prosperity. Their absence was a leading cause of the French Revolution which culminated about a century later and from which France has never recovered.

A large contingent of the Huguenots who came to the Colonies settled in Charleston, South Carolina, and helped develop that city into a center of Southern culture.

At this time, Prussia was being ruled by **Frederick William I** of the **Hohenzollern Dynasty**. Although Lutheran at first, around 1614, Brandenburg Prussia turned to Calvinism.

Subsequent to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV, Frederick passed the **Edict of Potsdam** which invited the Huguenot refugees to settle in Brandenburg. This brought a large number of highly qualified people, mostly of the middle to upper class, to the country.

Industry and commerce developed rapidly by the influx of this Protestant Pivot. Later **Frederick II** would write that his country had benefited enormously by the influx.

The Huguenot Pivot also moved to Holland which resulted in the rise of the **Dutch Republic**. Their presence there resulted in the Golden Age of the republic in which Holland developed into a world empire far out of proportion to its resources.

Near the end of Frederick William's reign in Prussia, his nephew **William of Orange** became King of England in 1689 and ruled as joint sovereign with his wife **Queen Mary II**. Under these two, Britain experienced the triumph of Protestantism over the Catholicism of James II.

Another Pivot produced a Client Nation in Sweden under the ministry of **Gustavus Adolphus** \ga-stā'vas a-däl'-fas\.

The result of this broad missionary outreach was the accumulation of a high inventory of doctrinal idea in the souls of the people which inspired and energized the industrial revolution. This in turn led Europe out of the Dark Ages into modern times.

The 18th century was filled with a rush of international events which served to shape the maps of Europe and the Americas to the advantage of the Pivot.

We do not have time to research the **War of Spanish Succession**, but it was terminated in 1714 by a series of treaties known as the **Peace of Utrecht** \yü'trekt\. The result was that Britain received the largest portion of colonial and commercial spoils and took the leading position in world trade.

**The French and Indian Wars** were a series of battles that went on from 1689 to 1763 between France and Britain for control of North America. The final of these wars was the **7-Years' War** which included Britain and Prussia versus France, Austria, and Russia.

As a result of this final war, Great Britain became the undisputed leader in overseas colonization and Prussia emerged as the most powerful force on the continent.

And while kings and their armies were fighting wars, redrawing boundaries, and signing treaties, the Pivot was busily developing theology and crystallizing Protestant doctrines.