

36. SOME FRANKISH MISSIONARIES

During the great migration of nations, the Franks moved to the south of the Netherlands. They were brutal and cruel pagans. Around the year 500, King Clovis reigned over the Frankish Empire. He was not a tyrant. Was he a coward? No, he was not a coward!



King Clovis, king of the Franks, 466-511.

On the battlefield, he could always be found in the heat of the battle, vigorously wielding his mighty sword. His enemies were terrified of him as he knew no mercy, cutting down anyone who came near him.

Clovis waged many wars during his thirty-year reign.

First, he fought and

conquered the Romans who still lived in his realm. That was a good start! He aimed to become powerful and wealthy by fighting and conquering. And the gods 'helped' him. The gods always help the brave, the strong and the heroes!

And yet...

When Clovis triumphantly returned from his cruel wars, and he had cleaned and sheathed his bloody sword; when he sat in the large hall of his palace with his family, then his wife Clotilda spoke a very different language.

She would tell him about Jesus, Who allowed Himself to be crucified. Then Clovis listened with a scornful smile on his face, with a mocking twinkle in his eyes. He had no respect for a God Who allowed Himself to be crucified! That's not what gods do! Clovis would not acknowledge a God on a cross!

During those quiet evenings, his wife Clotilda spoke about loving your neighbour. She pointed out to him that he should have compassion on his enemies. Clotilda was a Christian.

Clovis listened patiently to her, but the mocking expression in his eyes remained. Yet, she persevered and did not lose courage.

Time and again, she told him beautiful stories from God's Word.

Time and again, she pointed out to him the cruel wickedness of his pagan life. She earnestly warned her husband about his sin and pointed him to Christ, Who died for His enemies, Who shed His blood on Golgotha's hill. Then that scornful smile would curl his lips again. No, he rejected that Christianity. Worshipping the pagan gods made more sense to him.

And yet ...

He did not understand it, but at times a strange reverence arose in his heart, which he firmly resisted. He told himself to be sensible and not be influenced by the stories of his wife.

Compassion with his enemies?

Love for one's neighbour?

Clovis had no time for that sort of thing!



Clovis I and Clotilda had 5 children, 1 died in infancy. They were educated in warfare. Painting by Laurence Alma-Tadema

THE WAR AGAINST THE ALAMANNI TRIBE IN THE YEAR 496

War breaks out again.

The savage, pagan Alamanni tribe lived on the Eastern boundary of his great, extensive kingdom. Those people invade his territory with a powerful army. But Clovis does not fear them! He will repulse and drive out those intruders. New victories await him!

Swiftly he assembles his army, and when everything is ready, he and his thousands of brave soldiers march into battle. Clotilda remains behind. Did she pray for her pagan husband?

I am sure she did!

Meanwhile, Clovis quickly marches to the border where the enemy is invading. There the armies engage in battle.

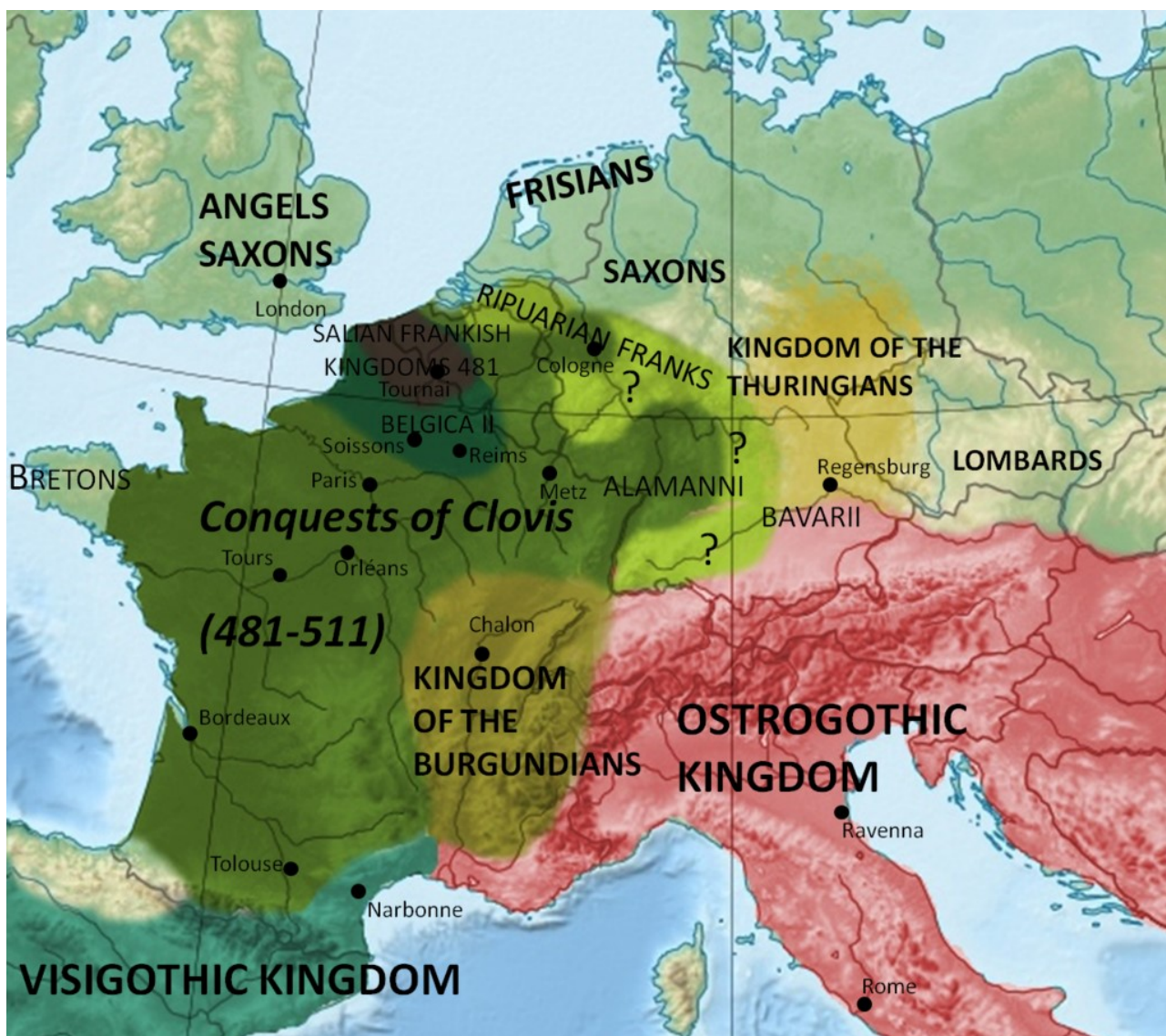
The fighting is fierce.

Thousands and thousands are killed.

Clovis himself performs many acts of bravery. We may find him at the most dangerous places. He encourages his men with word and deed. But none of it helps. The Alamanni are too strong. Despite their desperate resistance, the Alamanni gradually force back the Franks. The Frankish army wavers.

Clovis gets worried.

It becomes clear to him that he will lose this battle.



Conquests of Clovis between 481 and 511. Wikipedia

He calls on the gods, but they do not help him.

There is no help. On the contrary! The Alamanni advance like a tidal wave. He cannot stop them! Oh, the terror of it paralyses him! If he loses this war, then everything is lost! Then his country will be devastated by the cruel, unmerciful Alamanni. His villages and towns will go up in flames! Women and children will be cruelly murdered or carried away as slaves. Clovis trembles thinking about it! Is there nothing that can save him?

In his great distress, he calls on the God of the Christians, and he promises that if God gives him the victory, he will become a Christian.

*"O God of Clotilde, help me in
this my hour of need.
If thou wilt give me victory now,
I will believe in thee."*

Clovis on the battlefield

With renewed courage, he plunges himself into the fierce struggle and ... the God of the Christians *does* help! The battle, virtually lost, turns into a splendid victory! The Franks force the Alamanni back, who are surprised by the Franks' sudden, unexpected resurgence. They become confused and flee. The threatened danger has been averted.

Look, Clovis is marching back with his victorious army. True, the Frankish army has suffered tremendous losses. Thousands will not return home to their wives and children. Their dead bodies cover the bloody battlefield, but they have not died in vain! Victory is theirs! And Clovis does not forget his promise. He keeps his word. He and three thousand of his brave warriors are baptised in the city of Reims. He has seen and experienced that the God of the Christians is stronger than the gods he used to worship.

Did Clovis become a true Christian?

Alas, probably not. Clovis remained a pagan at heart. True, we are not to judge, but he didn't show the fruits of faith, although we must not forget that the times were rough and cruel. Whatever the case, the king's action had

significant consequences for his land and people, for since the *king* was baptised, thousands of his subjects followed his example. They built churches and monasteries throughout the Frankish Empire, and the gospel spread. The land of the pagan Franks gradually became a Christian country.

The golden thread of God's rule also runs through this history. God directed things so that His Kingdom grew. He was already busy building His church in the West so it could resist the tidal wave of Mohammedanism, which would sweep away His church in the East in the 7th century. Here we again see that the gates of hell cannot stand against His Word. True, locally, the church may disappear in certain countries, but it will grow in other countries.

OF MISSIONARIES AND KINGS

Even though the Frankish kingdom (today's France/Belgium) had become a Christian nation, paganism was still rife! In North and West Netherlands, the savage Frisians lived, and in the East, the Saxons. Many brave missionaries set out from the Frankish empire to the North to preach the gospel there. Those missionaries did this with love in their hearts. They had compassion for all those people who still lived in the darkness of paganism. They wanted to show those people the way of salvation. Those Frisians and Saxons must



*Baptism of Clovis. His wife Clotilda holds the crown.
(Order of Centurions)*

also learn to bend their knees for the God of heaven and earth; that was their aim. They braved many dangers, which threatened them from all sides. Those Frankish *missionaries* wanted to do the right thing for the Frisians, but...the pagans had no intention of believing the gospel.

Meanwhile, the Frankish *kings* were plotting to gradually extend their territory and power. They tried their utmost to subdue the Frisian and Saxon people. They believed that all those peoples must be united into one empire, and then *they* would govern that powerful realm! The thought of it made their hearts swell with pride. Frankish kings saw an excellent opportunity to achieve their plans through the mission workers.

So the Frankish kings gave letters to the missionaries heading north to the Frisian and Saxon area. Those letters *supposedly* served to protect the missionaries. In those letters, they wrote that they must not harm the Frankish missionaries, as they were under royal protection. But those kings had a hidden motive with that, and those Frisians and Saxons thought they thoroughly understood this. They knew that the Frankish kings were trying to extend their power and influence by converting the Frisians and Saxons to Christianity. But... the Frisian and Saxon people did not *want* to be submissive to the Franks. They were free people, and they wanted to remain free!

They would defend their liberty with their blood. Those Frisians and Saxons hated the Frankish people. The Franks were their mortal enemies.

And since the Frankish *missionaries* came to them with letters from the Frankish *kings*, they also hated the *missionaries*. They said to each other: "Those missionaries are spies from the Frankish king. Away with them! Kill them! Do not listen to them. And that Christianity which they want to force on us? They are trying to deceive us. If we accept Christianity, it means that we will become subject to the Franks. And *that* we will never do! We are free, and we want to *remain* free. Away with Christianity!"

The Frisians and Saxons confused these two things. Those Frankish missionaries were *not* spies. They came to the North to deliver them from paganism. They came to teach them the way of salvation. But the Frisians and Saxons did not believe that. That's why it would have been much better if the Frankish kings had not given the missionaries any letters of commendation. It made the missionaries suspect in the eyes of the Frisians and Saxons. As a result, a *double* hatred arose against the Frankish missionaries. In the first place, they experienced the usual hostility of the pagan priests against Christianity. That is the usual strife between Christ and the devil. That hostility is bad enough by itself. Those missionaries needed endless patience just to overcome that.

Secondly, there was also the *political* hatred against the Frankish Empire. The Frankish missionaries had to struggle against that twofold enmity and suspicion. It is no surprise that those Frankish missionaries did not see much fruit on their labour.

True, God's Word never returns empty. But now, it was doubly difficult for the missionaries.

AMANDUS

"You are a spy, a nasty Frankish spy. What are you doing in our country? You want to betray us to the Frankish king, don't you! Go back to where you belong; we want nothing to do with you! We don't trust you!"

See them crowding around him.

They fling wild, angry words at him.

They clench their fists.

Hatred burns in their eyes.

Look!

In the middle of that furious, threatening, yelling crowd stands an unarmed man.

They ignore his words.

Their shouting drowns out his words.

They do not want to listen.

What he says is all lies anyway.

Defenceless, he is helpless against the rage of these people. Those standing closest roughly grab

hold of him. They drag him to the nearby river and throw him in.

A loud splash.

Waves close over the head of the poor man. The angry crowd laughs scornfully and leaves without worrying about the man about to drown.

Drown?

No, not at all. With vigorous, powerful strokes, he swims to the other side and disappears into the dark forest.

Who is that man?

Why are they so angry with him?

Why don't they want to listen to him?

Why did they throw him into the river and leave him to drown?

This man is a missionary.

His name is Amandus.

At an early age, he already felt called to preach the gospel to the pagans. So, against his father's wishes, he became a monk and spent several years in a monastery. He studied hard to prepare for the task awaiting him. When he had completed his studies, he went to Flanders in Belgium, where the pagan Frisians lived.



Amandus, 584-679. Wikipedia

He would soon convert those half-savage people to Christianity!

Yes, but suppose they do not want to?

Suppose they are hostile towards Christianity? What?

Not *want* to?

They *must* become Christians!

He will *compel* them to accept Christianity!

They must give up their pagan idolatry!

He will baptise them. If not willingly, then unwillingly.

And they better not try to harm him because he has a letter from the Frankish king advising them that he is under the special protection of the king of the Franks. So when he shows them that letter, they won't dare to touch him.

Full of courage, he goes to work.

Together with his helpers, he demolishes the pagan temples wherever he finds one.

He builds churches instead.

That's a good start!

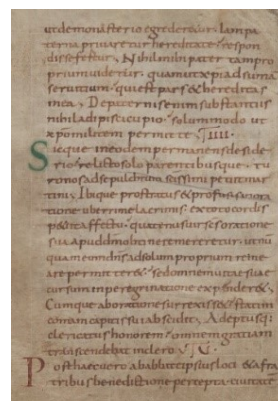
Now the Frisians can go to church instead of those pagan temples!

Amandus' intentions were noble, but he went about it in the wrong way. One may not *force* the gospel on people. Doesn't God's Word say: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts"? (Zech 4:6). Whoever wants to spread the gospel must be filled with love for his fellow men, and with patience and wisdom, he must aim to gain the people for Christ.

The result is that Amandus is sadly disappointed. The outcome is so different than he had imagined it to be!

Because ...

Infuriated, the Frisians watch the destruction of their sanctuaries. Hatred blazes up in them, and ... they hurl that foreign intruder into the Schelde



Part of an eighth century biography on Amandus. Wikipedia

River. They thumb their nose at that letter from the Frankish king!

However, Amandus does not give up yet. Using the same strategy, he continues to bring the gospel to them.

Again, it fails.

Those Frisians ill-treat him and throw him into the river for the second time.

Amandus again escapes by swimming to the other side. When he understands that they will not listen to him and notices their hatred and rage increase, he becomes discouraged. Disappointed,



The Schelde River is 350 km long

he leaves Flanders. He complains, "Nothing can be done with those people."

Yet, he later went back to Flanders to preach the gospel to those people for the third time. We don't know if he again used the same flawed strategy.

This time he saw some fruit on his labour. A small number of Frisians were converted and baptised. He even founded some monasteries along the Schelde River.

In the year 679, he died in Flanders.

Others continued his work.

ELIGIUS

The Frankish kings often waged war. Sometimes it was to defend their country when enemies

attacked. But mostly, the wars were to extend their borders. These wars caused much misery and suffering for those neighbouring countries. Who can count the number of soldiers, either dead or wounded, remaining on the battlefield? Only God knows. And that's not all! They took many prisoners of war to perform hard slave labour in foreign countries. Soldiers snatched men and women away from their families; children never saw their parents again. Those poor people also loved their wives, children, and parents. The agony they suffered was horrible.

See how those conquered Frisians are firmly bound, dragged away mercilessly, roughly and violently by the victorious Frankish soldiers. Do you see the distressed, sad expression on the faces of those poor prisoners of war?

Do you see how they keep turning around time and again to look once more at their loved ones and their beloved homeland, which they may never see again?

With a deep sigh, they walk on. The Frankish soldiers, who lead them away, hardly notice it. It does not concern them. What do *they* care about the misery of their fellow men? Soon they will sell their booty for lots of money at the slave market. The more they get, the better they like it!

See those prisoners of war standing on the slave market in the Frankish Empire.

It is busy there.

People are talking and laughing.

But the prisoners do not laugh.

Instead, they gloomily stare straight ahead. To them, life is over. Only the miserable existence of slavery awaits them. They will be treated worse than animals.

But watch that young man walking among all those buyers and sellers. This man does not laugh; no, his heart is full of pity. He purchases one of the slaves who are on show. Then he buys another and still another. He keeps buying till his money bag is empty.

And then?

He leaves the market with his new acquisitions and takes them home. The slaves follow their

new master. What will the future bring? Will they have a cruel, harsh master? They don't know.

It turns out much better than they expected. They are well fed and clothed. Their new master treats them kindly. He will never ill-treat or beat any of them. On the contrary! They do not have to work hard at all. Their 'work' is mainly listening.

Listening?

Yes, because their master tells those slaves that their gods *are* not gods. He teaches them about the *living* God.

He points them to the Saviour Who died on the cross.

He tells them that they also can be saved.

He shares the gospel with those poor slaves.

At first, those pagan Frisians would not have understood what he was talking about, but they listened because he treated them so kindly.

And then?

Then one day, that friendly master gives them their freedom. They may return to their own country. There they go, their faces beaming with happiness!

They may return to their wife and children or their parents!

They may return to their beloved homeland!

They had not counted on that!

Who is that wonderful man?

Why does he do all that?

His name is Eligius. He was born in 580 and grew up as a Frankish pagan.

However, one day he hears Columban speak, the missionary from Ireland. See the previous chapter. That preaching becomes a blessing to him because the Lord used it to convert him. Since then, Eligius was a true Christian who understood the emptiness of idol worship.

Eligius was a very skilled goldsmith and was well-known and respected. He always had plenty of work as his clients came from far and near.

Even the Frankish king heard his people speak about Eligius.

He thought he could make good use of such a capable goldsmith.

So, he sent for him, and Eligius entered the service of the king. From now on, Eligius lived in a beautiful house and earned lots of money. Now his job was to make coins for the Frankish king. He became Master of the Mint.

And what did Eligius do with all the money he earned? Did he save it all carefully, hoping to become wealthy one day?

No, he was not a greedy, stingy miser. On the contrary! He helped the poor people in his community as much as he could. He generously



Statue of Eligius (588-660) in the church of St. Marcel in St. Marcel (Aveyron), France

gave money to the sick and the disabled to provide for their needs. They spoke about him with respect and love.

One day he comes to the slave market and sees all



Eligius in his workshop (Pinterest)

that misery. He pities those poor prisoners of war and buys several slaves. Since then, he regularly visits those slave markets. He has ransomed hundreds of slaves, at times as many as fifty in one day. His main purpose was to teach them the gospel, and then he let them go back to their own country and people, hoping that they would preach the gospel in their own country.

Did he achieve his objective?

No, not with many.

Most of them soon forgot what they had heard from Eligius and turned back to paganism. But some *did*



Coins made by Eligius

believe the gospel and could not keep silent about Christ when they returned to their families.

Eligius was a quiet, friendly man.

He had an encouraging word for anyone who was in trouble.

He was a vastly different person than Amandus.

When Eligius saw those poor pagan slaves, he would often feel the urge to go and preach in the land of the Frisians. One day he spoke about it with the Frankish king. The king pulled a dubious face because he did not want to lose his talented Master of the Mint. But finally, Eligius got his wish. He was appointed bishop of Noyon, and then Eligius entered the pagan world as a missionary. True, he was not always received kindly because the Frisians saw him as another spy of the Frankish king. They mocked, beat and ill-treated him. However, the brave missionary never took revenge. He patiently endured insult and injury.

He laboured among the savage Frisians in Flanders and Zeeland for many years, and his work was not in vain. He instituted churches and destroyed idol temples and images. Eligius worked tirelessly. It is a pity that he also experienced that double enmity and that the Frisians often misunderstood his good intentions. In the year 658, at the age of seventy-eight years, he died in peace. The memory of the just is blessed.

† IN XPI NO MIN ELIGI V SEP S SVB

Signature of Eligius, Financier and minister to Dagobert I

WULFRAM

Many pagan Frisians have gathered at Medemblik, a place in North Holland. Chiefs of the Frisian tribes from miles around are there. Even Radbod, the king of the Frisians, is present. So why have they all come to Medemblik?

A pagan sacrificial feast is taking place. However, this time the offering will not be a beautiful horse or a strong, mighty bull, which is the usual sacrifice during these feasts.

For this special occasion, the offering will be a...human being! Who is the unfortunate youth to be chosen to be sacrificed? Nobody knows yet. But look, the priests in their long white robes are preparing to cast the lot. The gods will make their choice. With serious faces, conscious of their dignity, the priests slowly walk to the front. The critical moment is at hand. All eyes focus on the priest who will cast the lot. The silence grows and becomes filled with dread. They all wait for the result in breathless suspense, craning their necks to see what is happening. The hearts of many young Frisians beat anxiously as they watch the actions of the priests with increasing nervousness. One of them must die.



Wulfram C. 640 - 703

They know that.

But they suppress the gnawing fear and *seem* undisturbed.

They watch the preparations with feigned indifference.

The decisive moment has arrived.

An aged pagan priest casts the small sticks. Then, with solemn faces, they bend over those small sticks to study their position.

Then they rise.

The suspense becomes unbearable.

Thousands of eyes are fixed on them.

For a moment, the priests' eyes wander over the crowd and finally rest on a robust, healthy boy who also awaits the outcome with an anxiously beating heart. Then a priest slowly raises his arm, and his finger points to that boy...he must be the sacrifice.

"The gods have chosen *him*," the priest declares with an icy voice.

All eyes follow the direction of the outstretched arm.

There stands the condemned youth.

He turns ghastly pale when he hears the dreadful sentence.

His eyes twitch nervously. He trembles and staggers for a moment, but he can't do anything about it. It is the will of the gods. Poor, poor people, they know no better.

The chosen youth does not object and does not struggle against it. It is the will of the gods; therefore, he bows his head and submits himself to it. Poor boy! He does not know any better either.

King Radbod watches all this with interest. His eyes gleam.

A smile curves his lips while his strong hand rests on his heavy broadsword. He nods as he casts an approving glance at the chosen youth. The gods will be satisfied. This sacrifice will incline the gods favourably, now they will surely help him in his desperate struggle against the Franks.

Oh, those Franks! He hates them! He hates them with wild, unbridled hatred. They want to subdue him and his people and turn the rugged free

Frisians into slaves. Oh, Radbod's strong teeth gnash at the thought, and his eyes blaze.

Oh, those hypocritical Franks!

They send missionaries to draw the Frisians away from the ancient service of the gods. They preach a God of the cross! Bah!

A contemptuous, mocking laugh curls the firmly pressed lips of the Frisian king. But then his expression becomes sombre again. Yes, and when they have become Christians, they will have lost their freedom. But no, never that! His fists clench convulsively.

Those thoughts make Radbod such a fierce enemy of Christianity.

That's why he had the little Christian church in Utrecht demolished.

That's why he caused the monasteries to be burned to the ground.

That's why he had no respect for the grey hairs of the prior, the Father Superior of the monastery. That's why he did not spare the life of the young monks.

Their cries for help sounded like music in his ears.

He does not want to become a Christian. Not now, not ever. He does not want to become a servant of the Frankish kings. He wants to be free. He will not tolerate that his people become enslaved by those miserable Franks. They are free Frisians, and they will remain free Frisians! Unconsciously he stamps his foot.

Despite their courageous, desperate resistance, his brave soldiers have already been defeated twice by the Frankish king. But now it will change. Now they will sacrifice that handsome young man to the gods. This offering will make the gods look down favourably on them.

Now the gods will help him!

Now his brave Frisians won't be repulsed anymore.

Poor Radbod. He knows no better! He watches approvingly as the youth is led to a large oak



King Radbod c-648 -719

where the noose is ready, swaying gently in the breeze.

It becomes breathlessly quiet for the second time. When the lot had been cast, an approving murmur had broken the silence. Many young men heaved a sigh of relief. Thankfully, *they* are safe! Look, the young man is standing near the oak tree. A hand already holds the end of the rope. Suddenly a powerful voice breaks the heavy silence.

"Stop, king! Let that boy go! Your gods *are* no gods! This youth will die for nothing! This sacrifice has no value! Your gods cannot help you because they do not exist!"

A shock runs through the crowd, and all eyes look for the owner of that voice. They do not have to look for long. Undauntedly, a man steps forward. Loud and clear, he speaks to the king. The crowd responds with a threatening murmur. They send hateful looks his way, but he is not afraid! Fearlessly he looks at the mighty king.

Who of us would have dared to do that?

Great courage was necessary for this because he put his life at risk.

Who is he?

He is a missionary from the Frankish Kingdom.
His name is Wulfram.

King Radbod gives the missionary a scathing look.
Another one of those miserable Frankish missionaries!

Another one of those spies from the Frankish king!

Radbod feels an intense hatred blaze up. One word from him and his faithful subjects will tear that spy to pieces! How does that Christian dog dare to enter into this sacred place? It becomes alarmingly quiet. What will happen now? But Radbod controls himself. He shrugs his shoulders and answers tersely and sarcastically:

"The gods have appointed him as the sacrifice, and that *will* take place!" He speaks those words in a commanding tone without tolerating opposition; then he adds scornfully:

"If your God, that God of the cross of the Christians, is as powerful as you say He is, let Him save this youth from death!"

Then, without considering the missionary worthy of another glance, he turns to the priests and gives them a sign. They take hold of the youth and put the noose around the neck of the wretched boy. Wulfram folds his hands and prays:

"O God, Thou God of heaven and earth, Thou almighty God, show that Thou art stronger. Help, Lord!"

Will God listen... ?

The priests pull the rope tight. Just a few moments and the youth will be swinging between heaven and earth. The feet of the 'sacrifice' no longer touch the ground. But then ... then the rope suddenly breaks, and the 'sacrifice' falls back to the ground.

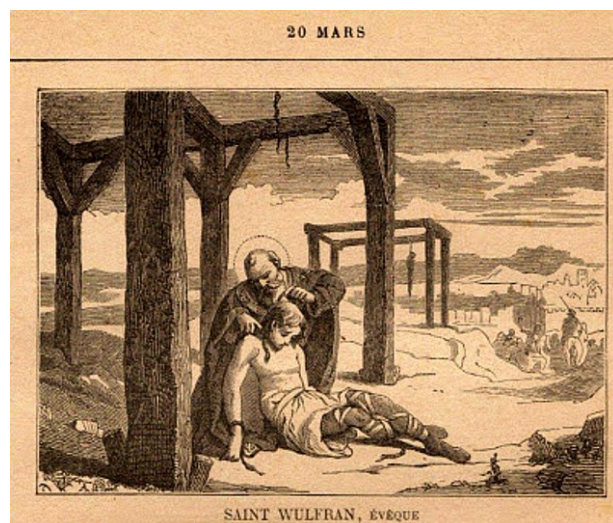
Shocked, the crowd watch it happen.

They are almost afraid to breathe!

They all look at the king, wondering what he will do.

Radbod stands astonished, stupefied! For a moment, he is confused. But he quickly recovers and cries out loudly:

"The youth is free! The gods do not desire this offering!"



Wulfram attends to the young man who escaped death by hanging as the rope snapped.

Wulfram immediately answers: "No king, not the gods, but the God of the Christians has saved this boy from death."

The impact is powerful; the crowd is stunned. For a moment, everyone is silent, but then a commotion ripples through the crowd.

The Frisians look at each other dubiously, unbelievably.

The sacrificial ceremony is over.

The feast is suddenly finished.

The crowd dissolves.

The people go home, busily discussing what they have just witnessed. Respect for that courageous missionary grows in many hearts.

Whatever else he may be, he is not a coward, and the Frisians know how to appreciate courage. No one dreams of harming him.

Look, there stands Wulfram. His eyes shine with happiness. God has not put him to shame! You can be sure that he thanked the Lord for this miracle. The young man, who was saved from certain death, timidly approaches Wulfram. Everyone goes home, but he stays with the missionary. Realising this man saved him from certain death, he does not know how to show his gratitude. But Wulfram does not ask for a reward.

Instead, he teaches that young man about the way of salvation through Christ. That instruction has borne fruit. He believed, and Wulfram baptised him. In that way, he showed his fellow countrymen that he had become a Christian. Later he brought the gospel to his people. God's ways are wonderful! No matter how much Satan rages, God shall fulfil His counsel. God directs all things for the benefit of his church-gathering work.

KING RADBOD REFUSES TO BE BAPTISED

Radbod, the king, went home as well. However, he is *not* happy and cheerful. Doubt creeps into his heart. He had counted on this human sacrifice to please the gods so they would help him. But he is not so sure about that anymore. He struggles with a dilemma. Is the God of the Christians really stronger and mightier than his pagan gods? His firm trust in the pagan gods has been shaken. Many questions arise in his heart, questions to which he has no answer. However, he has a deep respect for that Frankish missionary. He was no coward; that's why he did not kill him. In the meantime, Wulfram preaches among the Frisians, and the Lord blesses that preaching. Many are

baptised. Historians believe that the son of Radbod was also converted.

Gradually the thought grows in Wulfram's mind:

'What a blessing it would be if I could persuade Radbod to become a Christian'.

He decides to try his utmost.

He visits the king in his palace.

That is a bold move!

He speaks long and earnestly with him, and yes, he has some success. The king does not arrest him but listens to him carefully. Sometime later, a large baptismal font stands ready. The mighty Frisian king, the enemy and dread of the Christians, is going to be baptised!

What a victory for Wulfram!

No previous missionary had such success!

Was Wulfram proud of his achievement? I do not know.

Watch him standing near the baptismal font, waiting for the king to come to the front. He does not have long to wait for the king is already approaching.

There is a solemn silence. Wulfram stands ready to administer the sacrament.

This baptism will be a crown on his labours!

This action of the king will undoubtedly have great results, for the people will follow the king's example. That also happened with Clovis, the king of the Franks.

Some writers tell us that Radbod had already put one foot into the baptismal waters. Suddenly he hesitates. He looks the missionary straight in the eye and asks:

"Tell me, where are my ancestors? Are they also in heaven?"

Wulfram gets a terrible shock when he hears that question. He



Radbod refuses to be baptised.

is silent for a moment; he must answer the king truthfully. Then he says:

"They are lost."

He can and may not say anything else. Radbod responds:

"Well, then I would rather be with my ancestors in Valhalla than with the Christians in heaven."

He pulls his foot out of the baptismal font, turns around and calmly walks back home.

Dumbfounded, Wulfram watches him go.

'Failed,' it hammers through his head, 'failed!'

What a humiliation for him.

He was so close to achieving his desired result!

It had all been in vain!

He had not expected *that* to happen!

Deeply disappointed, Wulfram leaves the country of the Frisians. The will to persevere has suddenly left him. He locks himself in his monastery, where he dies several years later, in the year 720. King Radbod had died some months earlier.

Historians tell us that during the last years of his life, Radbod no longer persecuted the Christians. I am not sure how true that is.

This history clearly confirms the sovereignty of God. Unfortunately, Wulfram did not fully understand that, and so he became despondent and gave up. Wulfram thought all was lost, but he was mistaken. God's ways are different from our ways! At times, it looks like everything is going wrong; that is because we cannot always follow and understand God's ways. But God is faithful, and His work continues; even when we cannot see it. God never loses sight of *His* great purpose. If Wulfram had remembered that, he wouldn't have become discouraged but would have steadfastly continued his work, leaving the outcome with the Lord. Not at Wulfram's time, but at God's time, will the Frisian people bend their knees to the living God!

QUESTIONS

1. Who is Clovis?

2. Why did he despise the religion of his wife, Clotilda?

3. What did Clotilda try to impress on Clovis about one's responsibility to his neighbour?

4. How did circumstances change during the Alamanni conflict?

5. What step did Clovis take to prove himself a Christian?

6. List three results of this change for the Franks and the northern tribes.

7. How did the Frankish kings misuse the missionaries?

8. How did the Frisians and Saxons react?

9. What does the author mean by a 'double hatred' against the Frankish missionaries?

10. How and where did Amandus begin his mission work?

11. Did he experience the blessing of the Lord? Why or why not?

12. How were prisoners of war treated? What was done with them?

13. Identify Eligius.

14. Explain how he showed he was a Christian. What result did it have?

15. Describe the pagan sacrificial feast. Where was it located?

16. Why was Radbod so violently opposed to the missionaries?

17. Who intervened at the critical moment? Why did he do this?

18. How did the pagans interpret the breaking of the rope?

19. How did Wulfram oppose this conclusion?

20. Why was Wulfram so disappointed in Radbod?

21. What did Wulfram fail to understand?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Why did Clovis become a Christian? Sometimes, after the Lord displays His omnipotence unusually or powerfully, individuals are humbled for a time. Such persons give signs of a change within, but sometimes the change is not permanent. Can you find any examples of this in God's Word?
2. What are the four types of faith? (Luke 8: 4 – 8 & 11 - 15) If Clovis indeed retained his pagan beliefs, as the author tends to conclude, what type or types of faith best describe Clovis? Defend your answer.
3. Show how God's sovereignty reigns in moving the candlestick of His Word from the churches in Asia Minor to the area of western Europe.
4. What problems arise when church and state are too closely united? How did these problems affect the spread of the Gospel in Western Europe?
5. Explain the text, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."
6. How can the sovereignty of God be seen in the story of Radbod and Wulfram?
7. How should a minister react when he sees very little fruit on his labours?