



PART SIX — CHRISTIAN PREACHING IN AMERICA

Chapter I

1059-1121

ERIK-UPSI

Chapter I — ERIK-UPSI — Jonus killed while preaching Christianity in America. — Erik-Upsi resigns as bishop of Gardar in order to remain in America. — Ancient monument in Rhode Island. — Cult of the Cross in Gaspée.

During the 11th century, the colonies of Vinland [1] were included in the dioceses of Norway and Iceland.

Then as in the 16th and the beginning of the 17th centuries, America and Greenland were considered a continuation of Norway. Geographers extended the northwest of Greenland as far as the longitude of Spitzbergen and separated it from the north of the nearby Scandinavian islands by an arm of the sea or unknown lands.¹ This error explains the easy submission of the colonies to the regional capital.

Hardly one prelate made pastoral visits or church rounds in these faraway countries.

In 1059, Jonus, a Saxon bishop, came to Iceland. After preaching there for four years, he went to Vinland to bolster the colonists in their faith and to attempt the conversion of the Indian peoples who were beginning to furnish spouses to the Norse. The Vinlanders put him to death,² those who believed that his efforts could have little success and that Odin was regaining in those countries some of the ground he had lost in Europe.

The people of Vinland defended paganism in the same way as Olaf Tryggvason and Saint Olaf recommended Christianity: with the blow of an ax. On the two coasts of the Atlantic was the same savagery, the same intolerance. There were a thousand reasons for rulers and colonists to live in peace, uniting their efforts to enhance the prosperity of the realm; religious beliefs, that is to say what

¹ See maps by Sigurd Stephanius, 1570, and Gubrandus Torlacius, 1606, and *infra*, of Antonio Zeno.

² Mallet, *Introduction to the history of Denmark*, t. I, p. 254 — Iceland's *Landnamabok*, p. 306. — Th. Torfaeus, *History of Old Vinland*, p. 71.

men understood least, divided them, and this division had consequences which distance and the silence of historians do not allow [us] to evaluate, but which was assuredly very detrimental.

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In 1121, after several attempts about which history has kept only a vague memory, Erik-Upsi [2] an Icelander, first bishop of Greenland,³ set out for Vinland. The religious conditions of the country made him very uneasy.⁴

Some authors claim that this worthy priest returned to Gardar; but Rafn, whose authority is considerable, thinks otherwise.⁵ Erik's relinquishment of the bishopric of Gardar, accepted in Greenland around 1122, proves that the Christian idea had made progress in America, that the colonies of that country had a certain importance, that the prelate intended to consecrate his life to them. He was replaced in the bishop's seat of Gardar by Arnald, in 1124,⁶ at the request of the Greenland colonists, brought together in a general meeting [Thing] by Sokke Thorerson, head of Brattahlid and probably a descendant of Erik the Red.⁷

The best manuscripts of the annals of this period contain the report of Erik's voyage to Vinland. Their diversity of terms prove compilations independent of one another and by consequence their basic authenticity. But these manuscripts tell nothing of Erik's actions in Vinland. The Royal Society of Northern Antiquities, which has made so many happy discoveries these past 40 years, will no doubt raise the veil that still covers this very interesting part of the ancient history of America. It will finally find some authentic evidence about that old Newport [Rhode Island] structure whose construction, says Rafn, appears to coincide with Erik's stay in that country.

It is built of rough local granite. The stones are held together with a very resistant sand mortar.

It is circular in forms and carries eight arches resting on as many columns, about 24 English feet high. Rafn gives an exterior view, an interior view, a cross-section, and a plan, drawn by M. Catherwood, a skilled American architect.⁸ [3]

In 1678, 40 years after the second capture of Rhode Island by Europeans, Benedict Arnold, governor of the island, mentioned it in his will by the name of "Stone mill" and as going back to high antiquity. [4]

In comparing it to monuments whose Scandinavian origin is well established, one can fix with certainty the date of its construction and its original

³ *Rimbegia, sive rudimento computi ecclesiastici veterum Islandorum*, éd. st. Bjornonis, Hafn, 1780, p. 320, cited by Rafn, *Ant.Amer.*, p. 258.

⁴ Rafn, *Ant. Amer.*, pp. 261, 262; — *Découverte de l'Amérique au 10^e siècle*, p. 50 51. — M. E. Beauvois, *op. cit.*, p. 66. — Th. Torfaeus, *History of Old Vinland*, p. 71..

⁵ Rafn, *Ant. Amer.*, pp. 452, 453. — *Découverte de l'Amérique au 10^e siècle*, p. 31.

⁶ Th. Torfaeus, *Old Greenland*, cap. XXX, p. 243.

⁷ "Sockius Thoreris filius. (Eirico Rufo prognatus videtur)." (Th. Torfaeus, *Old Greenland*, cap. XXVI, p. 218).

⁸ Rafn., *Découverte de l'Amérique au 10^e siècle [Discovery of America in the 10th Century]*, pp. 51, and plates III, IV, V.

purpose. It can be assured that, before becoming a storage place for coal, as it is today, a mill as it was in the time of Benedict Arnold, it was a baptistry. At least, this is what history and archaeology tend to demonstrate.

At the beginning of Christianity, as we learn from Church Fathers, they baptized in the sea, in rivers, in fountains, beside wells. When the new religion triumphed under Constantine, spacious buildings were constructed, differentiated from the churches by their usage and called by the Latins, *sub dio* (in open air), by the Greeks [Greek phrase] (illuminated places). They were placed a little distant from the churches to show “that baptism is the door which introduces man into the Church of God.”⁹

Buildings with this usage, isolated from the churches, of the same architecture as the one in Rhode Island, are found at Igalikko, [5] Kakortok, [6] Iglorsoit; [7] at Pisa, Parma, Ravenna and Florence [Italy] there still exist baptistries built in the same isolated condition.

No trace of a church is seen around the Stone Mill [8]. That is not surprising. In the first centuries, usage was to have only one baptistry per diocese, but the needs of worship required a chapel or church for a population group. So churches were built in the woods, as is still done in certain parts of Norway and Greenland, but more care was taken in the building of the baptistry, principal monument of the diocese and sign of the episcopal seat.

Besides the Rhode Island monument, pioneers of the second discovery of America found in these countries beliefs which attest to the passing of Erik, at the very least to the sojourn of Christian priests.

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In the 17th century, Christian LeClercq, a Franciscan friar, lived for 12 years,¹⁰ in the Gaspée, which successively became Acadia and then Nova Scotia, after having been the Markland of the Scandinavians. There he found traditions about the Creation and Noah’s Flood, which seemed to be borrowed from Genesis.¹¹

Struck by the similarity, “it could be,” says the good monk, “that these people were instructed in the mysteries of our holy Religion, that they even had the knowledge of good Literature.” He adds that with time they must have slipped back into ignorance and idolatry for lack of ministers to perfect their learning and maintain the purity of their doctrine.¹²

The prayer they said each day at sunrise seems an echo of the *Pater* [Pater

⁹ Abbé Martigny, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités chrétiennes [Dictionary of Christian Antiquities]*, Paris, Hachette, 1865, *Baptistères [Baptistries]*.

¹⁰ Ch. LeClercq, *Nouvelle relation de la Gaspésie qui contient les Moeurs et la Religion de Sauvages Gaspésiens Porte-Croix, Adorateurs du Soleil, et d’autres Peuples de l’Amérique septentrionale, dite Canada* [“New account of the Gaspée containing the Customs and Religion of the Native Gaspée Cross-Bearers, Sun Worshipers, and other people of Northern America, called Canada”]. Paris, A. Auroy, 1691, in-12, p. 171.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-38.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

Noster, Our Father]. They spoke to the fixed star they watched, not as a god but as the greatest manifestation of divinity: “Give us life and health, for us and our families, daily nourishment, and victory over our enemies.”¹³

They have the cult of the cross *immissa* †; that is to say the cross acknowledged by Christians from the 5th century. If the people of the Gaspée had had this monogram, , which is found at the beginning of the historical period in India - or what theologians call *commissa*, *patibula*, or *tau*, **T**, which is found as well in India in a more remote era and among Christians of the first four centuries,¹⁴ it would be impossible to judge the cause and the date of its

¹³ Ch. LeClercq, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

¹⁴ Only once has the *immissa* cross been found on monuments before the 5th century: It carried the Roman consular date of 370 (Abbé Martigny, *op. cit.*, the word *Croix* [Cross]).

In Peru, in a tomb antedating the Spanish conquest, two jeweled vessels were found, one of which was surmounted with a statuette on twisted feet which carried in its arms a cross *immissa* of quite large size. (L. Figuière, *Les Merveilles de l'Industrie [The Marvels of Industry]*, Paris, Furne, s.d. (1873), p. 337, fig. 242). The Incan empire was founded by Manco-Capa in the 12th or 13th century, and it was only in this era that the arts made their first step in Peru. The vessel in question shows a certain skill and consequently must be later than the foundation of the empire. In the case where the cross carries ornamentation of a religious nature, it implies the presence of Christians between the 12th and 16th centuries. In any case, it can prove nothing against the generally accepted date for the adoption of the Cross *immissa* by Christians.

The famous bas-relief cross of Palenqué still guards its secret. It is surmounted with a rooster, which recalls the one that represents, on our clock towers, the symbol of vigilance, and one in old Iran, as we learn from J. Ménant (*Zorastre, — Essai sur la philosophie religieuse de la Perse [Essay on the religious philosophy of the Persians]*, Paris, Drench, 1857, pp. 12 and 134), which, with its morning song, wakes the worker and the shepherd and must signal to the inhabitants of the sky and the earth the end of time and the Resurrection. On each side of the cross, heavy with offerings, is a personage covered with fantastic ornaments. An infant is being presented to him. One can infer from this detail that it has a religious character.

In the opinion of Chevalier Le Noir (*Antiquités Mexicains [Mexican Antiquities]*, t. II, *Examine [Examination]*, p. 73), the ruins of Palenqué go back 3,000 years. Valdeck (*Voyage en Yucatan [Travel in Yucatan]* makes them 2,000 to 3,000 years. Presto (*History of the Conquest of Mexico*, Paris, Beady, 1844, t. III, p. 255, app 1), based on a handwritten account of Ixtlilxochitl, thinks Palenqué's construction likely only goes back to the 10th century. According to Viollet-le-Duc (*Introduction aux Cites et Ruines Américaines [Introduction to the American Cities and Ruins]* of Charley, Paris, Guide, 1863, p. 74), the style of the sculpture is more complex at Palenqué than in other ancient Mexican construction, but he blames an era of decadence. This learned architect's evaluation give great force to Persecutes arguments. Brassier de Bourbourg, whose authority is considerable, thinks Palenqué was founded by Votan [9] several centuries before the Christian era. But since the successors of Votan augmented and ornamented the ancient constructions with sculptures, the learned historian wonders if the cross, whose form is a bit Latin, recalls the memory of an early Christianity or refers to rivers in flood. He observes as well that in Tootled and Mexican worship, the cross was the emblem of rain and the symbol of Cé-Acatl (*Historic des nations civilizes du Mexico et de l'Amérique centrale durance les siècles antérieurs à Christophe Colomb [History of the Civilized Nations of Mexico and Central America in the centuries before Chirstopher Columbus]*, Paris, Bertrand, 1857, t. I, pp. 68-70).

In summary, it seems difficult to find the expression of a Christian idea in the cross of Palenqué.

Sargon, King of Assyria, coming to the throne in 721 BC, is represented in a bas-relief at Khorsabad [10] with a cross hanging from his ear (J. Ménant, *Eléments d'épigraphie assyrienne. — Les 'écritures cunéiformes. — Exposé des travaux qui ont préparées la lecture et l'interprétation des inscriptions de la Perse et de l'Assyrie [Elements of Assyrian epigraphy. — Cuniform writing. — Display of works prepared for the reading and interpretation of Persian and Assyrian inscriptions]*; 2e éd., Paris, Puprat, 1864, pp. 158 and 255).

As M. Ménant has kindly explained to us, this cross is an artistic whim, with no symbolic value.

So, except for the example cited above, all that is proved is that the cross *immissa*, before the 5th century, had a religious character which is now attributed to the Church.

introduction into northwest America. Whether the Cross of the people of Gaspée is *immissa* or Latin, on the contrary it is admitted without a problem that the people received it after the 5th century from the hands of Scandinavian priests, the only ones whose presence in America before the 15th century is ascertained by authentic monuments.

All the people of the Gaspée carried it figured on their clothing and their skin; they had it at hand in all their ceremonies and their travels; they placed it inside and outside their shacks, on boats, even on paddles. They hung it on their children's diapers and considered it a sign of their superiority over other nations.

Gaspée councils convened around a great cross, and each councilor had a small one in his hand.¹⁵

When a person of the Gaspée was sent on a mission, the chief solemnly handed him a beautiful cross on a necklace and told him, at the end of their meeting of preparation, "Go, keep this Cross, which will preserve you from all dangers, besides those to which we send you."¹⁶

Pregnant women carried one on their bellies.

One fact seems especially characteristic: the people of the Gaspée wanted a cross on their cradles and a cross on their graves, so that their cemeteries seem "more Christian than savage."¹⁷

That was, without any doubt, an echo of the Christian preachings in America, proof of the passing of Erik-Upsi and the Norse, who had their main station, says Humboldt, at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, above all in the Bay of Gaspée facing Anticosti Island [11], where the abundance and the ease of fishing attracted them.¹⁸

Father Christian Le Clercq, who holds a great authority from his 12 years' sojourn in the Gaspée, confirms this evaluation: "In particular, I found among certain Savages, enough material to conjecture and even to believe that these Peoples had not closed their ears to the Apostles."¹⁹



¹⁵ Ch. LeClercq, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-181.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 178-179.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹⁸ Humboldt, *Examen critique [Critical Examination]*, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

¹⁹ Ch. Le Clercq, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

PART SIX — CHRISTIAN PREACHING IN AMERICA.**Chapter I Notes**

- [1] **Vinland** As nearly as anyone can tell from the Icelandic Sagas, Vinland was a region south of Helluland (Slab-land) and Markland (Forest-Land), where grapes grew; grapes grow from 45 ° N latitude to the south, but not north of 45°; 45° N latitude runs through the middle of Nova Scotia and forms the northern boundary of New York State; whether this allows us to make Vinland a region extending south from Nova Scotia is still open to question.
- [2] **Erik-Upsi** Erik Gnipsson, an Icelander; Upsi was apparently a nickname and meant “pollack,” a northern fish; Erik came from the “highly-esteemed Valthjflinger stock at Kjos, in southern Iceland” (Nørlund, 1936); he was consecrated as a missionary bishop around 1112 or 1113 and went to Greenland “in the last year of the reign of Pope Paschal II,” or 1117 since Pascal died in January, 1118; in 1121 he left Greenland “to look for Vinland;” Fra Luka Jelic says that he made it to Vinland, and Gravier says he resigned as bishop of Gardar to devote his life to Vinland; in the poem *The Greenland Chronicles*, Claus Christofferson Lyschander (1608) says that Erik died about 1146 “from injury and illness,” and Bishop Arnald brought his bones under guard to Greenland and buried them there; unfortunately, no English translation of *The Greenland Chronicles* exists, so that we do not know *from where* Bishop Arnald brought Erik’s bones, or where exactly he buried them in Greenland.
- [3] **Catherwood** Frederick Catherwood, 1799-1854, English artist and architect, best remembered for his detailed drawings of the ruins of the Maya civilization; explored Mesoamerica in the mid-19th century with writer John Lloyd Stephens; their books, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatán*, and *Incidents of Travel in Yucatán*, were best sellers and introduced the civilization of the ancient Maya to Europe and North America.
- [4] **...as going back to high antiquity** Not true; Gravier, quoting Rafn, probably never read Arnold’s will, in which Arnold mentions the “Stone windmill” twice - first as a marker to say where he wanted to be buried, and again in designating 16 acres to go to his wife to be passed on to their youngest daughter; he says nothing about “high antiquity.”

- [5] **Igalikko** Igaliko, Greenland, a settlement in the ancient see of Gardar; the name means “The Abandoned Fireplace” in Greenlandic; the Norwegian Anders Olsen started farming at Gardar in 1780 and dedicated the place to St. Nicolas, the protector of seafaring people; the ruins of a cross church, 27x16 m, built of sandstone in the 12th century as the Cathedral of Gardar, remains there; the ruins of the bishopric cover an extended area, among them the ruins of a 130 m celebration hall, a tithe-hut, where the tithes were kept, and a barn for more than 100 head of cattle.
- [6] **Kakortok** Qaqortoq, Greenland; Hvalsey Church (Greenlandic Qaqortukukooq) is located near Qaqortoq and is the site of a number of Greenland's best-preserved Norse ruins in what was known by the Norse as the Eastern Settlement; the farm, whose original name was “Thjodhildarstead,” was established by Erik the Red's uncle, Thorkell Farserkur; a wedding at Hvalsey in 1408, between Sigríður Björnsdóttir and Thorsteinn Ólafsson, both from Iceland, is the last documented event from the days of the Norse; the farm itself was a major farm in South Greenland, with some 14 house ruins close by the church; the church itself is most likely from the early 14th century, possibly built by Norwegian/Scottish stone builders; an identical church is found in Norway and the Orkneys of Britain; the church is exceptionally well built, with carefully chosen stones; it most likely was plastered on the outside, and probably had a timber/turf roof.
- [7] **Iglorsoit** Apparently in Greenland, but not found.
- [8] **No trace of a church is seen around the Stone Mill** It would appear, from the archaeological excavations of 2006 and 2007 by the Chronognostic Research Foundation and Gray & Pape, Inc., that there may very well have been a building about 40 feet east of the Newport Tower; ground-penetrating radar showed an anomaly about 18 x 20 feet in size, 2 to 3 feet deep; when the area was excavated, large quantities of 19th-century fill was brought to light as if, at the formation of Touro Park (about 1855) and again around 1900, household trash of every imaginable kind was dumped into the hole, apparently to bring it up to the level of the rest of the park; since the whole of the feature was not excavated, it is still impossible to tell whether the feature is actually a building foundation; but the trash is underlain with the same kind of stones used in the construction of the Tower - local fieldstone; one can only speculate, at this point, that the excavators found something that Gravier didn't know about.

- [9] **Votan** Legendary or mythological figure mentioned in early European accounts of the Maya civilization of Mexico and Central America, who was said to have built Palenqué; also known as the Black God; the story of Votan was first published in the late 17th century by Francisco Nuñez de la Vega, Bishop of Chiapas, Mexico.
- [10] **Khorsabad** Dur-Sharrukin (“Fortress of Sargon”), the Assyrian capital in the time of Sargon II of Assyria; a village in northern Iraq, 15 km northeast of Mosul, which is still inhabited by Assyrians.
- [11] **Anticosti Island** French *l’Île d’Anticosti*, a large, thinly-populated island at the outlet of the Saint Lawrence River into the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, in the Province of Quebec, 20th largest island in Canada; French explorer Jacques Cartier saw and described it in 1534; privately owned until 1974, when Québec purchased it.