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Exploring the peripeteia of Clovis I of the Franks: examining the sincerity of his conversion to Nicene Christianity and its effects on late Antique Gaul

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EXPLORING THE *PERIPETEIA* OF CLOVIS I OF THE FRANKS: EXAMINING THE SINCERITY OF HIS CONVERSION TO NICENE CHRISTIANITY AND ITS EFFECTS ON LATE ANTIQUE GAUL

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ABSTRACT

The Gothic sack of Rome on 24 August 410 was perhaps one of the most fateful events in Christian history. Indeed, conceptions of Western-Nicene Christianity were forever altered with Emperor Honorius's (A.D. 384–423) abdication of Rome. Pope St. Innocent I (d. 417 A.D.) filled the vacuum of Roman stewardship thereby preserving a loose notion of a demonstrable "church." The theological implications notwithstanding, Clovis I of the Franks (ca. 466 A.D.–ca. 511)—an obscure Gallic chieftain—would find himself in a unique and significant position to select, preserve and perpetuate Nicene Christianity. His decision to choose "the God of Clotilda" (A.D. 475–545)—the faith representative of his Burgundian wife—not only precipitated the establishment of "Francia," but created a geographical bastion to affect the conversion of Britania, Germania, Scotland and Ireland.

Moreover, the development of Christianity from the catacombs to the Nicene Council appeared supplanted by the floundering Roman Empire. The end was indeed nigh, for Rome was commanded and garrisoned by a conglomeration of "barbarian" (e.g., non-Roman) tribes. These tribes brought with them a myriad of faiths such as native paganism, Manichaeism and Arianism that sought the assimilation of Roman Christianity. Despite these dire developments of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries, the coronation of Clovis I as "King of the Franks" in A.D. 509 marked perhaps the biggest *peripeteia* in Christian memory. Indeed, his antecedent marriage to St. Clotilda—a Burgundian princess who prayed unceasingly for his conversion—became the precipitating event for a successful Nicene-Christian resurgence.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The conversion of Clovis I of the Franks (A.D. 481–511) to Nicene Christianity in A.D. 496 proved to be a true *peripeteia*, or a "turning point" in the destiny of Europe.[1] His vision of a unified "Francia," which reportedly came to fruition through his Nicene Christian wife St. Clotilda (A.D. 475–545), led directly to the development of "Christendom." However, some in contemporary scholarship question the sincerity of Clovis I's conversion and St. Clotilda's significance to it. This is due in part to the frequent panegyrics written by the hagiographers St. Gregory of Tours (ca. 538–594 A.D.), St. Avitus of Vienne (ca. 470–518 A.D.) and St. Isidore of Seville (ca. 560–636 A.D.). An example of such panegyrics would be St. Gregory's frequent suggestions that Clovis I was called to wage a "Catholic crusade" to rout-out the "heresy" of Arianism in his *The History of the Franks*. Given such an anachronistic and romanticized interpretation of a fifth century Gallo-Roman chieftain, we must proceed with caution but must also allow the evidence and tradition to guide us.

While some of these panegyrics may often seem dubious to the contemporary reader, it is important to consider the spirit and context in which they have been transmitted to us. In doing so, we find that it is just as important to consider what is omitted as it is to consider an author's evident biases in his methodology. This is true because the absence of contradictory evidence in chronicles that would otherwise be expected to contradict a claim or at least criticize it, such as the sincerity of Clovis I's conversion, supports the historicity of the claim. For example, St. Avitus of Vienne's

Epistula 46 congratulates Clovis I on his baptism and conversion but gives no indication that we should doubt the conversion or its sincerity. Given that St. Avitus was a skilled Nicene Christian apologist and tuned-in to the quarrels between Clovis I, the Burgundians and the Gothic kingdoms of Gaul, we would expect to find an admonition or some other form of contradiction in his works if Clovis I's conversion was insincere. Yet, we have no record of such a document. This absence of criticism or contradiction does not prove the historicity or sincerity of Clovis I's conversion, but it does lend credence to its veracity when taken together with the absences of contradictions in the works of other chroniclers and the historical traditions that have come down to us.

The traditions that have been transmitted to us are often tantamount to hagiography despite the function such traditions as Clovis I's "glorious conversion" has maintained in France's origin story. For example, the popular and hagiographical story of Clovis I's conversion takes place during the Battle of Tolbiac in A.D. 496. According to St. Gregory, the Franks were being routed by the Alemanni and Clovis I himself was nearly killed until he:

> Raised his eyes to the heavens…felt compunction in his heart and was moved to tears. 'Jesus Christ,' he said, 'you who Clotilda maintains to be the Son of the living God, you who deign to give help to those in travail and victory to those who trust you, in faith, I beg the glory if your help. If you will give me victory over my enemies, and if I may have evidence of that miraculous power which the people dedicated to your name say that they have experienced, then I will believe in you and I will be baptized in your name. …I now call upon you. I want to believe in you, but I must first be saved from my enemies.'[2]

Following this plea, the Alemanni retired from the field and begged for mercy after seeing that their king had fallen. While St. Gregory's prose appears romanticized, his description of the events that culminated in Clovis I's conversion does suggest that he

accepted the God of his Burgundian wife ("the God of Clotilda") in A.D. 496, which we can accept at face value without assenting to his particular hagiography.[3]

Why Study Late Antique Gaul?

The study of Late Antique Gaul, which generally refers to the period between ca. 400–800 A.D., is very much the study of Europe's development and the advent of the Early Middle Ages. It begins with the Roman Empire's transformation to *Roma Gothica*, or "Gothic Rome," and ends with the coronation of Charlemagne as the first Holy Roman Emperor on 25 December 800. While Charlemagne is widely considered to be the "Father of Europe," Clovis I is widely considered to be the "Father of France." Together, these two kings rebuilt the notion of "imperial Rome" by restoring what British scholar Judith Herrin believes to be fundamental to Antique Rome: the *mare nostrum* ("our sea") or the Mediterranean Sea that connected all parts of the Roman Empire.[4]

The study of Late Antique Gaul is also very much the study of Christianity and its survival in a seemingly arid environment. While the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) represented the first formal and ecumenical attempt at doctrinal reconciliation, its accomplishments were short-lived. Emperor Constantine I's (ca. 272–337 A.D.) successors made efforts to erase his vision of a "unified" Christian Church, which were accompanied by the partitioning of the Roman Empire. With this political partition came an ecclesial partition with sees vying for the "authority" to speak authoritatively. Most notably, the Roman See made efforts to settle theological disputes with what it considered to be an implicit "primacy" or authoritative role among the other sees. An example of such efforts would be Pope St. Leo I's (d. 461 A.D.) *Tome* that sought to

resolve the Christological controversy surrounding the Semi-Arian and Nicene terminologies for the godhead. In promulgating his *Tome*, Pope St. Leo I also claimed that the Roman See had the authority to "take charge" of disputes like this one and that it spoke for all churches.

While these issues are infinitely more complex, the principles behind them are relevant to the study of Clovis I because his "Francia" would become synonymous with the "Catholic" ideology that came to fruition in Christendom. However, the limited historical evidence for this period leads English scholar Lewis Sergeant (d. 1902 A.D.) to the conclusion that: "The story of the Franks, especially of the earlier Franks, is rich in fable but poor in history. In the legend of Clovis, and even in the legend of Charles the Great, it is a work of considerable difficulty to separate what is historically accurate from that which has at best dubious origin."[5] It is in this spirit that we approach the subject of Clovis I of the Franks, for tradition and the absences of contradictions in the relevant sources can guide us toward accepting Clovis I's as a true "turning point" in the destiny of Europe.

Lastly, the Late Antique Gaul period is important to the development of Western Civilization because it witnessed the return of imperial Roman culture and government. While this occurred over several centuries, it is important to note the significance of Clovis I's conversion to the melding of the Franks and the Gallo-Romans. Rather than seeking to rebuild the Western Roman Empire in the image of the Franks, which was the approach the Semi-Arian Goths took, Clovis I sought to adapt his people to what he viewed as the "glory" of Christian Rome.

Nicene Christianity

The appellation "Nicene Christianity" has two separate but related definitions. The first and more direct definition refers to Christians that hold to the Nicene Creed, specifically the belief that the Father and the Son are of the same substance (*homoousia*). The second and more general phrase refers to a period characterized by turbulence within the Western Roman Empire following the Nicene Council (A.D. 325) that culminated in the transition from imperial Rome to Gothic Rome. Philip Schaff (A.D. 1819–1893) describes the Nicene and post-Nicene periods as "revealing a mass of worldliness within the church; an entire abatement of chiliasm with its longing after the return of Christ and his glorious reign, and in its stead an easy repose in the present order of things." Such degradation, he posits, coincided with the mass influx of "barbarians" from Germania, Gaul and the Baltic. Such an influx overwhelmed the Western Roman Empire and replaced the lords of "Old Rome" with Gothic lords, which were by large pagan or Semi-Arian. However, Nicene Christianity remained the majority throughout the turbulent fifth century and found in Clovis I's conquest opportunities for a resurgence. As we shall see, such a resurgence required the Nicene episcopate—that is, the bishops that held to the theology of the Nicene Creed—to invest its support in a king capable of restoring Gallo-Roman social and political structures that would rival those of Gothic Rome.

Moreover, the turbulence of the fourth and fifth centuries led Schaff to a controversial conclusion: that Pope St. Leo I arose to reform the ills of his contemporary church. However, in doing so he proclaimed the "supremacy" or "primacy" of the Roman See. While such a notion remains controversial, it illustrates the formalization of a

demonstrable "Nicene Church" in Clovis I's age. Thus, it was to this church—the church to which St. Clotilda belonged—that Clovis I would convert. In this sense, therefore, the concept of "Nicene Christianity" or a "Nicene Church" becomes relevant to the current study. Leading scholars Ian Wood and Danuta Shanzer often characterize the "Nicene Church" as referring to the "catholic church" and "Catholicism," respectively. The use of these different appellations in reference to the "Nicene Church" tells us that there is no designated or "objective" interpretation of what exactly constitutes the "Nicene Church." This means that we should approach the subject with caution and accept the testimonies of the chroniclers at face value because we find each of these appellations across the relevant sources.

While Peter Brown (b. 1935 A.D.) regards this age as rather loose in construction, it is prudent to simply accept that there were two competing interpretations of Christianity within the Western Roman Empire. However, accepting the existence of a "Nicene Church" does not imply that there were demonstrable sides *vis a vis* an "Arian Church" and a "Nicene Church" that fought for supremacy. But it is important to note that the Gothic tribes were introduced to Arian Christianity by Bishop Ulfilas (A.D. 311–383) rather than Western Roman interpretations of Christianity. Given the Goths' limited comprehension of the theological minutiae separating the two, it is prudent to simply accept that there were two different cultures based upon two different interpretations of Christianity. Stated simply, the Gothic understanding of Arianism led to an "us" and a "them" mentality with Western-Nicene Christianity. This conception is bolstered by the

testimony of the relevant sources that employ words like "captivity" and "bondage" when discussing Nicene Christianity's place within the Arian-Gothic Roman Empire.[6]

By viewing the notion of a "Nicene Church" in such a fashion, we can acknowledge Clovis I's options and ultimate decision of adopting Nicene Christianity over the seemingly more expedient Gothic Christianity. That said, the present project seeks to understand how such an obscure man chose the "Nicene Church" over his own interests and found himself in a position capable of preserving its unity. Moreover, Clovis I's significance in this respect is attested to by his interactions with the wider Roman Empire and the Roman See. It is recorded that Pope Symmachus (d. 514 A.D.) sent Clovis I a *pallium*, or a "papal vestment" to represent his authority over his new kingdom and Eastern Emperor Anastasius I also conferred on Clovis I the title *consul* in A.D. 507.[7] These gestures suggest that Clovis I held a legitimate role in the Roman Empire following his unification of Francia. In light of such records, it is reasonable to assume that Clovis I chose the "Nicene Church," to which his successors would remain loyal through Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne three hundred years later.

Ad Fontes: The Chroniclers of Late Antique Gaul and Italy

ST. GREGORY OF TOURS

Bishop Gregory of Tours was born on or around A.D. 538 in the Clermont region of central Gaul. His father belonged to the upper-echelon of Gallo-Roman society and served as a senator while his maternal uncle was Bishop Nicetius of Lyon (A.D. 413–573).[8] Of the milieu into which St. Gregory was born, Peter Brown says: "As in the days of Israel, the *virtutes sanctorum*, 'the deeds of the saints,' took place against a

background characterized by *strages gentium*, 'by the slaughter of warring nations.'"[9] Such circumstances as a divided Western Roman Empire and the inevitable strife between "Old Rome" and "Gothic Rome" created a sense of persecution among Nicene Christians. This sense of persecution would explain why St. Gregory employs panegyrics throughout his histories to portray Clovis I as a "Moses-like" figure leading Nicene Christians out of "Egypt."

The accuracy of certain aspects of his works is often considered sketchy or artificial by contemporary scholars like Ian Wood, Danuta Shanzer and Guy Halsall.[10] On the issue of chronological discrepancy, Guy Halsall questions St. Gregory's claim that: "At long last Clovis died in Paris. …He expired five years after the Battle of Vouille [A.D. 507]. He had reigned for thirty years and he was forty-five years old."[11] Halsall says that the chronology would only fit if one marks the customary coming-of-age for Frankish kings (fifteen years) as the starting point and adding his thirty-year reign.[12] If St. Gregory's dating was accurate, that would place Clovis I's birth in A.D. 466 and the start of his reign in A.D. 481. Yet, the evidence to support Clovis I's immediate succession of his father is scant. If St. Gregory's dating is correct, that would place his succession five years before he defeated Syagrius at the Battle of Soissons in A.D. 486. Since that victory was the precipitating event for Clovis I's impact on Gaul, there is no evidence that supports his reign prior to A.D. 486, thus making St. Gregory's chronology presumptuous.

Moreover, it is also difficult to separate fact from fiction in St. Gregory's *The History of the Franks* because he often employs hyperbole and panegyrics for people or

events that affect the Church. For example, his poetic account of St. Clotilda's theological differences with her husband suggests that he had intimate knowledge of it. In arguing over whether to baptize their first-born son, he records her saying: "The very names which you have given them [Clovis I's gods] were the names of men, not of gods [Jupiter]. …Who couldn't even refrain from intercourse with his own sister."[13] Yet, St. Gregory was born over a generation later around A.D. 538 and thus could not have been present for Ingomer's birth and death in A.D. 494. Being the good Roman primate of Tours that he was, he may have simply wished to convey a certain sense of "Divine Providence" in that St. Clotilda's union with Clovis I created a "New Rome."

Despite St. Gregory's hagiography, his work remains profitable insofar as conveying indirectly the factors that may have led to Clovis I's conversion. The themes of his chronicles, in his archetypal "churchy" language, point to the intercession of his wife St. Clotilda and a Constantinian-like conversion experience to stave-off defeat as the primary factors in his conversion.[14] For example, St. Gregory describes the events leading to the Battle of Tolbiac in A.D. 496:

> Queen Clotilda continued to pray that her husband might recognize the true God and give up his idol-worship. Nothing could persuade him to accept Christianity. Finally, war broke out against the Alamanni and in this conflict, he was forced by necessity to accept what he had refused of his own free will.[15]

St. Gregory's language conveys his belief that Nicene Christianity was the "only way" to prevail against certain death. In this sense, St. Gregory seems to imply that Clovis I's conversion was "miraculous" and perhaps even "predestined" or "inevitable." Regardless of this hagiography, we can still glean from his account that the events culminating in the Battle of Tolbiac marked a profound "turning point" in Clovis I's conquest, which

hastened the unification of Francia. Despite St. Gregory's insistence that Clovis I was "the savior of Christianity," his chronicles thus provide us with crucial historical context and a sense of how Clovis I's legacy was perceived in the late-sixth century.[16]

ST. AVITUS OF VIENNE

Bishop Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus of Vienne was born on or around A.D. 470 and, like St. Gregory, belonged to a Gallo-Roman senatorial family. His wider family was respected in the fields of history and law, such as his famous cousin Sidonius Apollinaris (d. 489 A.D.).[17] St. Avitus is considered among the most skilled Christian apologists in Late Antique Gaul, a trait that can be seen in his correspondences with King Gundobad of the Burgundians and his efforts to affect the king's conversion from Arianism. Moreover, St. Avitus's *Epistula 46* is widely considered the most accurate and edifying record of Clovis I's conversion and baptism.[18] Addressed to "Clovis, King of the Franks," St. Avitus congratulates the king on his conversion and baptism by lauding them as victories for the "Catholic Church."[19] This letter is striking in detail and form because its language seems to suggest that Clovis I's conversion and ultimate baptism were sincere. His tone and diction, as we shall see, are important factors for the study of Clovis I of the Franks.

St. Avitus was also a skilled orator and chronicler, which suggests that he received rhetorical training prior to the transition from the "Old Roman" system of education to the Gallic-Gothic system of the late-fifth and early-sixth centuries. This can be seen in his dedication to pronouncing Latin properly, which confirms that he most likely trained in the "Old Roman" system because Latin and Germanic languages intermixed following the division of the Western Roman Empire.[20] Moreover, he

frequently expresses indignation when questioned or criticized on the "finer points" of Early-Medieval rhetoric, which can be seen in his *Epistula 57*. In it he retorts to what he views as an insult: "A rumor originating with you whispers that you say that I fell into a barbarism in a sermon that I recently addressed to the people of Lyons on the occasion of the dedication of a church."[21] By correlating an alleged mispronunciation to "barbarism," we can conclude that such a charge was considered offensive to St. Avitus's Roman identity. His response also suggests that he was truly a "Roman" Christian because the charge of "barbarism" was often used to differentiate the Romans from the "uncouth" Semi-Arian Goths in control of the Western Empire in the late fifth century.

Aside from his talents in rhetoric, St. Avitus was also a dedicated Augustinian and often used St. Augustine of Hippo's (A.D. 354–430) works as references. In particular, the influence of St. Augustine's prose can be found in his *carminis* (poems) and *epistolae* (letters). For example, St. Avitus employs the same archetypical language found in St. Augustine's *De Gensi ad Litteram* ("The Literal Interpretation of Genesis") in his epic poem *De Spiritalis Historiae Gestis* ("The Spiritual History of Deeds").[22] St. Avitus writes: "Then at that body's lofty crest, He marked the head's tower, fitting a countenance with seven openings to the senses, which bring understanding and are capable of smelling, hearing, seeing, and tasting."[23] Compared to St. Augustine's *De Gensi ad Litteram*: "But thin tubes are led to the other senses, evidently to the ears, the nose, [and] the palate, to hear, smell and taste."[24] Thus, we see in St. Avitus's epic poem evidence of St. Augustine's influence and perhaps even direct reference to it. This connection better explains the Nicene Christian proclivities found in St. Avitus's works,

which apply especially to his apologetical letters sent to King Gundobad of the Burgundians and his congratulatory letter to King Clovis I.

Consequently, his *Epistula 46* tells us that he implored Clovis I to seek the evangelization of the wider Franks and those in what is now Europe. He says: "Do not be ashamed or find it troublesome even to take the step of sending missions for this purpose [evangelization] to build up the party of the God who has raised up yours so greatly."[25] Such an exhortation also suggests a sense of security in St. Avitus's own faith, for the state of Christianity in the early sixth century was certainly fragmented with competing interpretations and terminologies that created strife and schism. Hence, St. Avitus's dedication to what Danuta Shanzer refers to as the integrity of the "Catholic episcopate" perhaps explains why he saw Clovis I—one of those "uncouth" conquerors—as a hero.

The overarching themes of his letters include miracles, victories and perhaps even a touch of Divine Providence. However, the absence of full context often requires the reader to rely upon inferences and subtext. For example, St. Avitus does not state explicitly that Clovis I was "pagan" or "Arian." Yet, he implies that Clovis I's baptism into his church—"the Nicene Church"—began the Christianization of his empire's "barbarians."[26] Since Arian-Christians were already baptized, Clovis I would not have been rebaptized if he were converting from Arianism.[27] Thus, it stands to reason that he held to his ancestral beliefs that were often referred to as "pagan."[28] Moreover, St. Avitus speaks of Clovis I's conversion as a profound event with wide-ranging implications. He says: "Divine foresight has found a certain judge for our age. In making a choice for yourself, you judge on behalf of everyone. Your faith is our victory."[29] Such praise

implies that Clovis I's decision affected the vast number of Nicene Christians throughout the remnants of the Western Roman Empire, which would eventually reach the British Isles.

ST. ISIDORE OF SEVILLE

Isidore was born around A.D. 560 and presided at the see of Seville from A.D. 600 to his death in A.D. 636. He was a prolific writer whose works encompassed history and etymology, which were important sources of knowledge in the Middle Ages.[30] One of his two most influential works was the *History of the Kings of the Goths, Vandals and Suevi*, which traced each tribe from the mid-third century to the early seventh century. This work is of particular interest to the study of Clovis I because he corroborates the works of St. Gregory and St. Avitus without simply recording their histories. His sources were Eusebius's *Chronica* (ca. 378 A.D.) as preserved by St. Jerome, Orosius's *Historiae* (ca. 417 A.D.), the *Chronica* of Hydratius (ca. 430 A.D.), the *Chronica* of Victor of Tununa (ca. 440 A.D.), Prosper of Aquitaine's *Chronicon* (ca. 450 A.D.) and Johannes of Biclaro's *Chronicon* (ca. 565 A.D.).[31] Such a wide array of sources suggests that St. Isidore sought to compile the most accurate history to the extent his sources allowed.

Moreover, St. Isidore's *History* contains what can be considered a "eulogy of Spain" written in the wake of Alaric I's devastating conquest in the early-fifth century. He laments that "the most flourishing nation of the Goths after many victories in the world eagerly captures and loved you and enjoys you up to the present amid royal insignia and abundant wealth, secure in the fidelity of empire."[32] We can infer a profound sense of patriotism coupled with a certain sense of sorrow that imperial Roman Spain was

now in the hands of the Goths. Given his implicit distaste for the Goths, we would expect him to view the Frankish invaders through a similar lens. Yet, his *History* only mentions Clovis I's acquisition of the Burgundians and his victory over Syagrius at the Battle of Soissons in A.D. 486.[33] Given his silence on Clovis I's conversion and baptism, coupled with his extensive chronicles of Clovis I's successors and their victories over the Goths and Vandals in the mid-sixth century, we can conclude that nothing about the event itself struck St. Isidore as insincere or controversial. His silence on the matter, while not conclusive, thus lends further credence to the veracity and sincerity of Clovis I's conversion.

CASSIODORUS

Cassiodorus was the *praetorian prefect* of Italy starting with the reign of King Theoderic (r. 475–526 A.D.) and ending with the brief reign of King Witigis (r. 536–540 A.D.). His *Variae* (*inter.* 537–538 A.D.) was written during the waning years of King Witigis's reign while he was besieging Belisarius (ca. 505–ca. 565 A.D.), the Byzantine commander in Rome.[34] S.J.B. Barnish notes that Cassiodorus "claimed a wide range of motives for [his] work; to satisfy the demands of friends—a standard apology; to supply models of the official eloquence for future administrators, himself among them; to ensure immortality for those praised in the letters; to strengthen respect for the laws; and to provide a mirror of his own character."[35] Hence, Cassiodorus's work is of a different substance than St. Gregory's and St. Avitus's hagiographical histories because he was a Roman politician while Italy was under Ostrogothic control.

His *Variae* also serves as an *apologia* for the Arian-Gothic regime in Italy as well as a tribute to "New Roman" aristocrats. Although St. Gregory's and St. Avitus's works may also be considered *apologias*, their panegyrics more closely resemble hagiography. This distinction is bolstered by the saints' omitting of key facts and alternative point of views. Regarding the history of Clovis I, Cassiodorus provides key facts of the relationship between the Goths, Franks and Burgundians. In describing the events of the late fifth century, he gives us keen insight into how Clovis I's conquest and marriage were perceived by the Gothic aristocrats in Rome. For example, Cassiodorus records a letter—addressed to Clovis I by King Theoderic of Italy—in which he confirms St. Gregory's claim that Clovis I married his sister Audefleda to the Arian Ostrogoth Theoderic.[36] Thus, we have two independent sources to corroborate the account that Clovis I already maintained marriage alliances to the Arian-Gothic lords of Italy and Gaul.

However, we must also be cautious in interpreting his descriptions of certain Roman senators, politicians and other members of the Gothic aristocracy. Barnish notes that Cassiodorus omits several of the more salacious details of figures within the monarchy. For example, Cassiodorus often connotes or relies on subtext to convey his disapproval of the monarchy's intolerant policies of racial integration (Romans and Goths). In his Book VIII.33, Cassiodorus records a letter from King Athalaric (r. 526–534 A.D.) to the Distinguished Severus of Antioch (d. 538 A.D.) in which he alludes to the policy's ineffectiveness. He says:

> As it is the wish of a wise man to know the unknown, so it is folly to conceal proven facts, especially in a time when abuses can be very rapidly corrected.

> …There the merchants' wealth has often been damaged by the lawless seizures and hostile plundering of the country people… [who wish to adorn] the form of civilized life, have departed poor, shamed and empty-handed.[37]

Hence, Cassiodorus's work as an external commentator on Clovis I and the Franks is quite profitable but his work nevertheless requires us to be critical.

ST. REMIGIUS OF RHEIMS

St. Remigius of Rheims, also known as Remi or Remy, was the metropolitan bishop of Belgica Secunda (modern Belgium) and presided at the see of Rheims from ca. 458–ca. 532. His early life was similar to St. Gregory's and St. Avitus's insofar as his parents were of the upper echelons of Gallo-Roman society. His work is important in considering Clovis I's conversion because he was in the unique position of gauging its sincerity. This means that we would expect him to condemn or otherwise criticize the sincerity of Clovis I's conversion if it was indeed insincere. The absence of such criticism in his works, coupled with his eagerness to confer the Sacrament of Baptism on Clovis I, therefore suggests that it was sincere. Of his eagerness, St. Gregory tells us: "As he [Clovis I] advanced for his baptism, the holy man of God [St. Remigius] addressed him in these pregnant words: 'Bow your head in meekness, Sicamber [Merovingian]. Worship what you have burnt, burn what you have been wont to worship [sic].'"[38] Hence, Clovis I's baptism was important to St. Remigius, the "Lord Chancellor of France."

However, it should also be noted that St. Remigius was a "household name" in Late Antique Gaul beginning in the early 480s. This suggests that he knew—or was at least aware of—Clovis I's father, Childeric I (A.D. 440–481). Their familiarity is bolstered by St. Gregory's account of Clovis I's victory at the Battle of Soissons in A.D.

486. After defeating the Roman general Syagrius, St. Gregory notes that the victorious Franks looted several churches that were in St. Remigius's diocese.[39] In response, St. Remigius sent envoys to Clovis I requesting that he return the sacred "Vase of Soissons." Though St. Gregory intimates that this request was much to Clovis I's chagrin, he ultimately agreed and returned the vase to the bishop. Since this exchange occurred nearly ten years before his conversion while Clovis I was a still a "barbarian" chieftain, his amenability suggests that the young chieftain was aware of St. Remigius's prominence in Gaul. Moreover, Clovis I granted St. Remigius land in the Soissons region of Gaul to commission churches after his conversion in A.D. 486 and even more land in Tournai after his victory at Vouille in A.D. 507.

Despite his evident familiarity with Clovis I and his wife St. Clotilda, St. Remigius of Rheims is very much a part of France's "origin story." Given the prevalence of hagiography in the *Histories* of St. Avitus and St. Gregory, we must be careful in accepting the romanticized depictions of St. Remigius's personal "holiness" and "piety" that the latter describes as "equal to St. Sylvester's" during his role in France's origin.[40] While these traits may indeed be true, we have no independent (e.g., non-Christian) sources to corroborate their veracity. However, this skepticism does not preclude the value of his personal letters sent to Clovis I in the early-sixth century because they have been transmitted to us through other sources. Notably, the historicity of his letters is attested to by the *Epistolae Austrasicae*, which was compiled in the seventh century.[41]

RURICIUS I OF LIMOGES

Ruricius of Limoges was a Roman aristocrat and bishop of Limoges (Central Gaul) from A.D. 470–ca. 510. His *epistolae* are preserved by only a single source dated to the late-eighth or early-ninth century known as the *Codex Sangallensis*.[42] His correspondences are notable because they are not addressed to Clovis I nor do they suggest that Ruricius had any affection toward the Frankish chieftain. They are also valuable to us because Ruricius presided over his bishopric during the crucial transition from imperial Rome to "Gothic Rome," which gives us unique insight into how a Nicene Christian bishop viewed the Goths and other "barbarians." Given his value to the current study, Bishop Ruricius is another ecclesial chronicler that we would expect to condemn or otherwise criticize Clovis I's conversion if it was insincere or for political purposes.

SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS

Gallo-Roman chronicler and politician Sidonius Apollinaris (A.D. 431–480) was born into nobility during a period of "transition" between the imperial Rome of his parents' generation and the Gothic Rome of his generation. His work gives us unique and detailed insight into what Anglican historian W.H.C. Frend (A.D. 1916–2005) calls "some of the psychological barriers in the way of union between two peoples."[43] Sidonius's father was *praetorian prefect* of the Gauls and a Nicene Christian, which explains the sense of national pride that led Sidonius to become Bishop of Clermont in A.D. 469.[44] His experience in both political and ecclesial "worlds" is demonstrated by his unique writing style that often quotes both Classical and Christian authors. His internal struggles of trying to reconcile the *Romanitas* ("Roman-ness") of Gallo-Roman holdouts

and the "new order" of *Roma Gothica* ("Gothic Rome") makes Sidonius's works important to the study of Clovis I.[45]

Although Sidonius died roughly six years prior to Clovis I's conversion to Nicene Christianity, his *Epistolae* suggest that he had no respect for the Franks and other "barbarians."[46] He often refers to them in ways that we would describe as "uncouth" and perhaps even "subhuman." Given Sidonius's stations in both Gallo-Roman society and Christianity, he becomes a "barometer" of gauging how his contemporaries would view Clovis I and his conversion. Given that others like him—e.g., Cassiodorus and Ruricius of Limoges—have nothing to say about Clovis I's conversion, their silences lend credence to its sincerity.

Notes

[1] Liddell and Scott. *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*. 7th Edition Collated by Benediction Classics Press. (Oxford: Benediction Press, 2010). Pg. 630. The Greek *περιπέτεια* refers to a "turning right about" or a "sudden change in fortune."

[2] Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, Translated by Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin Books, 1974). II.30, 143.

[3] This idiom is popular among certain secondary sources that wish to pay homage to St. Clotilda's unceasing prayer for her husband's conversion.

[4] Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton: University Press, 1987), 20.

[5] Lewis Sergeant, *The Franks: From Their Origin as a Confederacy to the Establishment of the Kingdom of France and the German Empire* (New York: Etienne Press, 2015), 1.

[6] Avitus of Vienne uses the word *captivitas* in his *Epistula 46* in relation to the "captivity" of Nicene Christianity at the hands of Gothic Arianism.

[7] St. Gregory, *The History of the Franks*, II.37-II.38, 154-155.

[8] Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 106-107.

[9] Peter Brown, *Rise of Western Christendom*, 106.

[10] Guy Halsall, "Childeric's Grave, Clovis' Succession, and the Origins of the Merovingian Kingdom," Found in: *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul: Revisiting the Sources* (London: Routledge, 2001), 116.

[11] Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, II.43, 158. Also see: Guy Halsall, "Childeric's Grave, Clovis' Succession and the Origins of the Merovingian Kingdom," *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul: Revisiting the Sources* (London: Routledge, 2001), 117-133.

[12] Guy Halsall, *Childeric's Grave and Clovis's Succession*, 117.

[13] Gregory of Tours. *The History of the Franks*, II.28, 141.

[14] To borrow Danuta Shanzer's ingenious adjective "churchy" from her work *Vouille 507: Historiography, Hagiography and Diplomatic Reconsiderations and Fortuna*.

[15] Gregory of Tours, *The Merovingians*, edited and translated by Alexander Callander Murray (Toronto: University Press, 2013), II. 30, 10.

[16] See: Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, II.37,151-153; *The Merovingians*, II.30, 10.

[17] Avitus of Vienne, "Introduction," found in: *Avitus of Vienne: Letters and Selected Prose*, translated by Danuta Shanzer and Ian Wood (Liverpool: University Press, 2002), 4-5.

[18] Namely Danuta Shanzer at Ithaca and Ian Wood and Leeds. Their penultimate translation and analysis of Avitus's *Epistula* remains the most exhaustive work on the present period.

[19] Given his Nicene Christin bishop and his reference to "*schisma*," or "heretics" in reference to the Semi-Arians, Danuta Shanzer concludes that "Catholicism" is the proper term for how St. Avitus and his contemporaries viewed their "church." Cf. Avitus of Vienne, *Epistula 46: Introduction*, 362.

[20] Avitus of Vienne, *Letters and Selected Prose*, 7.

[21] Avitus of Vienne, *Epistula 57: Avitus the Bishop to Viventiolus*, 272.

[22] This connection is discussed critically in: Avitus of Vienne, "De Spiritalis Historiae Gestis," found in: *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul: Revisiting the Sources*, edited and translated by Ian Wood (London: Routledge, 2001), 266; Avitus of Vienne, *De Spiritalis Historiae Gestis*, edited and translated by George W. Shea (Arizona: University Press, 1997), 1.80-82.

[23] Avitus of Vienne, *De Spiritalis Historiae Gestis*, edited and translated by George W. Shea (Arizona: University Press, 1997), 1.82-84.

[24] Augustine of Hippo, *De Gensi ad Litteram*, edited and translated by John Hammond Taylor (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1982), 259.

[25] Avitus of Vienne, *Epistula 46*, 373.

[26] He acknowledges Clovis I's tough decision in disposing of his ancestral duties to his faith but simultaneously implores him to consider the Christianization of the Franks as fulfilling his duties just the same.

[27] The issue of "rebaptism" was settled in the early-fourth century during the Donatist Controversy. It was a response to Donatus and his followers claiming that the sacraments conferred by clerics who "apostatized" during the Roman persecutions were invalid and thus needed to be repeated. Hence, Clovis I would not have been baptized if he were already an Arian-Christian.

[28] Cf. Danuta Shanzer's introduction to St. Avitus's *Epistula 46*, 363.

[29] Avitus of Vienne, *Epistula 49*, 369.

[30] Isidore of Seville, "Introduction," *History of the Kings of the Goths, Vandals and Suevi*, translated by Guido Donini and Gordon B. Ford, Jr. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), V.III.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Isidore of Seville, "Prologue," *History of the Kings of the Goths, Vandals and Suevi*, translated by Guido Donini and Gordon B. Ford, Jr. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), 2.

[33] Isidore, *Historiae*, 37, 18.

[34] Cassiodorus, "Introduction," *Variae*, translated by S.J.B. Barnish (Liverpool: University Press, 1992), xiv-xv.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Cassiodorus, *Variae*, translated by S.J.B. Barnish (Liverpool: University Press, 1992), II.41, 43.

[37] Cassiodorus, *Variae*, VIII.33, 109.

[38] St. Gregory, *History of the Franks,* II.31, 144.

[39] St. Gregory, *The History of the Franks*, II.27, 139-140.

[40] St. Gregory, *The History of the Franks*, II.31, 144.

[41] Remi of Rheims, "Epistolae Austrasicae," Found in: *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul: A Reader*, edited and translated by Alexander Callander Murray (Toronto: University Press, 2000), 260-261.

[42] Ralph W. Mathisen, "The Letters of Ruricius of Limoges," found in: *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul: Revisiting the Sources* (London: Routledge, 2001), 104-105.

[43] W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 801.

[44] Sidonius Apollinaris. *Epistolae*, translated by W.B. Anderson, preserved by the Loeb Classical Library (Harvard: University Press, 1965), III.III, 13. Sidonius says: "the land which as begotten one rightly claims the chief place in one's affections."

[45] Cf. Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 110.

[46] Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistolae*, v.v, 180.

CHAPTER II

Historical Context

The full extent of Nicene Christianity's survival and the establishment of Christendom—*vis a vis* the conversion of Britania, Ireland and Scotland—hinged on the conversion of an obscure Gallic chieftain named Clovis I of the Franks in A.D. 496. Any measure of Christian unity following the Gothic sack of Rome in A.D. 410 would have been improbable without his conversion to Nicene Christianity. Yet, his conversion was certainly not assured because the Gothic tribes brought with them a myriad of competing faiths such as native paganism, Manichaeism and Arianism.[1] Moreover, we also find that his antecedent marriage to St. Clotilda (A.D. 475–544)—a Burgundian princess who prayed unceasingly for his conversion—became the precipitating event for his conversion.[2] Hence, the developments of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries created the environment that made Clovis I's conversion the biggest *peripeteia* in Late Antique Gaul.[3]

Yet, understanding Clovis I's significance to Christian history requires exploring a vast contextual setting. For only then may one comprehend the veritable chaos of his epoch, with Christian unity dangling perilously on the threshold of conquest, "heresy" and collapse. While it is true that Clovis I's union with St. Clotilda and ultimate conversion is often recorded hagiographically as "Divine Providence" by writers such as St. Gregory of Tours, their obviously romanticized panegyrics do not necessarily contradict the sincerity of Clovis I's conversion. The relevant factors that help qualify his

significance and historicity encompass a wide context of characters and events, such as Gothic invasion and theological disarray.

Clovis I's decision to accept Nicene Christianity rather than his native paganism or the Semi-Arianism representative of the Gothic tribes in control of Rome also denotes an epochal change. This defining moment reflects one of antiquity's greatest turning points, for Clovis I's decision to accept the Nicene Faith hastened the evolution of the Church as a separate entity apart from culture. Many secondary sources—like Peter Brown, Ian Wood and Danuta Shanzer—view the effects of Clovis I's conversion like those of Constantine I's conversion. They maintain that both conversions initiated epochal changes that benefited Christianity and the Roman Empire. It is through this lens that we must approach Clovis I's conversion, for it marked a turning point in Late Antique Gaul (modern France) thereby affecting the wider Roman Empire.

Given the conquests of the Western Roman Empire in the early-fifth century, an examination of the various Gothic tribes that affected both the empire and the Christian Church is also essential to understanding the socio-political climate of Clovis I's epoch. These are significant because the influx of Gallic-Baltic-Germanic tribes hastened the social and ecclesial conflicts extant in Clovis I's lifetime. Moreover, his conversion also explains and qualifies the revitalization of the Christian Church and marks the occasion when it began emerging as a separate entity unbeholden to the events or masters surrounding it. However, such a revitalization also provoked great debate and schism within the Church. These controversies mostly involved disagreements regarding terminology that describes the godhead and the notion of a visible Church. Regarding the

former, Nicene terminology stated that "Christ is of the same substance as the Father" (*homoousia*) while the Semi-Arians insisted that Christ was merely "of a like substance as the Father" (*homoiousia*).

Primer on the Nicene and Post-Nicene Roman Empire

THE ROMAN STATE

The Roman Empire's rapid growth toward "Christendom" proved unsustainable by the end of the fourth century. Emperor Constantine I's vision of a Christian Roman Empire, which was coming to fruition with the Edict of Milan (A.D. 312) and the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325), became untenable following his death in A.D. 337.[4] Where there was once a growing enthusiasm within the Church, there was now theological dissonance and ardent disagreement regarding its relationship to the world and to the state. After Constantine I's death, his three sons—Constantine II (A.D. 316–340), Constantius (A.D. 317–361) and Constans (d. 350 A.D.)—divided the Roman Empire into three parts with competing interpretations of Christianity.[5]

Each of these three kingdoms deviated radically from Constantine I's policies of tolerance.[6] For example, Emperor Constantius suppressed violently the worshiping of images throughout Rome, Alexandria and Athens.[7] He was especially suppressive of Nicene Christianity, which he opposed at every opportunity. These actions are notable because Emperor Constantius was an Arian whereas his other two brothers supported St. Athanasius of Alexandria (A.D. 296–373) and Nicene terminology (e.g., *homoousia*, or

that the Father and the Son are of the same substance).[8] Hence, Constantine I's dream of a unified Nicene-Christian kingdom did not survive his successors.

Moreover, the theological and political stalemate of the late-fourth century between Nicene Christianity and Arianism remained unresolved due to Gothic incursions. The main chieftains leading these incursions were Radagaisus (r. 405–406 A.D.) of the Ostrogoths and Alaric I (A.D. 370–410) of a combined Vandal-Visigothic army. In the wake of these invasions, Emperor Theodosius I (A.D. 347–395) left his young son Honorius (A.D. 384–423) on the Western Roman throne and attempted to liberate Constantinople in A.D. 395.[9] The chronicler Jordanes (died ca. 551 A.D.), writing around the mid-sixth century, records that Theodosius I was known as "the lover of peace and of the Gothic race" in his *Getica*.[10] Following his death, his eldest son Arcadius (A.D. 377–408) succeeded him in the east but did not share his father's love for the Goths.[11]

Emperor Arcadius's targeted policies of diminishing Gothic influence hastened the appointment of Alaric I as the "King of the Goths" (r. 395–410 A.D.) in late A.D. 395. As a result, Alaric I raised a substantial army over the next five years while skirmishing with Radagaisus for control of all Goths. St. Isidore of Seville (A.D. 560–636), writing in the early seventh century, records that these kings nearly destroyed one another.[12] He points to the inability of either king to achieve victory as the reason that Alaric I and Radagaisus united against Roman hegemony. Following their union, Alaric I invaded Italy by way of Pannonia (Northern Italy) in A.D. 400 while Radagaisus crossed the Swiss Alps and advanced on Florence.[13]

Following these events, Stilicho (A.D. 359–408) remained the only effective general in Western Emperor Honorius's ranks. He had been given the title of *Comes et Magister Utriusque Militiae Praesentalis* in A.D. 394 by Theodosius I just prior to his death, which essentially made him the "Commander-in-Chief of Both Forces (cavalry and infantry)."[14] Most notably however, Theodosius I's declining health led him to proclaim Stilicho as *parens principium* or "parental guardian" of his son Honorius.[15] This final declaration remained controversial but there was no time to settle the matter because the Goths required immediate attention.

Upon entering Italy near Ravenna (Northern Italy), Alaric I sent envoys to the court of Emperor Honorius. Jordanes chronicles that the envoys brought Alaric I's word that "if he would permit the Goths to settle peaceably in Italy, that they would so live with the Roman people that men might believe them both to be of one race."[16] The envoys also intimated that if Honorius were to refuse peace, the victor of the resulting war would become "Rome." Honorius balked at this offer and immediately sought the Roman Senate's counsel. Given his limited resources—Stilicho's worrisome political ambitions and his brother Arcadius's unavailability in Constantinople—Emperor Honorius granted Alaric I the regions of Gaul and Spain.[17] Jordanes qualifies this decision as a viable option because these regions were located on the peripheries of the Western Roman Empire and were already nearly "lost."

Subsequently, Alaric I and his Goths left Italy without issue and made their way toward Gaul and Spain. However, the controversy regarding Stilicho's appointment as "parental guardian" continued to fester until coming to a head shortly after peace was

made with Alaric I. Jordanes records that Stilicho "treacherously hurried to the Cottian Alps [bordering France and Italy]. … There he fell upon the unsuspecting Goths in battle, to the ruin of all Italy and his own disgrace."[18] Following this, the Western Roman Empire was thrust into war because of Stilicho's rashness. Alaric I's troops were routed initially but gathered together and defeated Stilicho's legions at the Battle of Pollentia in A.D. 402.[19]

Following Stilicho's offensive, Alaric I and nearly two-hundred-thousand Goths turned their attention toward Italy. They sacked the cities of Milan and Liguria (modern Genoa) and razed the region of Aemilia (in between the Po and Sillaro Rivers). St. Isidore records that Alaric I "[vowed], in contempt of Christ, that he would make a libation of the Romans' blood to his gods if he should win."[20] St. Isidore's evident Nicene Christian biases aside, his report suggests that Alaric I's invasion of Italy was spiteful and nihilistic. This determination is supported by Jordanes's description of Alaric I's "plundering" and "spoiling" of Aemilia in his *Getica*.[21]

Alaric I's troops then crossed the Rhine River on 31 December 405 and sacked Gaul, Spain and cities along the Fleminian Way (toward the Adriatic Sea) over the next five years. In response, Emperor Honorius vacated the ancient city and fled to Ravenna thereby leaving the Western Roman Empire vulnerable. Moreover, Alaric I's two-year foray into Spain is most notable for its brutality against Christians in Saragossa and Castile. It is recorded with vivid detail the mass executions of priests and the torching of churches.[22] There are two possible reasons for these actions. The first is the spread of Arianism throughout the Gothic and Vandal armies, which would explain their animus

toward Nicene Christianity.[23] The other is Alaric I's idea that the Nicene Tradition is the source of Rome's strength.[24] In both cases, it would appear a vehement hatred for Roman-Nicene Christians fueled this incursion.

Following his campaign in Spain, Alaric I marched into Rome unopposed on 24 August 410. This date is generally designated as the day on which Rome "fell," despite a little over a decade of rapid decline.[25] It is important to note that both Jordanes and St. Isidore record that Alaric I gave his troops explicit orders to sack and plunder the city but not to raze it or profane the holy places.[26] Such an order suggests that Alaric I had some measure of reverence for the ancient city despite his animus toward Honorius and Nicene Christianity. Although Alaric I conquered Rome, Jordanes and St. Isidore of Seville maintain an appreciation for his restraint by explicitly referencing it.[27]

Following the sack of Rome, the Goths sought to fortify themselves in the face of a large Roman army intent on liberating Italy. However, Alaric I died in A.D. 410 while attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea into North Africa. Athaulf (r. 410–415 A.D.) succeeded him as King of the Goths shortly thereafter and took Emperor Honorius's sister as his wife. Despite initial plans to solidify his Gothic kingdom as "New Rome," he opted for peace with Honorius. A contemporary chronicler, Paulus Orosius (A.D. 375–418), records in his *History Against the Pagans* that King Athaulf "chose to seek for himself at least the glory of restoring the renown of the Roman name by the power of the Goths, wishing to be looked upon by posterity as the restorer of the Roman Empire."[28] Essentially, Orosius suggests that Athaulf wanted to replace "*Romania*" with "*Roma*

Gothica," or "Gothic Rome."[29] Hence, Athaulf and his Goths decided to garrison Rome rather than expand into the Eastern Empire.

The Teutonic conquerors tried governing Rome over the next forty years as if nothing had changed. Once this approach proved untenable, General Odoacer (A.D. 435–493) appointed Romulus Augustulus (r. 475–476 A.D.)—a young boy of one last vestige of the Roman aristocracy—emperor.[30] When this final gambit failed to bring unity to the wider empire, Odoacer deposed Augustulus and named himself "King of Rome" in A.D. 476, its first *rex* in nearly a thousand years.[31] Subsequently, Odoacer sought to tie his kingdom to the Eastern Emperor Zeno's (A.D. 425–491) Arian-Christian kingdom in Constantinople. Cassiodorus notes in his *Variae* that both Odoacer and his successor, the Ostrogothic king Theoderic I (r. 475–526 A.D.), were recognized as "*Patricius* of the Roman Empire" by the Eastern-Arian Emperor Zeno.[32] Hence, Arianism remained a central force in the Western Empire due to Gothic relations with the East.

THE STATE OF CHRISTIANITY

While the chaos of the Roman State was collapsing under its own weight, the turbulent events of the late-fifth century contributed to the emergence of a "Nicene Church." However, consolidating Nicene Christians into a distinctive "Church" faced many obstacles and none greater than conflict within their own ranks. The new proprietors of Rome were by and large Arians and Semi-Arians, owing their interpretations of Christianity to the Arian Bishop Ulfilas (A.D. 311–383). His translation of the "Gothic Bible" in the fourth century solidified them as opponents of Nicene terminology (e.g., *homoousia*).[33] Although the charge of being an "Arian" was often

spurious and slanderous, the Gothic conception of Christianity was nevertheless influenced by a competing Christology. Hence, theological strife ensued because they believed in a different interpretation than equality of the godhead.

The next half-century witnessed the consolidation of Gothic-Roman rule in the Western Roman Empire. The chasm between Semi-Arian Christians and Nicene Christians grew wider with the events of the Second Council of Ephesus in A.D. 449. This synod or council is often referred to as the "Robber Council," as Pope St. Leo I (d. 461 A.D.) called its events a "robbery."[34] Such a determination refers to the council's foreman, Dioscorus of Alexandria (d. 454 A.D.), and his intentions of contradicting the accepted Nicene terminology. As a reaction to Pope St. Leo I's *Tome,* Dioscorus refused his envoys entrance and barricaded himself inside the council's chambers.[35] The stand-off between Pope St. Leo I and Dioscorus represents the antagonistic relationship between the Nicene Christians and Semi-Arian Christians in the latter half of the fifth century.

The namesake of Arianism and its later iteration Semi-Arianism was Arius of Alexandria (A.D. 256–336). He professed that "the Word [Logos] is not the proper and natural offspring of the Father, but even He was produced by grace. For God, who existed, made the Son, who had not existed, by His will."[36] In opposition, the Council of Nicaea professed that "We believe…in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-Begotten born from the Father, that is, from the substance of the Father."[37] Such a marked difference, the implication being that Christ and the Father are different given that the Son is subordinate to and generated from the Father, put Arian Christians at odds with Nicene Christians."[38] Such a theory created disarray throughout both "halves" of the

Roman Empire, as it contradicted the traditional (ante-Nicene) theology of the godhead (essentially, equality of the godhead).[39]

The Franks and The Burgundians

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FRANKS

The Franks belonged to the region of Gaul, which interacted intimately with the Roman Empire. Akin to Rome's historical experience with the Germanic tribes, the militaristic prowess of Gallic warriors was well-known. Their impenetrable defensive lines marked the Rhine river as both a physical and an ethnic boundary between Rome and the tribes of Gaul.[40] Thus the existence and ferocity of Gallic warriors, often a combination of Frankish and Burgundian tribes, most likely influenced the end of Roman expansion into Northern Europe. Yet, the tribes of Gaul were viewed through the same lens of barbarism as the Germanic Goths. Given there association, the term "Franks" (*Franci* in the Latin) appears to have most likely referred to a confederation of "peoples living just north and east of the lower Rhine in what are now the Netherlands and north-western part of Germany."[41] However, a loose ethnic identity became more identifiable by the time of Emperor Constantine I (c. 272–337 A.D.) and appeared solidified by the reign of Julianus Caesar (A.D. 332–363).[42]

By the fifth century there existed a demonstrable separation between the Germanic "Goths" and the Gallic "Franks" as well as an identifiable structure of the latter. During Emperor Constantine I's rule (ca. 306 A.D.), he garrisoned his troops around the Rhine and Cologne to pacify political unrest due to an uprising of early-Frankish leadership. Ammianus Marcellinus (A.D. 330–400) records that Constantine I

executed the Frankish princes Ascaricus (d. 306 A.D.) and Merogaisus (d. 306 A.D.) by throwing them to the lions at Trier a year later.[43] Moreover, Ammianus records that Julianus Caesar "decided to go and recover Cologne, which had been destroyed before his arrival in Gaul. …He did not stir from there until he had overawed the Frankish kings and lessened their pugnacity."[44] Hence, the literary transition from "Frankish princes" to "Frankish kings," suggesting a primitive notion of a "Frankish kingdom," occurred over fifty years (A.D. 306–356). Furthermore, the Frankish acquisition of Batavia (Netherlands) and wider Toxandria (Flanders and Southern Netherlands) in A.D. 355 was perhaps the most notable development of the era. It is notable because the Salii tribe—the tribe out of which Clovis I would come—established a formal settlement along the Rhine and thus laid the foundation for unification.[45] Emperor Julianus prepared his legions to invade this new "kingdom" but ultimately offered peace contingent upon acknowledgment that the Franks were subjects of the empire. The Franks were thus considered federates (*foederati*) of the Roman Empire, which perhaps explains why Clovis I retained an appreciation for the empire.

The Franks also initially experienced the same measure of subservience to the Romans as the Germanic Goths. They were conscripted into the Roman legions and forced to garrison the Rhine to prevent other Franks from entering the empire. Although the Romans did not initially separate Gothic "barbarians" from Gallic "barbarians," there was some sense of a regional difference. For instance, the Germanic legionnaire Charietto (d. 365 A.D.) was appointed "count of both Germanies by [Emperor] Julian."[46] However, the Franks eventually distinguished themselves and earned greater favor from their

Roman masters. For example, the Frankish general Merobaudes (d. 388 A.D.) was promoted to *magister peditum* (Master of the Infantry) during Emperor Julian's war with Persia in A.D. 363.[47]

Richomer (d. 393 A.D.) was perhaps the most notable Frank prior to the Gothic sack of Rome. He ascended to the office of consul in A.D. 384 prior to becoming the military commander in the Eastern Empire from A.D. 388–393.[48] Hence, the Gallic Franks surpassed the Germanic Goths in terms of acceptance into the Roman Empire. Ammianus Marcellinus lends credence to this determination in his *History* by intimating the acceptance of Richomer as "Roman."[49] The antecedent history of the Franks—especially their ascendancy into the upper echelons of the Roman establishment—perhaps explains why Clovis I ultimately converted to and defended Nicene Christianity.

Additionally, Frankish involvement in the west did not produce the same measure of security or stability as in the east. While Richomer's nephew Arbogast (A.D. 340–394) briefly ascended to *magister militum* ("Master of the Military") in the west around A.D. 390, he was ultimately involved in a coup that deposed Emperor Valentinian II (A.D. 371–392). He assumed control of the western empire and proclaimed the Roman Eugenius (d. 394 A.D.) emperor following Valentinian II's death.[50]

Arbogast, like his uncle Richomer, is also a notable figure representative of early Frankish relations with the Roman Empire. He urged Emperor Eugenius "The Usurper" to punish other Frankish tribes for sedition.[51] Such an approach to other tribes suggests that the early Franks harbored the same measure of tribalism as the Germanic Goths. Also, several Franks in this epoch were appointed *praefecti laetorum* (loosely translated

as "barbarian prefects") in Gaul and Germania around A.D. 400.[52] Hence, several Franks served the Roman Empire by governing and garrisoning their home lands. However, such relationships did not define the Frankish tribes. Many Frankish tribes such as the Quadi, Chamavi, Chattuari and Salii rose against Emperor Julian near Cologne between A.D. 357–358.[53] This upheaval is quite notable because the Salii tribe (Salians) accepted an offering of peace from the Romans and were thus granted land in Toxandria (modern Flanders and the Netherlands). They lived peacefully until the mid-fifth century when Clovis I unified the Frankish tribes under one banner.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BURGUNDIANS

The historical relevance of the Burgundians can be divided into two separate periods: ante-Clotilda (A.D. 350–475) and post-Clotilda (A.D. 475–545). Ammianus Marcellinus, writing in the mid-fourth century about the ante-Clotilda era, records the Burgundians as bordering the eastern boundary of the Alamanni in the region called "Capillacii" or "Palas."[54] This region existed in an abandoned province between the Rhine and Danube rivers that the Romans yielded centuries earlier. Paulus Orosius (A.D. 385–420), writing around A.D. 417, records that the Burgundians originated from the interior of Germany during its subjugation by the Romans Drusus (B.C. 38–B.C. 9) and Tiberius (B.C. 42–A.D. 37).[55] Although the Burgundians would eventually find stability through St. Clotilda's marriage to Clovis I, their early kingdom was perpetually harassed and ultimately razed by the Huns in A.D. 437.[56]

Following the Burgundian kingdom's destruction, the survivors relocated to Southern Gaul (Savoy Alps).[57] There they established a new kingdom in the waning years

of the fifth century. The kingdom's reconstruction did not come without obligations or responsibilities to their faith. Their new kingdom was located in between the Gothic-controlled Roman Empire and "Old Rome," which was Nicene Christian. This location elevated them to a position to arbitrate and serve as a buffer between the two antagonistic civilizations. Despite the possibility of Gothic invasion due to the location of their new kingdom, the Burgundians remained on the side of Rome and Nicene Christianity.[58] Hence, the Burgundians of the fifth century retained the Nicene-Christian identity that was recorded by Paulus Orosius a century earlier in his *History Against the Pagans*. He said that "In the third year of [Gratian's reign (A.D. 370)]. … [The Burgundians] have all become Christians, embracing the Catholic faith and acknowledging obedience to our clergy."[59] However, Paulus Orosius also records that some in the Burgundian royal family eventually apostatized between A.D. 450–475. He notes that they were "won over" by Visigothic-Arian propaganda.[60] His Nicene-Roman proclivities aside, we can take the testimony of Orosius as reliable evidence that the reconstructed kingdom was divided.

Following the death of King Gundioc (d. 473 A.D.), the Burgundian kingdom was divided between three of his four sons.[61] Chilperic II (A.D. 450–493) ruled Lyons, Gundobad (A.D. 473–516) ruled Vienne while Godegisel (A.D. 473–500) ruled Geneva. Of these three heirs, Chilperic II distinguished himself most by supporting the Western-Roman Emperor Glycerius's (r. 473–474 A.D.) war against the Goths.[62] In return for his fidelity, Chilperic II was rewarded with the rank of *Magister Militum*, or "Master of the

Knights" in A.D. 474. Aside from his brief defense of Rome, Chilperic II is most notable for siring a daughter, who he named Clotilda.

St. Clotilda and Clovis I

AN INTRODUCTION TO ST. CLOTILDA

St. Clotilda was born in A.D. 475 to Chilperic II, King of the Burgundians at Lyon, and Queen Caretena (died ca. 493 A.D.).[63] A contemporary of Queen Caretena, Sidonius Apollinaris (d. 489 A.D.), celebrates her virtues as "the mother of the poor" and "an advocate for the guilty" in his *Epistolae*.[64] Although it should be noted that Sidonius was a panegyrist keen on hyperbolizing and had no affection for the Burgundians, the spirit of his work is clear. His celebration of Queen Caretena was echoed on her epitaph by Bishop Fortunatus of Poitiers (d. 600/9 A.D.) who memorialized her as having "[merited] the day unending" or *meruit nunc sine fine diem.*[65] This suggests that Queen Caretena was a Nicene Christian, which explains why St. Clotilda retained the Nicene-Christian disposition that would eventually influence the conversion of her husband.

Moreover, the ante-Clotilda Burgundians settled in Southern Gaul where they established a new kingdom across Langres, Avignon and the Durance (Southeastern France).[66] Rather than fight on the side of the Arian Goths, the Burgundian kingdom maintained its support of Rome and therefore paid homage to the Roman Church.[67] This suggests two things: that St. Clotilda's birth and maturation coincided with a solidified Arian-Gothic kingdom, and that her royal family reaffirmed its pledge to Rome. However, this pledge lasted only until the death of St. Clotilda's grandfather King Gundioc in A.D. 473.

Following the death of her father (Chilperic II) and her uncle Gundobad of Vienne's conversion to Visigothic Arianism, Queen Caretena and her daughters retired to Godegisel's "Catholic" Kingdom of Geneva in early A.D. 493.[68] It was at the court of Geneva that St. Clotilda received a formal request for marriage from Clovis I of the Franks. St. Gregory of Tours records that upon becoming king of the Franks, Clovis I sent envoys throughout the Burgundian and Gothic kingdoms with the intention of finding a suitable alliance through marriage.[69] After meeting St. Clotilda, his envoys sent word that she was "refined and intelligent and [they had] learned that she was of the blood royal."[70]

Given the prospect of marrying a Burgundian princess, Clovis I immediately sent an embassy to King Godegisel requesting her hand in marriage. Such a marriage secured three things for Clovis I. First, it granted him entrance into the Burgundian royal family. Second, it offered alliances with other Burgundians thereby swelling his ranks. Third and most significant, securing a marriage to a Nicene Christian princess offered legitimacy and continuity in the eyes of the wider Western Roman Empire. These three things thus afforded Clovis I the prospect of solidifying his Frankish kingdom while adding the Burgundian kingdoms as well as the Nicene subjects of Rome to what would become the "Merovingian Dynasty."[71]

AN INTRODUCTION TO CLOVIS I OF THE FRANKS

Clovis I of the Franks was born around A.D. 466 in Tournai (modern Belgium) to a Frankish chieftain named Childeric I (A.D. 440–481) and a Tervingi (Visigothic) princess named Basina (A.D. 438–477). Very little is known about his childhood, but his

maturation into a Salian chieftain and ascension to "King of the Franks" is recorded by the often-hagiographical chronicles of St. Gregory of Tours and Fredegar. Following the consolidation of Francia and the evident success of the Merovingian Dynasty, their chronicles must have therefore recorded the popular lore of his conception and birth. For example, Fredegar records that:

> On the night of his [Clovis] conception, King Childeric I was awoken by his wife Basina repeatedly. …Three times Basina woke up her husband and sent him outside to see what he could see. On the first occasion, he saw lions, unicorns and leopards; then wolves and bears; and the third-time lesser beasts like dogs.[72]

Given the obvious hagiographical whims of this story, Fredegar may have thought that Clovis I represented the "lion" that would unify the Franks through three major successes (like the three times Basina awoke her husband): militaristic, familial and ecclesial.[73] Given the hagiographical nature of these chronicles, it is prudent to put Clovis I's literary representation as a "messiah-figure" in its proper context. To this end, we first note that the struggles between Nicene Christianity and other interpretations of Christianity must have been widespread. For, the very spirit of St. Gregory's and Fredegar's chronicles suggests that Clovis I "saved" Rome from the "barbarians."

Despite its panegyric presentation, St. Gregory's work appears to have some basis in fact. The chronicler Cassiodorus, writing between A.D. 537–538, records in his *Variae* that Eastern Emperor Anastasius (A.D. 430–518) sent a naval raid against the Italian coasts, presumably in support of Clovis I.[74] Hence, it appears that Clovis I garnered the support of the Eastern Roman Empire in his campaigns against Gothic-Arians under the control of the eastern ruler King Theoderic I (A.D. 454–526).[75] Here we find evidence to support the sincerity of Clovis I's conversion and his role as the progenitor of a

revitalized Nicene-Christian Western Roman Empire apart from St. Gregory and Fredegar.

Moreover, Clovis I's appreciation for Gallo-Roman history and tradition perhaps explains his ambition of restoring Rome's "imperial prestige." However, he chose the traditions of the Western-Latin Roman Empire and Nicene Christianity rather than the Eastern-Greek Roman Empire and other interpretations of Christianity (e.g., Semi-Arianism, Monophysitism etc.). Although the historicity of Clovis I's conversion can be observed in the trajectory of Roman-Nicene Christianity toward the Middle Ages, relying upon the aforementioned primary sources becomes problematic. For example, St. Gregory employs inductive reasoning by referring anachronistically to Clovis I's conquests as "Catholic crusades against Arianism" despite not fully converting to Nicene Christianity (thereby rejecting Semi-Arianism) until A.D. 496.[76] Rather, he seems to have viewed Clovis I's early reign through the lens of the "Christendom" to which he was accustomed. Given the scant evidence supporting the whys and wherefores of Clovis I's decision to adopt Nicene Christianity, we must therefore read St. Gregory's work critically with the intention of corroborating his claims.

While the popular tales of Clovis I's life can be left to the hagiographers, certain facts of his life can be accepted at face value. For example, Clovis I married St. Clotilda in A.D. 492. He converted to Nicene Christianity following the Battle of Tolbiac in A.D. 496. He unified Francia following the Battle of Vouille in A.D. 507. Lastly, he was baptized on Christmas Eve in A.D. 508. It can also be accepted that these events led to the establishment of the Merovingian Dynasty, out of which the notion and polity of

"Christendom" would be realized. There is thus merit in examining Clovis I's life, conversion, relationship with the Church and his legacy in understanding how Nicene Christianity influenced the ideals of "Christendom."

Notes

[1] Patrick J. Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation & Transformation of the Merovingian World* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1988), Cf. 66-67. Although the exact origin of Arianism in Gothic lands remains contested, sufficient evidence exists to attribute its spread to Bishop Wulfila or Ulfilas (c. 311-383 A.D.). His survival in the Eastern Empire in the wake of the Nicene Council is attributed to the Arian Emperor in Constantinople, Constantius II. This issue shall be discussed further in the forthcoming work.

[2] The Burgundians were an influential "barbarian" kingdom that accepted Catholic-Christianity rather than Arianism. However, their influence vanished suddenly in the many forays of the fifth century after Christ. These developments shall be discussed further in a forthcoming section.

[3] Liddell and Scott. *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*. 7th Edition Collated by Benediction Classics Press. (Oxford: Benediction Press, 2010). Pg. 630. The Greek *περιπέτεια* refers to a "turning right about" or a "sudden change in fortune."

[4] The Edict of Milan ended the illegality of Christianity in the Roman Empire.

[5] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2011), 37-39.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity*, 38. Schaff describes Constantius as a "fanatical Arian."

[9] It is important to note that Theodosius I was the last to rule over both "halves" of the Roman Empire.

[10] Jordanes, *The Origins and Deeds of the Goths* or *Getica*, translated by Charles C. Mierow (New York: Forge Books, 1908), 45-46. It is important to note here that Jordanes's contemporary scholars chronicled these events ambiguously. Nevertheless, there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of his chronicles.

[11] Jordanes, *Getica*, XXIX.146, 46.

[12] Isidore of Seville, *History of the Kings of the Goths, Vandals and Suevi*, translated by Guido Donini and Gordon B. Ford (Chicago: Leiden, 1966), 8-9.

[13] Jordanes, *Getica*, XXIX.147, 47.

[14] Ian Hughes, *Stilicho: The Vandal Who Saved Rome* (South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword Books, 2015), 28-30. Translation of the militaristic terminology by Michael O. Gaston, 18 December 2017.

[15] Ian Hughes notes that the terminology "parens" is used intentionally to convey a more accurate sense of Theodosius I's wishes. Rather than proclaiming Stilicho regent, he was referring to his responsibility as the senior imperial officer to foster a good and moral development for Honorius.

[16] Jordanes, *Getica*, XXX.152, 48.

[17] Ibid. Jordanes reflects no respect or admiration for Emperor Honorius or Stilicho.

[18] Jordanes, *Getica*, XXX.154-155, 48-49.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Isidore of Seville, *History of the Kings of the Goths, Vandals and Suevi*, I.14, 8-9.

[21] Jordanes, *Getica*, XXX.155-156, 48-49.

[22] Warren H. Carroll, *The Building of Christendom* (Front Royal: Christendom College Press, 1987), 83.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, translated by Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin Group, 1974), Cf. 106-110.

[25] Peter Heathers, *The Restoration of Rome*, 108.

[26] Jordanes, *Getica*, XXX.156, 49. See also: Isidore of Seville, *History of the Kings of the Goths, Vandals and Suevi*, I.15-16, 8-9.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Paulus Orosius, *History Against the Pagans*, translated by Irving Raymond, found in "Readings in Late Antiquity: A Source Book," Edited by Michael Maas (New York: Routledge, 2010), 7.43, 349.

[29] W.H.C. Frend defines the term "Romania" as a sense of Christian-Roman identity, e.g., the sense of fatherland, peace, religion and law. See his *Rise of Christianity*, 726.

[30] Procopius, *History of the Wars: Book V*, preserved by the Loeb Classical Library, translated by H.B. Dewing (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1919), 3. Romulus Augustulus ("little Augustus") was the son of Orestes, who inherited power roughly seventy years after the last Roman emperor. It is noted that he had "some Roman blood running through his veins," which is indicative of the intermixing between Romans and invaders.

[31] Procopius, *History of the Wars,* Book 5, 5.

[32] Cassiodorus, *Variae*, translated by S.J.B. Barnish (Liverpool: University Press, 1992). I.6, 9.

[33] Peter Heathers, *The Peoples of Europe: The Goths* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 60-61.

[34] Christopher Bellitto, *The General Councils: A History of the Twenty-One Church Councils from Nicaea to Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 2002), 25.

[35] Pope St. Leo I, *Epistle IX*, Found in "Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers," Edited by Philip Schaff (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2012), 7. "For the most blessed Apostle Peter received the headship of the apostles from the Lord, and the church of Rome still abides by His institutions, It is wicked to believe that His holy disciple, Mark, who was the first to govern the church of Alexandria, formed his decrees on a different line of tradition: seeing that without doubt both discipline and master drew but from one Spirit from the same fount of grace, and the ordained could not hand on aught else than what he had received from his ordainer. We do not, therefore allow it that we should differ in anything, since we confess ourselves to be of one body and faith, nor that the institutions of the teacher should seem different to those of the taught."

[36] Arius of Libya, "The Banquet," *The Faith of the Early Fathers: Volume I*, translated by William A. Jurgens (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1970.), 276.

[37] Heinrich Denzinger, "Canons of the Council of Nicaea," *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals,* Edited by Peter Hunermann (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2012), 50-51.

[38] *Hypostasis* is translated literally as "the essential or basic structure/nature of an entity." See: Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich (& Drake). *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3rd edition revised and edited by Frederick William Danker (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2000), s.v. *υποστασις*. P. 1040.

[39] The ante-Nicene understanding of the godhead is perhaps best articulated by St. Ignatius of Antioch (died c. 110 A.D.) and St. Justin Martyr (A.D. 100 – 165). In St. Ignatius's *Letter to the Magnesians* (c. 110 A.D.) he states: "there is one God, who manifested Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ, who is His Word proceeding from silence, and was in all respects pleasing to Him that sent Him."[39] Moreover, in St. Justin's *Second Apology* (*inter* A.D. 148 – 161) he states: "After God we worship and love the Word who is from the unbegotten and inexpressible God, since He even became man for us, so that by becoming a partaker in our passions He might also work their cure." St. Athanasius of Alexandria (A.D. 296 – 373) perhaps best represents the Nicene and post-Nicene understanding of the godhead. He states in his *Letter Concerning the Decrees of the Council of Nicaea* (*inter* 350 – 351 A.D.) that "God, however, being without parts, is Father of the Son without division and without being acted upon. For neither is there an effluence from that which is incorporeal, nor is there anything flowing into Him from without, as in the case of men."[39] This letter thus served as a defense of Nicene terminology, which was contested throughout the wider eastern empire in the wake of the council.[39] At any rate, St. Athanasius was the primate of the eastern See of Alexandria (Egypt), which means that both the Western Roman Empire and parts of the Eastern Roman Empire accepted Nicene terminology.

[40] Edward James, *The Franks* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 34.

[41] Edward James, *The Franks*, 35.

[42] Also known to history as "Julian the Apostate."

[43] Edward James, *The Franks*, 38-39.

[44] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, Translated by John C. Rolfe, Preserved by the Loeb Classical Library (Harvard: University Press, 1950), 1.16.3, 1-3.

[45] Walter C. Perry, *The Franks, From Their First Appearance in History to the King of Pepin* (Bonn: 1857), 8.

[46] Edward James, *The Franks*, 42-43.

[47] Edward James, *The Franks*, Cf. 42.

[48] Edward James, *The Franks*, Cf. 43.

[49] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, Cf. 3.29.2.

[50] Edward James, *The Franks*, 43. Dr. James herein notes the suspicious nature of Emperor Valentinian II's death.

[51] Edward James, *The Franks*, 52. Arbogast's intentions appear predicated upon the notion of "*gentilibus odiis insectans*," or "urged on by tribal hatreds."

[52] J.B. Bury, *The Notitia Dignitatum*, translated by J.B. Bury (Amazon Digital Services, 2016). It should be noted here that the Notitia is fiercely contested within scholarship. The surviving copies are incomplete and have been accused of error. Nevertheless, the mention of Franks "in charge" of Roman-Gaul stipulates to the history herein discussed.

[53] Edward James, *The Franks*, 51.

[54] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, translated by John C. Rolfe, preserved by the Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1950), xviii, 2, 15.

[55] Paulus Orosius. *History Against the Pagans*, translated by R.P. Pryne (Toronto: Great Library, 2015), vii, 32.

[56] Godefroid Kurth, *Saint Clotilda*, Translated by V.M. Crawford (London: Benziger, 1898), 17.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Godefroid Kurth notes that the Burgundians received imperial honors for their service to the Church and Rome. The post of "Master of the Knights" was bestowed upon them, which Alaric II of the Goths envied greatly. Cf. *St. Clotilda*, 17-18.

[59] Paulus Orosius, *History Against the Pagans*, vii, 32.

[60] Ibid. See also: Godefroid Kurth, *Saint Clotilda*, 18-20.

[61] King Gundobad is also known to history as "King Gondové."

[62] Godefroid Kurth, *Saint Clotilda*, 19-20.

[63] Also known to history as "Caretenes," "Caretena Agrippina de Narbonne" or "Carstamene."

[64] Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistolae*, translated by W.B. Anderson, preserved by the Loeb Classical Library (Harvard: University Press, 1965), V. 7.

[65] Edmond Le Blant, *Inscriptions Chretiennes de la Gaule* (Paris: Impériale, 1856), Vol. I, 69-71, No. 31. Latin translation by Michael Owen Gaston on 3 December 2017. The epitaph of Queen Caretena is attributed to Fortunatus of Poitiers. It says roughly: *Meruit nunc sine fine diem; Nunc tibi pro meritis stat sine fine dies; Felix cui meritis stat sine fine dies*, or "[Caretena] Has now merited the day unending; Now to her comes for her merits the day unending; Happy be she to whom the unending day comes for her merits." I would like to thank my colleague James R.P. Joseph at Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church for conferring with me on this archaic translation.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Godefroid Kurth, *Saint Clotilda*, 16.

[68] Godefroid Kurth, *Saint Clotilda*, 22-23. It should be noted that the location of their flight is contested. St. Gregory of Tours records that they fled to the court of Gundobad while Fredegar records that they fled to the court of Geneva. The latter record appears more credible.

[69] Gregory of Tours, *The Merovingians*, translated and collated by Alexander Callander Murray (Toronto: University Press, 2013), 8-9.

[70] Gregory of Tours, *Merovingians*, II, 28.

[71] See Godefroid Kurth, *St. Clotilda*, 25-26. Also, see Warren H. Carroll, *The Building of Christendom*, 135-137.

[72] Peter Heather, *The Restoration of Rome* (Oxford: University Press, 2013), 209-210.

[73] Peter Heather's analysis here is spot-on considering Clovis I's legacy. However, it is important to note that Fredegar had no possible way of foreseeing the future. Hence, the account is rather panegyric.

[74] Cassiodorus, *Variae*, translated by S.J.B. Barnish (Liverpool: University Press, 1992), II.38, 37.

[75] Cassiodorus tells of a letter sent from King Theoderic I to Faustus, the Praetorian Prefect in Sipontum, who reports that "the traders of the city of Sipontum claim that they have been ruined by hostile ravaging." Cassiodorus thus attributes such "raiding" to Emperor Anastasius's naval fleet sent to aid Clovis I. See *Variae*, II.38.

[76] St. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, II.27-30, 41-44. The concept of "crusading" was also anachronistic in the fifth century.

CHAPTER III

CLOVIS I'S CONVERSION AND THE ADVENT OF FRANCE

Introduction

The conversion of Clovis I of the Franks to Nicene Christianity in A.D. 496 affected directly the survival of the Church itself and the balance of power within the Gothic-controlled Western Roman Empire. His sudden adoption of Nicene Christianity also had far-reaching impacts on Italy and wider Europe with the unification of "Francia." Consequently, Clovis I's conversion has since has been the subject of prolific hagiography by historians like St. Gregory of Tours and St. Avitus of Vienne, thus making it difficult to examine the facts *sans* panegyrics. But through examination we find that Clovis I's adoption of Nicene Christianity was certainly not a foregone conclusion because it required him to forsake his heritage and repudiate his national pride. Indeed, Clovis I's conversion meant that he rejected the Arian-Gothic kingdoms with which he had already secured marriage alliances. His conversion eventually legitimized his rule in the eyes of Nicene Christians and the Roman Church, but the Western Empire's successor kingdoms remained Semi-Arian. The support from this legitimacy granted him more soldiers from the ranks of the Burgundians that eventually led him to victory over Alaric II's Arian-Visigothic kingdom at the Battle of Vouille in A.D. 507, which is widely considered to be the moment "where France began."

Yet we know that Nicene Christianity and "Old Rome" were not the only factions that would have benefited from Clovis I's conversion. We also know that Christianity, both Nicene and Semi-Arian, was already familiar to the Franks prior to his conversion.

Cassiodorus tells us that Clovis I's sister Audefleda (A.D. 471–526) married the Arian-Ostrogothic King of Italy Theoderic (r. 475–526 A.D.), who eventually married their daughter Theodegotha (ca. 473–ca. 524 A.D.) to the Arian-Visigothic King of Toulouse Alaric II (d. 507 A.D.).[1] These marriage alliances indicate that there were both Nicene and Semi-Arian Christians with political ties in Clovis I's court before his conversion in A.D. 496. Other chroniclers such as St. Avitus of Vienne also attest to the presence of Semi-Arianism and Nicene Christianity in Clovis I's court. He uses rhetorical language in his synoptic *Epistula 46* when describing Clovis I's "*acrimonia*" or "sharpness" to see through the "obfuscation" of orthodoxy by Semi-Arian Christians.[2] Such language suggests that Clovis I had personal experience with Semi-Arian Christianity given the conversions of his sister and niece.

Given the conflict between Nicene and Semi-Arian factions in the years preceding Clovis I's conversion, it is important to consider the wider significance of choosing either interpretation. Clovis I would not have been the "first Nicene king," nor would he have been the "first Arian king" in the Western Empire. As noted in Chapter II, the Burgundian King Chilperic II (St. Clotilda's father) was Nicene Christian while her uncle Gundobad was a Semi-Arian king. Therefore, Clovis I's conversion to either interpretation of Christianity would not necessarily have been a watershed moment. Yet it was, which leaves historians with two theories for considering Clovis I's conversion and its consequences to Late Antique Gaul.

The first theory, what we shall call the "conscious theory," represents the traditional theory and suggests that Clovis I adopted specifically Nicene Christianity

rather than Semi-Arianism. The second theory, what we shall call the "accidental theory," represents the historico-critical theory and suggests that Clovis I's decision and its consequences were merely coincidental and therefore do not reflect a decision to choose one faith over another. While each theory has merit, the "conscious theory" reflects the best interpretation of Clovis I's conversion because it accounts for all relevant information—primary sources and tradition—and is the least presumptuous given the absence of contradictory evidence. We shall now examine the strengths and weaknesses of each theory.

The Conversion of Clovis I of the Franks: Two Theories and the "Wolfram-Pirenne Thesis"

THE CONSCIOUS THEORY

The "conscious theory" accepts the histories that have been transmitted to us at face value. This theory relies on the often-hagiographical accounts of St. Gregory, the limited information in St. Avitus's *Epistula 46*, the absence of contradictory evidence and a wealth of tradition to determine the sincerity of Clovis I' conversion. Contemporary proponents of this theory, like Godefroid Kurth (A.D. 1847–1916) and Danuta Shanzer (b. 1956 A.D.), point to the tradition that St. Clotilda's preoccupation with her husband's conversion and the unlikelihood of his conversion apart from her influence as evidence against competing theories.[3] Given Clovis I's consistent rejection of St. Clotilda's pleas, his sudden acceptance of that very faith over the seemingly more expedient and advantageous option of Gothic-Arianism suggests a conscious decision on his part. However, it should be noted that there are no independent (e.g., non-Christian) sources

either to corroborate or contradict the tradition that St. Clotilda had an integral role in Clovis I's conversion.

The issue of "tradition" and its transmission is the most controversial component of the "conscious theory" because it can be easily construed as "confirmation bias." Such bias is a presumption that a historian's judgement is clouded by extraneous considerations. Ian Wood, for example, is critical of the "conscious theory" and points to the propagandistic value of Clovis I's "legend" to the "Nicene Church" in its struggle with the Semi-Arian Goths as a more likely explanation for his conversion.[4] However, other scholars such as Godefroid Kurth (A.D. 1847–1916) state confidently: "Our historians inform us, and we have no difficulty in believing them, that the conversion of her husband [which she accomplished] was Clotilda's most constant preoccupation."[5] Given the availability of different approaches to the subject, we must note that the way tradition is transmitted or the language in which it is transmitted does not necessarily negate the veracity of the tradition itself. Given the paucity of historical evidence regarding Clovis I's conversion, the "conscious theory" must therefore rely upon an earnest but cautious reading of the panegyrics. It must also accept the silences of other chroniclers as evidence in and of itself that supports the sincerity of Clovis I's conversion to Nicene Christianity.

However, we must be careful when arguing that the absence of contradictory evidence lends credence to the "conscious theory." Rather than employing an "argument from silence" as conclusive evidence, which could be construed as a *post hoc* fallacy, we must simply point to the absence of contradictions in the works of chroniclers that would

otherwise be expected to criticize Clovis I and his conversion. The absence of such contradictory evidence in the works of Sidonius Apollinaris, Cassiodorus, St. Avitus, St. Gregory and St. Isidore therefore lends credence to the "conscious theory" because there is no shortage of chronicles and letters or other commentaries on fifth-century Late Antique Gaul and Italy. This suggests that the chroniclers were active and "tuned-in" to the events of their epoch.

An example of such a chronicler is Sidonius Apollinaris (d. 489 A.D.), a Roman aristocrat and historian whose works have been transmitted to us. Though he died seven years prior to Clovis I's conversion, he gives us a clear sense of how the Gallo-Roman bishops viewed the invading Franks. Sidonius describes in his *Epistolae* the defeat of his "good friend" Syagrius at the hands of Clovis I in A.D. 486.[6] His language conveys a sense of dismay that a "barbarian" could defeat a Roman general. Moreover, he never mentions the Franks by name but uses dismissive euphemisms like "the barbarians" and "the Northern Germans" to refer to them throughout his works.[7] This literary treatment suggests that Sidonius's fellow Gallo-Roman historians would have viewed Clovis I through a similar lens by the turn of the sixth century. But as far as we know, there is no explicit evidence to suggest that his conversion was insincere or "un-Roman." Given that King Theoderic married Clovis I's sister and Eastern Emperor Anastasius (r. 491–518 A.D.) conferred on Clovis I the title of *consul* by A.D. 506, we can see that the wider conception of the Franks had changed significantly by the early-sixth century.[8]

Another Gallo-Roman chronicler that would be expected to criticize or discredit the sincerity of Clovis I's conversion is Bishop Ruricius of Limoges (died ca. 511 A.D.).

His works are widely considered to be commentaries on the destruction of Gothic-Roman hegemony and the ills of sixth-century society. For example, Ruricius laments to Bishop Volusianus of Tours (r. 491–498 A.D.):

> Thus, what is worse, long forgetfulness has destroyed the ancient and inherent affection in us, caused partly, as it must be confessed, by our own negligence, partly by the exigencies of the times, [and] partly by the infirmity of the body. …For—because you write that you are rendered stupefied by fear of the enemy—he who is accustomed to endure a domestic enemy ought not to fear a foreign one.[9]

We can conclude from his reference to the "exigencies of the times" and his allusion to a "foreign" enemy that Ruricius was referring to Clovis I's early attempts at conquering Aquitania between A.D. 486–496.[10] Given such language, we can deduce that Ruricius thought Clovis I to be of the same barbarian archetype that Sidonius Apollinaris attributed to the barbarian Franks. Given his dislike of the man who was contributing to "the destruction of the ancient and inherent affection" of Late Antique Gallo-Roman society, we would expect Ruricius to comment explicitly on Clovis I. We would also expect him to denounce Clovis I's Frankish kingdom as representing the antithesis of "Gallo-Roman values." Yet, we have no record of his works after the Battle of Vouille in A.D. 507.

The most compelling instance of the absence of contradictory evidence in a chronicler's work that would otherwise be expected to criticize Clovis I's conversion is St. Avitus of Vienne's *Epistula 46*. In it, St. Avitus suggests that Arianism (he employs imprecisely the word *schisma* to refer to "heresy") nearly "took hold" of Clovis I but through his "keen intellect, [he] uncovered [its] lies."[11] Aside from his panegyric that refers to Clovis I's conversion as a "victory for the Catholic Church [sic]," St. Avitus's

Epistula 46 reveals his ardent support of Nicene Christianity by praising Clovis I's baptism and ultimate coronation:

> Now her bright glory adorns *your* [sic] part of the world also, and in the West, in the person of a new king, the ray of an age-old light shines forth. It is fitting that it began to shine on the birthday of our Redeemer so that the vivifying water appropriately gave birth to you in your salvation on the very day when the world received the Lord of Heaven born for its redemption.[12]

St. Avitus's letter clearly regards Clovis I as a "hero-figure." The tone of the letter also tells us that Clovis I actively chose Nicene Christianity over Semi-Arian Christianity. Moreover, American historian Danuta Shanzer points to St. Avitus's staunchly "pro-Catholic [sic]" language in praising Clovis I's "rejection of heresy" to support the sincerity of his conversion.[13] Shanzer notes that St. Avitus had great admiration for the Burgundians under King Gundobad (d. 516 A.D.), the uncle that murdered St. Clotilda's parents, and diligently sought his conversion from Semi-Arianism.[14] Given Clovis I's conquest of the Burgundians, St. Avitus was not particularly fond of the pagan conqueror and thus had no reason to praise his conversion and ultimate baptism if the conversion itself were simply for political value.[15] This interpretation, according to Shanzer, is the most practical theory and affirms the sincerity of Clovis I's conversion.

Lastly, King Theoderic's *praetorian prefect* (imperial administrator) Cassiodorus provides us with various other accounts of Gallo-Roman letters, poems and documents that range in subject from imperial edicts to the talents of an anonymous cithara player (ancient lyre or guitar). Of the former, Cassiodorus records a letter from the Ostrogoth King Theoderic to Clovis I dated around A.D. 507 in which Theoderic demands that Clovis I: "Accept the advice of one long experienced in such affairs; those wars of mine

have turned out well which were carried through with moderation to the end."[16] Given the ire conveyed in the subtext of Theoderic's letter, we can conclude that he did not shy away from deriding Clovis I as his Franks were decimating the Alemanni or Alaric II's Visigothic armies. The absence of criticism in Cassiodorus's records despite his imperial position and the prevalence of other records thus suggests that his silence on Clovis I's conversion is evidence for the likelihood of the "conscious theory."

Nevertheless, there is valid criticism of the "conscious theory" because its proponents accept its historicity and often transmit panegyrics in the same way. For example, the often-romanticized interpretations of Catholic historians are best demonstrated by Warren H. Carroll's (A.D. 1932–2011) description of St. Clotilda's virtues. He writes of her purportedly-unceasing prayer for her husband's conversion: "Yet the faith that burned in her was the faith of Perpetua, of Cecilia, of Jerome's Paula–all from the greatest families of Rome, who would have recognized Clotilda instantly as their sister in the spirit."[17] Such a romanticized vision of St. Clotilda's "virtues" implies that she played an integral and intimate role in her husband's conversion thereby hastening the creation of France. Such criticism can be applied equally to St. Gregory's account of Clovis I's attempts at sowing the seeds of Nicene Christianity among his Franks following his conversion. St. Gregory records the Franks' response to Clovis I's desire for their conversion: "Dutiful king, we shall drive away our mortal gods, and we are ready to follow that immortal God preached by [Bishop] Remigius."[18] Given the unlikelihood that Frankish subjects would readily cast aside their ancestor worship and "barbarian nature," skepticism toward St. Gregory's account is warranted.

Moreover, the unlikelihood of the wider Frankish tribe's conversion is bolstered by the history of their conquest in Gaul and Clovis I's uncertainty of whether his Franks would agree to be baptized. St. Gregory and Sidonius Apollinaris tell us that Clovis I and his Frankish soldiers often razed churches and looted holy places during their raids.[19] For example, St. Gregory tells us that the Franks looted churches in Soissons in the wake of their victory over Syagrius in A.D 486 because they were "still sunk in [their] grievous ways."[20] St. Gregory also tells us that Clovis I expressed concern to Bishop Remigius of Reims that "there remains one obstacle [to my conversion]. The people under my command will not agree to forsake their gods."[21] Thus, the Franks were expected to refuse Nicene Christianity but this all changed on the day of Clovis I's baptism in A.D. 509. St. Gregory tells us: "Clovis was attended by three-thousand of his picked soldiers, who were to be baptized on the same day, the first sheaves of the harvest which the Church now set itself to reap." However, St. Gregory's dubious report does is not necessarily conclusive because the Franks were a warrior tribe, which means that his disciplined soldiers would most likely have been more amenable to conversion than his subjects. Hence, the baptism of Clovis I's soldiers does not necessarily imply that "the Franks" were baptized simultaneously.

THE ACCIDENTAL THEORY

The "accidental theory" uses the historico-critical methodology to examine the historicity of Clovis I's conversion. Contemporary proponents of the "accidental theory," like Peter Brown (b. 1935 A.D.) and Ian Wood (b. 1950 A.D.), point to the reality that Clovis I was a "barbarian pagan." He would have been unable to understand fully the

theological minutiae separating Nicene and Semi-Arian Christianity. The suggestion of a conscious decision on his part would therefore more accurately reflect other motivations such as gaining support for his conquest from Nicene Christians. Indeed, Peter Brown says: "He [Clovis I] showed that he did not wish to join the 'family of princes' formed by the barbarian rulers of the western Mediterranean," which suggests that Clovis I's decision to adopt a "foreign" culture and religion was explicitly at the expense of his "barbarian" nature.[22]

Ian Wood states: "If [Clotilda's] influence on the relations between the Franks and the Burgundians is hard to assess, so too is her role in her husband's conversion. …On the other hand, a letter written by Avitus of Vienne…ascribes no role either to the queen or to the outcome of a battle [the Battle of Tolbiac]."[23] Wood's theory is based on the limited testimony of St. Avitus, which may be true *in principium*, presupposes that Clovis I intentionally decided against his own interests. If Wood's conclusions are true, the absence of corroborating evidence supports the theory that St. Clotilda's faith and efforts to effect his conversion had no direct connection to it. The only non-Nicene Christian chronicler of the period (Fredegar) that could give us a better vantage point for assessing this theory appears to have simply recorded St. Gregory's history rather than his own accounts, which does not necessarily provide for an accurate history.[24] Given such limited information from the chroniclers, we must consider the socio-religious culture of late-fifth century Italy and Gaul to assess the likelihood of Wood's theories. Since Semi-Arianism was the accepted interpretation of Christianity among the "barbarian" successor kingdoms from Theoderic in Italy to Alaric II in Gaul to the

Vandal Huneric (d. 484 A.D.) in Corsica,[25] it stands to reason that if Clovis I and his Franks were to convert from paganism to Christianity, natural pride would have most likely led them to adopt the religion of their fellow conquerors. The probability of this theory is bolstered by Clovis I's decade-long rejection of his wife's pleas for his conversion, which demonstrates that he was steeped in his "barbarian ways." Yet we know that Clovis I eventually adopted Nicene Christianity, which precludes the "accidental claim."

ORIGO ET RELIGIO: THE WOLFRAM-PIRENNE THESIS

We can also see elements of the "accidental theory" in what we shall call the "Wolfram-Pirenne Thesis." Its namesakes, Herwig Wolfram (b. 1934 A.D.) and Henri Pirenne (A.D. 1862–1935), seek to explain Clovis I's significance in alternative ways such as his value in lore and legend, which indirectly rejects the "conscious theory." They attribute Clovis I's significance to his value as a "Catholic hero" in the *divinam originis* (divine origins) of Christendom, which neither supports or refutes explicitly other theories but nevertheless connotes a similar measure of skepticism as the "accidental theory." Indeed, it does not seek to ascertain the sincerity of Clovis I's conversion, but rather seeks to understand his conversion's value in combating what the panegyrists often refer to as the Gothic-Vandal "scourge." For example, this theory points to Jordanes's and St. Isidore's hyperbolic descriptions of groups like Theoderic's Ostrogoths and Gaiseric's Vandals, for which they evidently have no respect. They often refer to the Ostrogoths and Vandals as "harbingers of iniquity" and "cannibals."[26] Although the "Wolfram-Pirenne Thesis" does not explicitly take a position on the sincerity or

significance of Clovis I's conversion, it nevertheless supports the "accidental theory" by focusing solely on the political value of Clovis I's conversion.

German scholar Herwig Wolfram gives us better insight into his thesis regarding Francia's "origin and religion" by telling us: "The *origo* is not a common biological descent of a given group nor is it only the traditional account of the origins of a single person or group; it also proclaims the heroic-divine origins of a gens and its kings, origins that have to be continually renewed in the cult and thereby kept alive."[27] In Wolfram's judgement, the historicity of Clovis I's conversion and baptism may be genuine but the *popularis ratio* (popular cause) of his significance to antiquity may be found elsewhere. He thus suggests that the legend of Clovis I's conversion, immortalized by St. Gregory and kept alive by French and Catholic tradition, is simply hagiography used to romanticize Clovis I's political aspirations.

French historian Henri Pirenne proposes a controversial theory that without King Gaiseric of the Vandals (A.D. 389–477), it is "improbable" that Clovis I could have gained the significance attributed to him.[28] He presents his theory in the context of explaining the transition from the ancient to the Medieval world, which proposes two fundamental processes: the fragmentation of the Roman Empire and the rise of Northern Europe.[29] Through these two central paradigm changes, the rise of Gothic-Vandal successor kingdoms replaced Western-Roman hegemony. For example, Gaiseric's Vandal kingdom arose out of Northern Africa and conquered regions of Spain, Italy and Gaul by A.D. 454. This expansion culminated in the methodical sacking of Rome in A.D. 455, which spared no Nicene church or holy site.[30] St. Isidore, a native of Seville who

would have been well-versed in anti-Vandal rhetoric, despised the Vandals and refers to them as "demonic foes" whose presence brought a veritable "apocalypse." He says:

> The Vandals…occupied Spain, did much killing and ravaging in their bloody raids, set cities on fire, and exhausted the property which they plundered, so that human flesh was devoured by the people in the violence of their hunger. Mothers ate their children; the animals too…and so four plagues raged through all of Spain, and the prediction of divine anger which had long ago been written by the prophets was fulfilled.[31]

Despite St. Isidore's hyperbole, we can glean from his account that King Gaiseric was considered an apostate of the highest order and a great persecutor of Gallo-Roman Nicenes.

According to Pirenne's thesis, Clovis I should be viewed through the lens of the "anti-Gaiseric," a "Catholic hero" that represented the "salvation" of Nicene Christianity from "persecution." The *origo* of Clovis I's legend would therefore be based on a hagiographical memory rather than any claim of theological altruism or love of "St. Clotilda's God." Moreover, this theory neither accepts nor rejects the historicity of Clovis I's conversion and baptism but simply attributes their acquired significance to the fact that Clovis I "turned around" the fortune of Nicene Christianity. The significance of the historical Clovis I, often considered a *peripeteia* or "turning point" in Christian history, would be merely that he provided the occasion of the legend of Clovis I. However, this theory has been met with criticism in contemporary scholarship. Among other issues, scholars like British historian Norman Baynes (A.D. 1877–1961) proposes different chronologies to mark the end of antiquity and the advent of the Medieval period. He also points out that the role Pirenne ascribed to Clovis I as the "anti-Gaiseric" was first attributed to Charlemagne.[32] Despite its weakness, Pirenne's thesis causes us to consider

other reasons than the "conscious theory" to explain Clovis I's significance to Christian history. For example, his theory that the legend of the "Catholic hero" Clovis I was more valuable to his conquest than the fateful and sincere conversion story described by St. Gregory.

St. Clotilda and Clovis I's Need for Legitimacy

LEGITIMACY THROUGH MARRIAGE

Given the abundance of possible alliances within Italy and Antique Gaul, Clovis I's pursuit of marrying a "royal woman" suggests that he sought legitimacy through one of Gaul's royal families. St. Gregory tells us that Clovis I sent envoys throughout the Gallic kingdoms following his victory over the Roman general Syagrius at the Battle of Soissons in A.D. 486.[33] His narrative implies that St. Clotilda's ancestry was of great importance to Clovis I, which is reflected in his envoys' letter upon learning that she was unbetrothed. He records that "they [Clovis I's envoys sent to Gundobad's Burgundian court] observed that she was an elegant young woman and clever for her years, and they discovered that she was of the blood royal."[34] Hence, marrying the Burgundian princess St. Clotilda provided Clovis I with a legitimate claim to the Burgundian throne thereby establishing himself among the lords of Gaul.

St. Clotilda's role in legitimizing Clovis I's conquest is straightforward, but her influence on his conversion to Nicene Christianity has become legendary. The extent of her role, that is whether it was causal or correlational, is disputed within historical scholarship. Contemporary scholars like Ian Wood and Danuta Shanzer claim that France's popular "origin story" borders on hagiography. However, they both concede that

St. Clotilda had a role in Clovis I's conversion but disagree on the significance of her Nicene Christian faith. Rather than attributing Clovis I's "Catholic crusade against Arianism" to St. Clotilda's virtue like St. Gregory, Wood points to "Old Rome's" heritage and substantial resources that undoubtedly made Nicene Christianity more attractive to the king.[35] Given his ambition for legitimacy, marrying St. Clotilda also granted Clovis I extra soldiers for his conquest of Gaul.[36] St. Isidore, writing in the early-seventh century, confirms this in his *History* by saying: "Against him Clovis, the ruler of the Franks, who aspired to the kingdom of Gaul, waged war [on the Goths] with the help of the Burgundians."[37] The support of St. Clotilda's Burgundian family granted the legitimacy required to unify the other Burgundian and Frankish kingdoms in Gaul. However, his marriage to St. Clotilda, coupled with the Burgundians' support, granted him secular legitimacy only.

LEGITIMACY IN THE NICENE-CHRISTIAN CHURCH

In order to obtain full legitimacy—the kind that would only come from Rome and its Christians—required the support of the "Nicene Church." As far as we know from our sources, Clovis I did not have intimate contact with the Nicene Church prior to his conversion and baptism. However, we do have three letters written between A.D. 480 and A.D. 507 that demonstrate an evolution in their relationship. The first letter is dated between A.D. 480–486 and was sent to Clovis I from Bishop Remigius of Rheims (A.D. 437–533). In it, he describes the social and spiritual factors that Clovis I faced before his marriage:

> You, who have already reached the very top by the practice of humility, must see to it through your merit that God's favorable judgement does not turn from you, for, as the saying goes, the deeds of a man are tested. …Your bounty should be pure and decent and you should pay respect to your bishops and always have recourse to their advice; and if there is good agreement between you and them, your province will better endure. Encourage your citizens, give relief to the unfortunate, support widows, and nourish orphans. …Let justice issue from your mouth. Expect nothing at all from the poor and strangers in case your desire to receive their gifts or anything else increases. Let your court be open to all, so that no one shall depart from there downhearted. Whatever paternal property you possess, free captives with it and release them from the yoke of servitude [a very Gothic practice]. Should anyone come into your presence, let him not feel like a stranger. Joke with the young, hold discussions with elders–if you would reign, render judgements nobly.[38]

The bishop's language is reflective of the traditional qualities that the Church would have associated with a "noble Catholic King." His description of what constitutes such a king echoes the spirit of St. Augustine's *City of God*: "Two loves, therefore, have made two cities. There is an earthly city made by the love of self…and a heavenly city made by the love of God."[39] Such a spirit would certainly have been instilled in St. Clotilda because it became the identity of Nicene Christians living among the "Arian kingdoms of man" in the fifth century. Bishop Remigius's words suggest that Clovis I's conversion was sincere and therefore not opportunistic given the success and longevity of Clovis I's dynasty.[40]

Moreover, the second letter from Bishop Remigius wished to provide Clovis I with solace following his sister Albochledis's death in A.D. 507. We know from St. Gregory that she converted from Semi-Arianism and was baptized together with Clovis I but died shortly thereafter.[41] This letter is important because its language suggests that Clovis I had developed a more intimate relationship with the Church in the years following the bishop's first letter. Remigius says to Clovis I:

When a person such as her departs from the light of this world, she should be held in high regard rather than mourned. For her life was such that, chosen by God and, it may be believed, received by the Lord, she has passed on to heaven. She lived for your faith, and…Christ fulfilled her desire to receive the blessing of virginity. …You still have to administer to the kingdom, and, with God's favor, to direct its course. You are the head of peoples and preserve the political order.[42]

Remigius's language thus suggests that Clovis I was in communion with the Church through the bishopric of Rheims between his conversion in A.D. 496 and death in A.D. 511. This evidence is quite notable because as we have seen, Clovis I's family was intertwined with the Arian-Gothic kings Theoderic and Alaric II through his sister and niece but is nevertheless described as being a Nicene Christian.

The third letter is perhaps the most notable of the three because it was written by King Clovis I and addressed to "Aquitanian Bishops on the King's Peace and Apostolic Letters." In it, we see for the first time the "imperial personality" that Clovis I developed on his journey from pagan chieftain to "Catholic King of the Franks" and the first sense of duty or servitude to the Church. His letter begins:

Clovis, king, to the holy lords and bishops worthy of an apostolic see. …Since report divulges the declaration and command issued to our entire army before we invaded the homeland of the Goths, we could not overlook [informing] your blessed selves [of it]. In the first place, we have commanded with respect to the rights of all churches, that no one is to try to sieve any kind of property, neither from religious women nor widows who can be shown to be dedicated to the service of the Lord; likewise, from clerics and the children of both clerics and widows staying in the homes of their parents. …Regarding other lay captives who are proven to have been taken into captivity outside the peace, there is no question that you may send apostolic letters [of intercession] to anyone you wish. Obviously, as far as those people, lay or clerical, who are seized without our peace are concerned, let apostolic letters by all means be sent to *me* [emphasis added], provided you truly authenticate your letters, sealed at the bottom with your ring…for the capriciousness and lies of many have been discovered [referring to Semi-Arians], so that one perceives the truth of the scriptural phrase, 'The righteous perishes with the unrighteous [cf. Gen. 18:23].' *Pray for me, holy lords and fathers worthy of an apostolic see* [emphasis added].[43]

Given his passive and reverential language toward "bishops and holy fathers," Clovis I appears to have immersed himself fully in Nicene Christianity by A.D. 507. This suggests that the Battle of Vouille, which is widely considered the moment "where France began," represented a "Nicene King's" attempt at defeating the Arian Visigoths. This is supported by his apparent desire to first inform the Church of his actions and assure them that no harm would come to Nicene Christians, thereby suggesting deference to its authority. Therefore, we see in this letter evidence to support that Clovis I consciously chose Nicene Christianity following his conversion and baptism.

This conclusion is bolstered by the ultimate conversion of Clovis I's subjects to Nicene Christianity. We must bear in mind that the Franks were by and large convinced of their divine origins. "The Merovingians," as they called themselves, were descendants of Merovechus (A.D. 415–458), son of the Roman aristocrat and Frankish king Clodio (A.D. 395–448). They believed that Clovis I's father, King Childeric, was the son of Merovechus and therefore Clovis I represented the Roman heredity of their "divine origin."[44] They were thus steeped in their ancestral traditions despite pressures to adopt Christianity. Nevertheless, Clovis I presented his subjects with the "truths" of Nicene Christianity and they converted by the time of his death in A.D. 511.

The Battle of Vouille: "Where France Began"

The Battle of Vouille, which occurred at Poitiers in the summer of A.D. 507, is widely considered to be a "turning point" in the establishment of France and the development of Christendom. It, like the Battle of Tolbiac in A.D. 496, is viewed by the

chroniclers as a pre-ordained event that viewed Clovis I as a legendary "Catholic hero." We must therefore begin our study with the notion of a "decisive battle" and whether Vouille can be properly considered one.[45] American historian Bernard Bachrach (b. 1939 A.D.) states of what constitutes such a battle: "For those historians who have ventured opinions on a broad scale regarding decisive battles in the early Middle Ages, long-term impact, indeed very long-term impact, the more far reaching the better, tends to be at issue. …Many of these studies fall victim to the post hoc fallacy."[46] In other words, Bachrach suggests that the Battle of Vouille itself is often consider less important than the argument that it was the moment "where France began." It is in this context that one must approach the study of Vouille as the final stage of Clovis I's evolution from pagan chieftain to Nicene-Christian king without falling into the "post hoc fallacy."[47]
By approaching Vouille in this context, it becomes clear that the battle was indeed a "decisive battle" for Clovis I because it allowed him to annex the region of Aquitania and establish a Frankish hegemony in Northern Gaul. However, King Theoderic of the Ostrogoths intervened to prevent the rest of Gaul from leaving Gothic control.

Following Clovis I's conversion to Nicene Christianity, he continued engaging the Gothic lords of Toulouse and Rome. Such skirmishes that took place between the Battle of Tolbiac in A.D. 496 and the Battle of Vouille in A.D. 507 were not always successful for Clovis I, such as Alaric II's capturing of Saintes (Southwestern France) shortly after Tolbiac. Nevertheless, consistent offensives cemented in the minds of the Gothic kings the threat of Clovis I's unified kingdom. Several years after his tactical victory at Saintes, Alaric II of the Visigoths wished to further avoid conflict with Clovis I

and arranged a formal parlay on an island in the Loire, Tours.[48] After swearing "eternal friendship" to one another, Alaric II and Clovis I parted ways sometime between A.D. 502–503.

However, this treaty ended officially in A.D. 507 during the prelude to Vouille. Theoderic the Great, King of the Ostrogoths and ruler of Italy, promised Alaric II reinforcements to help defeat the Franks. However, Theoderic failed to reach Alaric II in a timely manner and thus earned a reputation of being "unreliable" among his allies. Procopius (A.D. 500–565), writing in the mid-sixth century, claims that King Theoderic may have known precisely what he was doing. He states in his *History of the Wars*: "[Theoderic] was still engaged in his preparations and purposely kept putting off the departure of the army. …Finally, he sent the army, but commanded the generals to march in a leisurely fashion."[49] Procopius therefore suggests that Theoderic chose not to side with his ally Alaric II against Clovis I and his Franks for fear that they may also march on Rome. Without Theoderic's aid, Clovis I killed Alaric II personally and annihilated his Visigothic army. According to his contemporary St. Avitus of Vienne, Clovis I's victory at Vouille granted him the valley of the Durance River (Southeastern France).[50]

Moreover, Cassiodorus, also writing in the mid-sixth century, perhaps sheds further light on Theoderic's decision to march toward the Franks with no intention of reaching them. He records in his *Variae* a letter sent from King Theoderic to Luduin (Clovis), King of the Franks dated prior to the Battle of Vouille. He says: "But, since crimes should always be avenged on the authors of treachery, and the punishable fault of the chieftains should be requited on the commons, restrain your attack on the exhausted

remnants. Those who, as you see, have taken refuge in the protection of your kindred, deserve to escape, by the law of friendship."[51] Cassiodorus thus intimates that Theoderic and Clovis I had a civil relationship due to his marriage to Clovis I's sister, Audefleda. In this spirit, Theoderic pleaded with Clovis I to refrain from pursuing the Alemanni into his territory. This suggests that King Theoderic expected Clovis I to defeat Alaric II and therefore did not want to provoke his ire.

Despite the interpersonal relationships of rulers throughout Late Antique Gaul and Italy, "the Battle of Vouille was the opening military encounter of a campaign that some have seen as orchestrated by [Clovis I] to destroy the Visigothic kingdoms in Aquitaine and to conquer the southwestern quadrant of Gaul."[52] Most importantly, it marked the first appearance of an official "Nicene Christian Frankish Kingdom" and its actions toward routing-out Gothic Arianism in the Western Roman Empire. However, it remains unclear how active the Church's role was—if any—in Clovis I's mission to unify Gaul into Francia aside from its implicit support. While St. Gregory tells us that Clovis I had a sudden surplus of gold and silver to give to his people that he attributes to Emperor Anastasius I in Constantinople, there is no explicit proof that either the Church or the Eastern Empire played a role in Clovis I's conquest of the Goths.[53] Clovis I's role as a "Nicene Christian conqueror," therefore, appears to have been assumed as a part of his conversion experience rather than decreed imperially or ecclesiastically.

However, it should be noted here that the aforementioned letter that Clovis I penned to the "bishops, lords and fathers worthy of an apostolic see" was a quasi-declaration of war. Indeed, his letter was not intended to be clandestine and word of its

contents eventually made its way to Alaric II who suspected that their "Loire treaty" was null-and-void. Following this, probably in late-February A.D. 507, Clovis I marched his troops south from his capital at Paris while Alaric II marched his troops north from Toulouse.[54] While St. Gregory would have us believe that this battle was a "Catholic crusade against Arianism," there is no evidence to suggest such an anachronistic interpretation. Nevertheless, St. Gregory quotes Clovis I: "I find it hard to go on seeing these Arians occupy part of Gaul. With Gods help let us invade them. When we have beaten them, we will take over their territory."[55] Also, St. Gregory invokes the name of St. Martin (A.D. 316–397), a soldier-turned-monk that was the patron saint of Tours presumably to connect Clovis I to his "sacred memory."

St. Gregory tells us of the battle itself: "Some of the soldiers hurled their javelins from a distance, others fought hand to hand. The Goths fled, as they were prone to do, and Clovis was the victor, for God was on his side."[56] Indeed, he proves his claim that "God was on his side" by telling us that his leather corselet saved his life by taking the brunt of a spear attack by Gothic soldiers wishing to avenge the death of their king.[57] Following his victory, Clovis I sent his son Theuderic (A.D. 484–534) throughout Rodez and Clermont to announce that they were now a part of Francia. Clovis I also raided Toulouse and Angouleme of all Alaric II's treasures. Clovis I's conquest of Gaul was thus complete in the wake of his victory at the Battle of Vouille, the moment "where France began." However, Clovis I's significance to Christian history does not end here. Indeed, the Frankish Church and the subsequent development of the *lex Salica* (law of the Salian Franks) would soon guarantee Francia's role in the expansion of Christendom.

Notes

[1] Cassiodorus, *Variae*, Translated by S.J.B. Barnish (Liverpool: University Press, 1992). II.41, 43. In a letter addressed to Clovis I, Theoderic I refers to himself as "your kindred."

[2] Avitus of Vienne, *Epistula 46*, Translated by Danuta Shanzer and Ian Wood (Liverpool: University Press, 2002), 368. Danuta Shanzer and Ian Wood believe that St. Avitus's use of "*acrimonia*" indicates his rhetoric by praising the intellect of King Clovis I. See: 364-365.

[3] See: Godefroid Kurth, *Saint Clotilda*, 33; Danuta Shanzer, *Vouille 507: Historiographical, Hagiographical and Diplomatic Reconsiderations and Fortuna*, 68-71.

[4] See: Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 41-45.

[5] Godefroid Kurth, *Saint Clotilda*, Translated by V.M. Crawford (London: Duckworth, 1898), 33.

[6] Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistolae*, Translated by W.D. Anderson (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1965), v.v, 180.

[7] Sidonius, *Epistolae*, VIII.III, P. 409. We know that he was referring to the Franks because he refers to a treaty between King Euric and King Clodio, which was between the Visigoths and the Merovingian Franks.

[8] See: Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, II.38, 154.

[9] Ralph W. Mathisen, "The Letters of Ruricius of Limoges," Found in: *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul: Revisiting the Sources* (London: Routledge, 2001), 112.

[10] Alaric II repelled Frankish incursions for nearly a decade until he fell at the Battle of Vouille in A.D. 507.

[11] Avitus of Vienne, *Epistula 46*. Translated by Danuta Shanzer and Ian Wood. (Liverpool: University Press, 2002). P. 369.

[12] Avitus of Vienne, *Epistula 46*, 370.

[13] Danuta Shanzer, "Vouille 507: Historiographical, Hagiographical and Diplomatic Reconsiderations and *Fortuna*, Found in *The Battle of Vouille, 507 CE Where France Began* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 68-71.

[14] See: St. Gregory, *The History of the Franks*, II.28, 141.

[15] Danuta Shanzer and Ian Wood, "Avitus of Vienne: The Historical Context," *Avitus of Vienne: Letters and Selected Prose* (Liverpool: University Press, 2002), 10-13.

[16] Cassiodorus, *Variae*, II.41, 43-44.

[17] Warren H. Carroll, *The Building of Christendom* (Front Royal: Christendom College Press, 1987), 135.

[18] St. Gregory of Tours, *Historiarum Francorum Libri X*, 31.

[19] See: St. Gregory, *History of the Franks*, II.37, 151-152; Sidonius, *Epistolae*, VIII.III, 408-409.

[20] St. Gregory, *History of the Franks*, II.27, 139-140.

[21] St. Gregory, *History of the Franks*, II.31, 144.

[22] Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 136.

[23] Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms: From 450 – 571*, (London: Longman, 1994), 43.

[24] Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, 42-45.

[25] King Huneric expelled all Nicene-Christian bishops from the island of Corsica in A.D. 484. His mass executions of those that refused is notorious among Christian legend in the Early Middle Ages.

[26] See: Jordanes, *Getica*, 13-16; Isidore of Seville, *History*, 72-75.

[27] Herwig Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and its Germanic Peoples*, Translated by Thomas Dunlap (Berkley: University Press, 1997), 200.

[28] R. Van Dam, "The Pirenne Thesis and Fifth-Century Gaul," Found in: *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?*, Edited by John Drinkwater and Hugh Elton (Cambridge: University Press, 1992), 322.

[29] Van Dam, "The Pirenne Thesis and Fifth-Century Gaul," 321.

[30] Isidore of Seville, *History*, 71-74, 34-37.

[31] Isidore of Seville, *History*, 72, 34.

[32] Baynes's criticism is noted in R. Van Dam' *The Pirenne Thesis and Fifth-Century Gaul*, 322.

[33] Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, II.29-II.31, 141-147

[34] Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, II.26, 141.

[35] See: Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms: From 450 – 571* (London: Longman, 1994), 41-51.

[36] Her brother Gundobad was afraid of Clovis I and therefore granted him full support, including the use of his men and other resources based in Northern Gaul.

[37] Isidore of Seville, *History of the Kings of the Goths, Vandals and Suevi*, Translated by Guido Donini and Gordon B. Ford, Jr. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), I.36, 18. Although St. Gregory refers to the "Battle of Poitiers," contemporary scholarship believes that he was actually referring to the "Battle of Vouille" that occurred in Poitiers in A.D. 507.

[38] Remigius of Rheims, "Letter of Bishop Remigius of Rheims to Clovis," Found in *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul: A Reader,* Translated by A.C. Murray (Toronto: University Press, 2008), 260-261.

[39] Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, Translated by William A. Jurgens (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1979), 14.28,102.

[40] Charlemagne and his Carolingians were the direct descendants of Clovis I's Merovingians. He was crowned the first "Holy Roman Emperor" on 25 December 800, thus finalizing the development of Christendom.

[41] St. Gregory of Tours, *This History of the Franks*, II. 29-30, 143-145.

[42] Remigius of Rheims, *Letter to King Clovis on the Death of His Sister*, Translated by Alexander Callander Murray (Toronto: University Press, 2008), 263-264.

[43] Clovis of the Franks, *Letter of Clovis to Aquitanian Bishops on the King's Peace and Apostolic Letters*, Translated by Alexander Callander Murray (Toronto: University Press, 2008), 267-268.

[44] Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, II.9, 123-125.

[45] Such "decisive battles" are "the Battle of Milvian Bridge" in A.D. 312 where Constantine defeated Maxentius for control of the Roman Empire or "the Battle or Tours" in A.D. 732 where Charles Martel repulsed a great Arab invasion.

[46] Bernard Bachrach, "Vouille and the Decisive Battle Phenomenon in Late Antique Gaul," Found in *The Battle of Vouille, 507 CE Where France Began*, Edited by Ralph W. Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer (Boston: de Gruyter, 2012), 14.

[47] Referring to the logical fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, which means literally "after this, therefore, because of this."

[48] Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, II.35, 150.

[49] Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Translated by H.B. Dewing (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1919), v.xxi. 22-28, 125.

[50] Avitus of Vienne, *Epistula 79*, Translated by Danuta Shanzer and Ian Wood (Liverpool: University Press, 2002), 237.

[51] Cassiodorus, *Variae*, II.41, 43.

[52] Bernard Bachrach, *Vouille and the Decisive Battle Phenomenon*, 22.

[53] Cf. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, II.38, 154.

[54] Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, II.36, 151.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, II.37, 153.

[57] Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

THE EFFECTS OF CLOVIS I'S CONVERSION, THE FIRST COUNCIL OF ORLEANS AND THE FRANKISH CHURCH

Introduction

The polity of the Western Roman Empire changed dramatically upon Clovis I's conversion to Nicene Christianity in A.D. 496. Christians in Italy and Gaul were now divided between two factions with rival militaries: the Gallo-Roman Nicenes and the Gothic Semi-Arians. The former, which were the holdouts of imperial Rome and always held a religious majority, were now supported by the Franks. The latter, which held political and social control through force for nearly a century, were supported by the Ostrogoth Theoderic in Italy. In this sense, Clovis I's conversion marked a paradigm shift that gave to the religious majority social and political structures capable of competing with the Gothic lords of Italy and Gaul. In creating these new structures, Clovis I tied his kingdom to the "legends" of St. Hilary of Poitiers (A.D. 310–368) and St. Martin of Tours (A.D. 316–397), which were remembered for combating Arianism in the fourth century. By associating his reign with these "heroes of Gaul," Clovis I bound his conquest to the "liberation" of Nicene Christians from Arian-Gothic rule throughout the Western Roman Empire.

But the extent to which Clovis I and his Franks actually conceived of themselves as "Gallo-Roman Nicene Christians" is unclear. Despite Clovis I's lofty ambitions of reconstituting imperial Rome following his conversion and baptism, Merovingian Gaul remained a mixture of Nicene Christians, Semi-Arian Christians and pagans. As noted in Chapter III, St. Gregory's account that more than three-thousand Franks followed in their

king's footsteps by being baptized most likely referred to his war chieftains and lieutenants rather than the "Frankish people." British historian J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (A.D. 1916–1985) notes that "The Frankish notables, and they were counts before they were bishops and abbots, had become Christian long before their humbler followers."[1] Given this more reasonable assumption about the conversion of the Frankish people, we can conclude that Clovis I and his "notables" converted long before the actual Frankish people rejected their tribal religion. This tells us that Frankish support of the Nicene bishops in Gaul and Italy relied primarily on strength through force rather than the conversion *en masse* of all regions under Frankish control. This is certainly more likely because the regions that fell to Clovis I's conquest—e.g., Aquitaine, Toulouse, Poitiers and Vienne—remained a hodgepodge of Nicenes, Semi-Arians and pagans.

Moreover, Clovis I's conversion and its relation to Nicene Christianity's newfound cry for "liberation" appear linked in the descriptions of the chroniclers. For example, St. Avitus of Vienne explicitly links the two in his *Epistula 46* by saying: "Or perhaps I should preach the sense of pity that a people, *up till recently captive, once released by you*, its joy conveys to the world and by its tears to God (emphasis added)."[2] Considering the language and subtext conveyed by St. Avitus's use of the Latin *captivitas* ("captivity" or "bondage") in the context of Christian studies, we can conclude that St. Avitus was referring to the Franks and other Gallo-Roman Christians held "captive" by the Semi-Arian Goths.[3] Thus, Clovis I's conversion and baptism were viewed through the lens of "freeing" Gallo-Roman Nicene Christians from the "bondage" of the Arian Goths.

Given this social and political setting, King Clovis I and his Frankish court adopted a "Nicene Christian identity" amid the theological and cultural uncertainty throughout both "halves" of the Roman Empire. St. Gregory tells us that following his conversion, the king said to a church official: "I find it hard to go on seeing these Arians occupy a part of Gaul. With God's help let us invade them. When we have beaten them, we will take over their territory."[4] Although St. Gregory's account seems to be more of a panegyric, we are not limited solely to his testimony in this instance. We can look to Clovis I's only recorded *epistula*, which is dated to the eve of the Battle of Vouille and addressed to "Aquitanian Bishops." In it, Clovis I's tone suggests that the Nicene bishops of Aquitaine already understood his motivation for "invading the homeland of the Goths."[5] He also concludes his *epistula* with the observation that "the capriciousness and lies of many have been discovered, so that one perceives the truth of the scriptural phrase, 'The righteous perishes with the unrighteous [Cf. Gen 18:23].'"[6] These two accounts, when taken together, suggest that Clovis I considered the Semi-Arian Goths as "clear and present dangers" to his new Frankish kingdom. However, the extent to which his considerations at this time were related to theological or ecclesial loyalties remains unclear. Therefore, we can conclude that Clovis I's desire to conquer the Western Roman Empire ran parallel to and often complemented the "Nicene Church's" goals but did not necessarily collaborate intimately in all things.

An example of an occasion on which Clovis I collaborated intimately with the Church was the First Council of Orleans, which convened on 10 July 511. In very much the same way that Constantine I was involved with the First Council of Nicaea, Clovis I

reportedly convoked this council to forge a stronger relationship with the Nicene episcopate.[7] However, we should also note that there are two competing theories to explain Clovis I's motivations for reconciling his Salic law with ecclesiastical law. On one hand, J.M. Wallace-Hadrill points out that if Clovis I had truly intended for a meaningful relationship with the Church he would have sought the council immediately after the Battle of Vouille in A.D. 507.[8] Yet he waited three years and apparently convoked it when Francia faced practical problems such as:

> The right of asylum, royal permission for ordinations, the uses to which royal largesse to churches may be put, the frequenting of the royal court by clerics with favors to ask, the ordination of slaves, the appropriation of Arian churches taken from the Goths and the employment of their ministers.[9]

But the action of convoking a council tells us that, although Clovis I was a king in his own right, he accepted Rome's moral ascendency over Gaul.[10] This suggests that he intended on aligning his kingdom explicitly with the Church and even accepted a subordinate role to it. This conclusion is bolstered by the king's acceptance of the council's canons, which were attempts to reconcile Frankish law or the *Lex Salica Emendata* (LSE) with ecclesiastical law. Given that the LSE was among the prevailing Merovingian law codes in the fifth and sixth centuries, its adaptation or fusion into Christian law represents one of Clovis I's chief accomplishments following his conversion.[11]

The Immediate and Long-Term Effects of Clovis I's Conversion

THE IMMEDIATE EFFECTS

There were three immediate effects of Clovis I's conversion to Nicene Christianity. Firstly, it created a new paradigm for the pagan Franks; secondly, it allowed Nicene Christianity to compete with the Arian-Gothic establishment; and thirdly, it solidified Clovis I as a threat to neighboring kingdoms. In regard to the former, Clovis I's conversion created a new paradigm that sought to hasten the transition of his Franks from their pagan ancestor worship to Christianity. This new paradigm found in the Gallic "legends" of Sts. Martin and Hilary a new identity predicated on the Christian virtue of *sanctitas*, or "integrity" and "purity."[12] With this new approach to Nicene Christianity, Clovis I sought what he considered to be its reintegration to the Western Roman Empire. Where the sectarianism of Semi-Arian successor kingdoms had once diminished the empire's influence on its peripheries, Clovis I's now took strides toward reasserting its dominance.

As for the first two immediate effects, Clovis I's Frankish kingdom was bolstered by the Nicene bishops within his kingdom of Francia, which after A.D. 496 was the Neustria region of Paris, Orleans, Tours and Soissons.[13] He also garnered the support of influential Nicene bishops within Armorica, which added to his kingdom the cities between the Seine and the Loire (Western Gaul) that had declared themselves free of Roman occupation nearly a century earlier. With their support, Clovis I reintegrated Armorica to Western-Roman rule in A.D. 497 by offering it peace without war contingent upon its submission.[14] The acquiescence of an autonomous region, that is a region outside the Roman Empire, suggests that Clovis I's prowess as a conqueror was widely-known by the early sixth century. It also demonstrates that Nicene bishops

possessed great influence within their bishoprics despite the hegemony of Gothic Semi-Arians. Moreover, forging partnerships with these powerful bishops positioned Clovis I to integrate his Franks into the Nicene-Christian subculture that apparently ruled Armorica. This hastened a paradigm shift whereby his Franks, who were secure in the lore of their ancestors and gods, were planted into the very culture that their king had adopted. Given the assumption that converting a king would inevitably convert his subjects, which eventually proved true in this instance, Clovis I effectively entrusted the destinies of two groups to his conquest.

As for the third immediate effect, Clovis I advanced his conquest by turning his attention to the Burgundians under kings Gundobad and Godegisel (St. Clotilda's uncles) whose kingdoms stretched from the Rhone to Marseilles. With a touch of intrigue, St. Gregory tells us that King Godegisel sent word to Clovis I that he would be willing to pay tribute to the Frankish king if he helped him defeat his brother. He records Godegisel's letter: "If you help me to attack my brother so that I can kill him in battle or drive him out of his territory, I will pay you an annual tribute which you may care to exact."[15] St. Gregory then tells us that all three kings marched into battle until Godegisel's army suddenly joined forces with the Franks and routed his brother's host. Gundobad retreated to Avignon while Godegisel relinquished half of his kingdom to Clovis I with the exception of Vienne.[16] Having taken the field without much resistance, Clovis I and his host marched toward Avignon to defeat Gundobad (the uncle that murdered St. Clotilda's parents). But Clovis I and his Franks were unfamiliar with siege warfare and grew weary during their encampment outside the city's walls. It was not until

a defector from Gundobad's court suggested that the Franks should retire from the field and exact a tribute from Gundobad did they return to Francia. Fearing Clovis I's army, the Burgundian king in Avignon had no choice but to pay the tribute.[17]

THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS

There were two long-term effects of Clovis I's conversion to Nicene Christianity. Firstly, Francia eventually became synonymous with Gallo-Roman Christianity; and secondly, Clovis I's successors expanded its borders by evangelizing Britania, Ireland and Scotland by the time of Charlemagne. The first long-term effect started developing during the waning years of Clovis I's lifetime, which can be illustrated by his role in the First Council of Orleans in A.D. 511. His intent is described by the tone of the conciliar letter and its attached canons, which are addressed to "Their lord the most glorious king Clovis, son of the Catholic church, greetings from all the bishops whom you have ordered to attend the council [sic]."[18] Its language also lends credence to this conclusion given its directness:

> Concern for the glorious faith so impels you to improve the Catholic religion that you have ordered the bishops to assemble together in order to discuss the state of episcopal opinion as to what needs to be done. In accordance with the instructions of the agenda (*tituli*) that you supplied, we are reporting precisely what we think is the best action to take. If in your judgement what we have decided seems correct, may the agreements of so great a king and lord sanction with even greater authority the implementation of the decision of so many bishops.[19]

In noticing both the humble and gracious undertones of this letter, we find that the conciliar fathers sought to reconcile the *Lex Salica*, or the Law code of the Salian Franks, with Roman and Christian laws. This conclusion is also bolstered by the lengths to which the council sought to fit its canons into a very "Merovingian frame."

The *Lex Salica Emendata* and the Canons of the First Council of Orleans

The *Lex Salica Emendata* (LSE) is relevant to the study of Clovis I's legacy because it was replaced by the *Canons of the Council of Orleans* (CCO) in A.D. 511. While the word "*lex*" is imprecise linguistically, it refers generally to the law codes of "barbarian" kingdoms that sought to mirror Roman law.[20] It is imprecise because the exact etymology of the word itself is often attributed to either the Old Norse *lög* ("to put in order") or the Latin *legere* ("to read").[21] This conundrum can be demonstrated by contrasting the imprecise *lex* with the precise *codex* (tablet or ledger) used in formal Roman jurisprudence.[22] For example, the *Codex Theodosianus* (Theodosian Code or Law) refers to a specific collection of parchments bound into a book as opposed to the *Lex Salica Emendata* that refers to a general collection of Roman laws.[23] The difference is perhaps best illustrated by the tradition whereby the original *Lex Salica* is often misattributed to Clovis I despite its recorded use from the mid-fourth century.[24] It is more likely that a redaction of the *Lex Salica*, which is an edited or revised edition (*emendata*), was used by Clovis I as a template when he reconciled it with ecclesiastical laws or canons.

Moreover, the CCO contain some stark differences to the Merovingian LSE both in the language of the laws and in the penalties ascribed to breaking them. For example, notice the nondescript language whereby the LSE describes the crime of homicide and its penalty: "If someone is proven to have killed a free Frank or barbarian who is living by the Salic law, let the offender be judged liable for 8000 denarii, which amounts to 200

solidi."[25] Contrast its language and economic penalty with the CCO's explicit references to the "rights" of killers, ecclesiastical jurisdiction and extenuating circumstances:

> Regarding homicides…who take refuge in a church, we have decided that what the ecclesiastical canons decreed and the Roman law established on these matters must be followed: namely that such people may in no way be dragged from the atriums of churches, or from the manse of the church or bishop. They are not to be surrendered except on condition that oaths are taken on the gospels preserving them from death, mutilation and every kind of [afflictive] penalty, and provided that the criminal agrees to pay compensation to the person to whom he is liable [sic].[26]

The descriptive language of the CCO's *Canon I* suggests that it is derived from the need to uphold three fundamental obligations: to the law itself, the dignity of the criminal and the jurisdiction of the Church. Hence, Clovis I sought to adapt his Frankish kingdom to the evidently more humane and ecclesiastically-centered precedents of Christian Rome.

Clovis I's willingness to assent to the Church's "rights" tells us that, even though he waited three years after the Battle of Vouille until practical issues festered, his intentions were not to supersede the Church. Given the exorbitant amount of *epistolae* sent to secular leaders in protest of their interference in Church governance throughout the past few centuries, we would expect to find similar *epistolae* if the Church thought Clovis I's intentions to be similar in nature.[27] Yet, the records we do have from bishops like St. Avitus and St. Remigius demonstrate Clovis I's sincerity in both preserving the Church's autonomy and assenting to its authority (e.g., *Epistula 46*).

The reconciling of the LSE to the CCO also benefited the long-term relationship between future Frankish generations and the Church. As Wallace-Hadrill concludes: "The [LSE] has a practical purpose; it gathers together certain traditional Frankish practices…and adds to them other, more recent, practices that have to be accepted on

Roman soil…and all this matter is promulgated by the authority [of the Frankish king]."[28] In effect, Clovis I provided to the Church a law code by which his people wanted to be governed in a language that the Church could appreciate. Such a pursuit tells us that Clovis I was intent on fostering a permanent relationship with the Nicene churches of his bishops.

Moreover, Clovis I's efforts to "translate" his Frankish culture to his regional Nicene churches impacted the perceptions of the Gallo-Roman holdouts of imperial Rome. Rather than simply "replacing" the Western Roman Empire's *ethos* like General Odoacer's conquest that culminated in Rome being governed by its first *rex* in nearly a thousand years (A.D. 476), Clovis I proved that he was cut from a different cloth. By respecting the Western Empire's *Romanitas*, or its "Roman-ness," Clovis I positioned his successors to be accepted as an emperor, the likes of which had not been seen since Emperor Constantine I.

Notes

[1] J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 24.

[2] Avitus of Vienne, *Epistula 46*, Translated by Danuta Shanzer and Ian Wood (Liverpool: University Press, 2002), 372.

[3] Leo F. Stelten, *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin*, 10th edition revised and edited by Leo F. Stelten (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2013). s.v. *captivitas*, 36.; John C. Traupman, *Latin and English Dictionary*, 3rd edition revised and edited by John C. Traupman (Philadelphia: Bantam Books, 2007), s.v. *captivitas*, 88.

[4] Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, II.37, 151.

[5] King Clovis I, *Letter of Clovis to Aquitanian Bishops on the King's Peace and Apostolic Letters,* Translated by A.C. Murray (Toronto: University Press, 2008), 9.42, 267-268.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Council of Orleans, *Letter of the Bishops of the Council of Orleans to Clovis*, Translated by A.C. Murray (Toronto: University Press, 2008), 268.

[8] J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings* (Toronto: University Press, 1982), 177.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings*, 176.

[11] The LSE was the law code for the Salian Franks, a tribe of which Clovis I was a part. There were also the "Breviary of Alaric," the "Burgundian Code" and the "Ribvarian Law" among others.

[12] Wallace-Hadrill notes that the transition from Frankish *fortuna* such as sacrifices to the gods to the Christian virtues of *sanctitas* was based on the "cult of St. Martin." See: J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford: University Press, 2001), 26.

[13] Clovis I acquired these territories following his victory over Syagrius at the Battle of Soissons in A.D. 486. They became his base of operations for his unification of "Francia."

[14] Lewis Sergeant. *The Franks*, 1222 (E-Edition). The annexation of Armorica also ended its near-century of autonomy from Roman control following the Gothic sack of Rome in A.D. 410.

[15] St. Gregory, *History of the Franks*, II.32, 145.

[16] St. Gregory, *History of the Franks*, II.32, 146-147.

[17] St. Gregory, *History of the Franks*, II.32, 147-168.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] A.C. Murray, "The Salic Law (Lex Salica)," Found in: *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul: A Reader*, Edited and translated by Alexander Callander Murray (Toronto: University Press, 2000), 533-534.

[21] Alphonse Van Hove, "Lex," Found in: *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 9 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), Accessed on 10 March 2018 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09207b.htm>

[22] Leo F. Stelten, *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin*, 10th edition revised and edited by Leo F. Stelten (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2013), s.v. *codex*, 44.; John C. Traupman, *Latin and English Dictionary*, 3rd edition revised and edited by John C. Traupman (Philadelphia: Bantam Books, 2007), s.v. *codex*, 101.

[23] Van Hove, "Lex," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*.

[24] A.C. Murray, "The Salic Law," 533.

[25] A.C. Murray, "Lex Salica Emendata: Homicides of Freemen," 535.

[26] A.C. Murray, "From the Council of Orleans," 569.

[27] Notably: Pope St. Leo I's *Epistolae* to Eastern Emperors Theodosius II and Marcian. See: Pope St. Leo I's *Letters*, found in: "Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers," edited by Philip Schaff (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2012), 12-25.

[28] Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings*, 180.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

The threat of the pagan Franks to the Arian-Gothic kingdoms of Rome began with Clovis I's acquisition of Northern Gaul. Following his defeat of Roman General Syagrius at the Battle of Soissons in A.D. 486, Clovis I established himself as a contender among the Gothic lords of Gaul and Rome. The Western Roman Empire was partitioned with the Franks in the north, the Visigoths in Aquitania, the Vandals in Spain, the Ostrogoths in Italy and the Burgundians in the southern Rhone valley.[1] St. Gregory notes that upon facing the threat of Frankish invasion, the Visigoth King Alaric II surrendered Syagrius to Clovis I for execution despite his pleas for asylum.[2] Having cowed out of fear of invasion, Alaric II proved to the Gothic kingdoms of Gaul and Italy that Clovis I was a clear threat. Alaric II also earned a reputation as an "incompetent gambler," which most likely affected his failed alliance with Theoderic in Italy.[3] Following his political victory over Alaric II, Clovis I found himself ensconced in politics and practical issues concerning ecclesial jurisdiction.

Following his victory over the Visigothic king and the founding of a unified Francia, which ultimately benefited Nicene Christianity, the practicality of Clovis I's conversion becomes clear. Although we have no evidence to suggest that his conversion was purely political or insincere, the speed at which his kingdom flourished after the Battle of Vouille tells us that the support of the episcopate was vital to his success. Following his successes, Clovis I gained imperial allies in the Eastern Roman Empire for the task of containing Gothic Semi-Arianism.[4] There is also evidence to suggest that

Clovis I adopted an "imperial persona" in dedicating his new Parisian church to the apostles, which also showed deference to Roman Christianity. Such relationships confirm for us what the chroniclers St. Avitus of Vienne and St. Remigius of Rheims recorded in the sixth century: that Clovis I conversion to Nicene Christianity was sincere.

In regard to Francia's relation to the Western Roman Empire, Clovis I's reign coincided with the brief pontificates of Gelasius I (d. 496) and Anastasius II (d. 498), which are remembered for their efforts toward achieving theological unity. Given the different theologies of the godhead (*homoousia* and *homoiousia*) that divided the Nicenes and Semi-Arians discussed in chapter two, suggestions for a *via media* (middle way) dominated ecclesial discourse at the close of the fifth century and into the sixth. The two aforementioned pontiffs presided over an epoch that witnessed the collision of competing interpretations of the godhead and various attempts at reconciliation. Regarding these attempts at reconciliation, we have a fragmented "Decretal Letter" that combines the promulgations of Gelasius and Anastasius II on matters such as the authority of the Councils of Nicaea (A.D. 325) and Chalcedon (A.D. 451).[5]

These promulgations are relevant to Clovis I because they depict the late-fifth century Roman See's desire to reiterate what it considered to be orthodox theology while accusing the Eastern Empire of advocating for "heresy."[6] Examples of such "heresy" (among Gothic Semi-Arianism), according to the decretal, was the Christology that was known as *Monophysitism* (one divine nature) that some regions of the Eastern Roman Empire adopted while rejecting Chalcedon (A.D. 451). The regions of Palestine and Egypt effectively rejected the council's definition that there are "two natures in Christ,"

which garnered imperial support from Emperor Anastasius I (d. 518 A.D.).[7] However, the Christological controversies regarding Christ's nature were secondary to the real issue at hand, which was a struggle for supremacy between the Roman and Constantinopolitan Sees.[8] This was not a new conflict but it reached an apex at the Council of Chalcedon when Pope St. Leo I refused to confirm that the See of Constantinople was "equal in dignity" to the See of Rome.[9] Given the complexities of this issue, it is important to simply accept that the "Frankish Nicene Church" was more like the "church of Pope St. Leo I" than it was the "church of Eastern Emperor Anastasius I."

Given the two primary theories that seek to explain Clovis I's conversion, the "conscious theory" and the "accidental theory," we can conclude that the former is the most likely of the two. Indeed, through examining all the pertinent evidence such as ecclesial letters and the chroniclers' histories we find that the evidence supports the "conscious theory." This evidence also reinforces the traditions that have come down to us. We can therefore conclude that Clovis I's conversion was conscious and intentional. This conclusion is bolstered by what the natural consequence of Clovis I's decision required of him, which was the wholesale repudiation of his familial alliances that would have easily provided him entrance into the Arian-Gothic kingdoms of Gaul and Italy. When coupled with the rejection of his "national pride," we can see that his conversion to Nicene Christianity explicitly rejected the Semi-Arian Christianity of his kin and allies. Thus, his decision to adopt Nicene Christianity and his eagerness to adapt his Frankish culture to the Nicene culture representative of the Gallic bishops within Francia tells us that his conversion was conscious and intentional.

This conscious decision to adopt Nicene Christianity proved to be a "turning point" in Late Antique Gaul because Clovis I's Frankish kingdom disrupted the Arian-Gothic hegemony that had divided the Western Roman Empire for nearly a century. Prior to the Battle of Vouille, Gaul was partitioned with Alaric II in Aquitania, the "independent" regions of Armorica and the two Burgundian kingdoms under Gundobad and Godegisel. To the immediate east, the Ostrogoth Theoderic reigned over his Kingdom of Italy that reached the shores of the Mediterranean while the Eastern Roman Emperor Anastasius II was "flirting" with Semi-Arianism and Monophysitism. Thus, we see that the entire Roman Empire was fragmented across cultural and religious lines at the time of Clovis I's ascension. But this all changed in the wake of the Battle of Vouille and Clovis I's baptism because he consolidated all Gaul into his kingdom. This "Kingdom of Francia" once again provided the imperial Gallo-Roman Nicene holdouts a voice following nearly a century of suppression.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The conversion of the Frankish king Clovis I to Nicene Christianity in A.D. 496 set in motion the factors that helped shape the modern world. Though his role may appear minor in the vastness of world history, there would have been no Charlemagne and no Holy Roman Empire to preserve the ideals that came to fruition in Christendom without the foundations built by the Kingdom of Francia. Its unique role in evangelizing what would become wider Europe—namely Britania, Ireland and Scotland—was hastened by Clovis I's conversion to Nicene Christianity. Though Clovis I and his successors often faltered under the weight of wealth and worldliness, like so many kingdoms have before,

the eventual conversion of the Frankish people guaranteed the survival of Western-Roman Nicene culture. For good or ill, its survival also guaranteed the transmission of Christian tradition that served as a keystone for the next millennium.

Notes

[1] Ralph W. Mathisen, "The First Franco-Visigothic War and the Prelude to the Battle of Vouille," Found in *The Battle of Vouille, 507 CE Where France Began*, Edited by Danuta Shanzer and Ralph W. Mathisen (Boston, de Gruyter, 2012), 3.

[2] Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, II.27, 139-140.

[3] Herwig Wolfram, *The Goths*, 243.

[4] Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 25-26.

[5] Its fragments were most likely compiled by an ecclesiastical clerk in Gaul at the end of the sixth century.

[6] Heinrich Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions and Declarations on Matter of Faith and Morals*, Edited by Peter Hunermann and Anne England Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 317-318, 114-115.; See Also: Herwig Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and its Germanic People* (Los Angeles: University Press, 1990), 206-210.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Herwig Wolfram, *The Roman Empire*, 206.

[9] Leo the Great, "Epistles XLIII-XLIV," Found in: *The Church Fathers – Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Translated by Charles Lett Feltoe (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2012), 52-53.

APPENDIX I

The Teutonic Tribes

An Introduction to the Goths

The Goths are among the chief Teutonic emigrants whose impact on the course of history is incalculable. They crossed the river Danube in the summer of A.D. 376 thus marking their emigration into the North-Eastern Roman Empire from Germania and the Baltic. There appears to be two causes for this exodus. The first is the turbulent socio-political struggle that followed the death of two of their kings.[1] The second is that they sought asylum from the continued encroachment of Hunnic invaders from north of the Black Sea.[2]

Despite the imminent political turbulence on the Roman horizon, the Gothic exodus toward Rome proved fateful. They sought to retain their ethnic identities—e.g., the Tervingi or "Visigoths" as "forest people" and the Greutungi or "Ostrogoths" as "steppe and grass people"—while also becoming "Romanized."[3] The evolution from "barbarian" to *Romani Gothici* (Gothic Romans) also influenced Christian history.[4] Eventually, the fifth century culminated in the Gothic expansion into Rome (ca. 401 A.D.), Emperor Honorius's retreat to Ravenna (A.D. 405), the sacking of Rome (A.D. 410) and the crowning of a Visigothic "King of Italy" (A.D. 476). Most importantly however, it witnessed the emergence of the Goths as a quasi-theological rival of Rome and Nicene Christianity.

THE VISIGOTHIC-TERVINGI

The Visigoths (*Vesi* in the Latin) were a conglomeration of tribes from north of the Danube that split from the Thervingians (*Tervingi* in the Latin) in the fourth century. They most likely migrated from the island of Scandza in the mid-third century, which was a Romanized name for Scandinavia.[5] Their encroachment toward the Black Sea to escape famine, disease and the threat posed by the Huns may explain their migration toward the Roman Empire.[6] Upon landing near the Black Sea, Visigothic raids into the empire's peripheries became common. Despite such forays into their territory, the Romans achieved an amicable relationship with the Visigothic invaders that lasted into the mid-fourth century.[7] However, the continued encroachment of the Huns from the Asiatic steppes into the Balkans necessitated a new arrangement with their Roman hosts. The Thervingian chieftains—Alaviv (d. 377 A.D.), Fritigern (d. 380 A.D.) and Athanaric (d. 381 A.D.)—negotiated formal admittance into the Roman Empire for a substantial number of their tribesmen.[8] They most likely crossed the Danube at Durostorum Silistra (modern Bulgaria) in early A.D. 376.[9] However, their presence was ill-received presumably due to their "barbarity." This impression was reinforced by the Gothic ransacking of villages throughout Thrace (the modern Balkans, Aegean and Black Sea).[10]

While feigning interest in negotiating for peace, the Tervingi were planning to settle in Thrace.[11] They courted Emperor Valens under the pretense of acquiescing to his demands but positioned themselves to garrison their imminent land grant. For Fritigern, the survival of his people was worth the cost of conflict with the Eastern Roman Empire. He willingly negotiated a treaty with Emperor Valens for the sake of defeating Athanaric,

a rival commander of another confederation of Tervingi.[12] This rivalry is quite relevant because Emperor Valens negotiated two separate deals with Fritigern and Athanaric.[13]

However, Emperor Valens appeared to have hidden motives for allowing the Tervingi entrance into his empire. He offered admittance under the pretense of altruism but secretly viewed the Goths as potential soldiers for his war with Persia.[14] Hence, their admittance into the empire came at a steep cost, for they were conscripted as Roman *foederati*, were expected to fight the Persians and were ordered to "keep the peace" throughout the peripheries.[15] The Eastern Empire's consistory also forced them to pay exorbitant amounts in taxes in lieu of serving in the legions as well as steep levies on simple goods.[16]

The best source of information regarding the Goths' entrance into the Roman Empire was Ammianus Marcellinus (A.D. 330–400). He records in his *History* that Alaviv's envoys to Emperor Valens delivered the message "*suscipi se humili prece poscebant, et quiete victuros se pollicentes, et daturos (di res flagitasset) auxilia*" or "[They approached Valens] with humble entreaty begged to be received, promising that they would not only lead a peaceful life but would also furnish auxiliaries if the circumstances required."[17] Hence, it appears that Alaviv's appeal for entrance came with a certain implicit amenability (*se humili*) for Emperor Valens's terms.

Subsequently, Fritigern acquiesced to the emperor's demands and garrisoned his Tervingi around the Danube to prevent other Gothic tribes from entering the empire. Most notably, Fritigern was ordered to the Muntenia (modern Romania) to prevent a considerable force of Greutungi Goths from entering the empire.[18] Since the Greutungi

originated from the same tribal region as the Tervingi, Fritigern was well-acquainted with their commanders, Alatheus (d. 387 A.D.) and Saphrax (d. 400 A.D.).[19] However, these commanders avoided the Tervingi host by landing as far from Fritigern's as possible. Thus, the Greutungi entered the empire unchallenged and marched toward Marcianople in Thrace (modern Bulgaria) in A.D. 378.

Marcianople was garrisoned by the Lupicinus (d. 378 A.D.), a lieutenant of Emperor Valens. To avoid an urban battle, Lupicinus invited Fritigern and Alaviv of the Tervingi and Alatheus and Saphrax of the Greutungi to a formal parlay.[20] However, this event is recorded as a key precipitating event that culminated in the Battle of Adrianople and the subsequent Gothic War.[21] The formal parlay devolved quickly into chaos between the two sets of commanders. Rather than seeking an amicable resolution, Lupicinus ordered his men to cut-down the Goths regardless of Fritigern's treaty with Emperor Valens.[22] This action hastened a widespread Gothic rebellion, which empowered Fritigern's consolidation of his command.

Thus, the *détente* between Emperor Valens and Fritigern devolved into open rebellion. Fritigern's Tervingi became social "heroes" and were joined by "Thracian miners, overtaxed Roman underclasses and Gothic-barbarian slaves."[23] Simultaneously, an entire unit of *foederati* joined Fritigern's rebellion in protest of poor treatment.[24] Its commanders—Colias (died ca. 378 A.D.) and Sueridus (died ca. 378 A.D.)—joined Fritigern's host at Adrianople and sought to aid in routing Emperor Valens's legions. Subsequently, Alatheus—who also survived Lupicinus's hasty onslaught—joined forces with Fritigern's host. Their overwhelming defeat of Emperor Valens led to more than

twenty years of lawful and lawless settlements around the Roman-Balkans.[25] The Greutungi continued raiding in Thrace and Moesia (south of the Danube) while Fritigern and his Tervingi sought some measure of assimilation into eastern culture but continued raiding the peripheries.

Despite such developments, the following year was not kind to Fritigern and his raiding parties. Emperor Gratian (A.D. 359–383) now ruled over virtually the entire Roman Empire. He was the young nephew of the Eastern Emperor Valens, who implored his uncle to avoid a pitched battle with the Goths. Despite his family's misfortune at Adrianople, Emperor Gratian supported vociferously Nicene Christianity, which was characterized by allegiance to the Bishops of Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. Given that he still needed an eastern *imperator*, he recalled General Theodosius (A.D. 347–395) from Spain and invested him with the control over the eastern empire.[26] It is important to note that he was also a Nicene Christian, thus reinforcing the effects his campaigns had on the Goths' developing notions of Christianity.

Moreover, the ascension of Theodosius I on 19 January 379 as "the friend of peace and of the Gothic people" ushered in a new era of relations.[27] Upon becoming the eastern emperor, he recruited various Gothic soldiers into his legions. An army of these *foederati* commanded by the Gothic general Modaharius (d. 415 A.D.) defeated a substantial column of Fritigern's forces the same year.[28] Such a defeat was quite apropos, for Modaharius belonged to the same Tervingi clan as Athanaric.[29] Thus, defeating Fritigern provided some measure of "justice" in the minds of Modaharius and his kinsmen.

Theodosius I's apparent triumph over the "heroes" of Adrianople was short-lived. The three main chieftains—Fritigern, Alatheus and Saphrax—forged an alliance in the summer of A.D. 380.[30] While Fritigern marched toward Thessaly, Epirus and Achaea, Alatheus and Saphrax marched on Pannonia (modern Hungary).[31] Realizing that there would be no peace through force, Emperors Gratian and Theodosius I sought a diplomatic resolution. They offered to make Alatheus and Saphrax's Greutungi permanent "federates" of the empire. Along with this new legal status came land grants in Pannonia Secunda (modern Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia) and Pannonia Valeria (modern Hungary and Croatia).[32]

While Gratian and Theodosius I sought the placation of the Greutungi, Fritigern led his Tervingi host along the Danube toward Macedonia. In response to raiding in Thessaly, Emperor Gratian sent a substantial force to heed Theodosius I's call for aid.[33] Gratian placed two Frankish generals in command of his force, Flavius Bauto (died c. 385) and Flavius Arbogast (A.D. 340–394). They joined Theodosius I's beleaguered troops and pressed their advantage, ultimately routing Fritigern's remaining forces. Gratian's troops thus forced Fritigern to retreat to Moesia (modern Balkans), which was the region from where they started the campaign.[34]

THE OSTROGOTHIC-GREUTUNGI

The Greutungi originated in the same tribal region as the Tervingi. However, the death of King Hermanaric (d. 375–376 A.D.) precipitated their separation from the Tervingi.[35] Following the king's death, the Tervingi departed *en masse* thus making the Greutungi its own people. This departure left the Greutungi susceptible to Hunnic

conquest, which devastated them continually. Although the Greutungi retained some measure of autonomy, King Vinitharius (died ca. 376 A.D.) was isolated and ultimately defeated by King Balamber (r. 370–376 A.D.) of the Huns. Thus, the Ostrogothic-Greutungi faced different struggles than their Visigothic-Tervingi kinsman. Despite such differences, both tribes would eventually reject Roman-Nicene Christianity.

Moreover, such treatment was certainly nothing new for the Teutonic tribes. The decades preceding the Hunnic advance into Germania and the Baltic were characterized by Roman interference. To curb the tide of Teutonic evolution and growth, Emperor Constantius II (A.D. 317 – 361) ordered the harassment and raiding of Teutonic settlements. While such brutality may been matter of course in the Roman context, it certainly hastened Teutonic resentment of Rome.[36] The imminent threat of Hunnic conquest necessitated action by the Ostrogoths rather than diplomacy as in the case of the Tervingi. The Greutungi appeared to have no interest in negotiating with Emperor Valens, which was the same emperor that slaughtered their kinsman along the Danube.[37]

Following the events of Adrianople, the Greutungi settled in Pannonia Secunda (modern Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia) and Pannonia Valeria (modern Hungary and Croatia).[38] During this period the Greutungi came to be known as "Austrogothi," or "Ostrogoths" by Roman poets and panegyrists such as Claudius (ca. 370 A.D. – 404).[39] This distinction from the other Goths is notable, as the Ostrogoths faced vastly different trials than their regional kin. They were forced to adopt Hunnic customs and social structures under the reign of Uldin (ca. 400 A.D.).[40] This antecedent history did not bode well for relations with the Roman Empire. The Ostrogothic chieftain Odotheus (d. 387

A.D.) revolted from his Roman hosts in A.D. 386 and attempted to cross the lower Danube into Dobroudja (modern Bulgaria and Romania).[41]

Notes

[1] Peter Heather, *The Goths* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 1.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Herwig Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and its Germanic Peoples* (Los Angeles: University Press, 1990), Cf. 69.

[4] "*Romani Gothici*" refers to "Romanized Goths," or "Gothic Romans."

[5] Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms: 450-751* (London: Longman, 1994), 6.

[6] Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 119.

[7] Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms: 450-751*, 6.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms: 450-751*, 7.

[10] Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 120.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 119.

[13] Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, Cf. 118-119; 130-131.

[14] Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 118.

[15] The *foederati*, or "federate soldiers," refers to non-Roman "barbarians" that were allowed entrance and settlement within the Roman Empire.

[16] Herwig Wolfram, Cf. 118-119.

[17] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History: XXXI,* 4.1, Preserved by the Loeb Classical Library, Translated by John C. Rolfe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), 401.

[18] Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 118.

[19] Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 119.

[20] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History: XXXI*, 4.1-5.6.

[21] Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 120.

[22] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History: XXXI*, 4.1-5.6.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms: 450-751*, Cf. 5-8.

[26] Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 131.

[27] Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 130-131.

[28] Ibid. *Foederati* referred to "barbarian" soldiers admitted into the Roman legions.

[29] Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 131.

[30] Ammianus Marcellinus, *History: XXXI*, 3.1.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 132.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Jordanes, *Getica*, Translated by Charles C. Marlow (Princeton: University Press, 1908), 77.

[36] Ibid.

[37] It is recorded by Claudius that Emperor Valens assassinated Teutonic leaders, which led to a pitched battle along the Danube. In the process of defeating the Teutons, Emperor Valens offered bounties for each "barbarian" head collected.

[38] Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, 132; Thomas Burns, *A History of the Ostrogoths*, Cf. 44.

[39] Thomas Burns, *A History of the Ostrogoths*, 44.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

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