From the perspective of a Nicene bishop living in the kingdom of Toulouse in the year 506, the future looked promising. In this year, King Alaric II had made some impressive strides toward demonstrating his worthiness as a successor to the Roman imperial government. Most significantly, he had sponsored the compilation of the *Lex Romana Visigothorum*, or *Breviarium Alarici*, by Gallo-Roman jurists and permitted the convocation of a church council in the civitas of Agde for the month of September. The twenty-four bishops and ten clerical representatives who attended Alaric’s synod made no effort to conceal the Arian king’s role in its convocation and boldly announced in their canonical acts that they had gathered together “with the permission of our most glorious and magnificent and pious lord king.” This was possibly not the first time Alaric had shown an interest in the conciliar activities of his Nicene subjects, and it showed no signs of being the last. In the months leading up to his fatal confrontation with Clovis, the king of the Salian Franks, in 507, Alaric had begun planning an even grander synod, one that would convocate bishops from both Gaul and Spain. He put the project in the hands of Eudomius, a *vir magnificus* from his court, who in turn involved Bishop Caesarius of Arles, who had presided over the Council of Agde and whose efforts at forging ecclesiastical unity in Gaul complemented the political aspirations of the king.

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4 Mathisen, “Second Council of Arles,” 511–54, suggests that Alaric was involved in the convocation of the so-called Second Council of Arles ca. 500.

Interestingly, the relations between the Visigothic king and the bishop of Arles had been strained prior to the Council of Agde by accusations of collusion with the Burgundians leveled against Caesarius by his own notarius, Licinianus. When Alaric learned of the accusations in 505, he ordered Caesarius to be exiled to Bordeaux. The exile proved short-lived, however, as Caesarius was recalled to Arles in 506, the year of the Council of Agde. The most likely explanation for Alaric’s swift change of mind was the upcoming council itself, which would have needed Caesarius’s enthusiastic cooperation to succeed. Regardless of Alaric’s own suspicions of Caesarius’s innocence or guilt, the king was aware that he required the metropolitan bishop’s spiritual and pastoral authority to legitimize his conciliar projects, including the proposed synod of 507, scheduled to take place at the Visigothic capital of Toulouse. Larger political events would intervene, however, and the Council of Toulouse never took place; Caesarius’s subsequent provincial councils would be held in relative isolation from contemporary Frankish meetings. Thus, with his victory over Alaric at Vouillé in 507, Clovis seemingly had wiped away a promising start to a new era in Gallic conciliar life.

Four years later, the victorious Clovis convoked his own church council in Frankish Gaul. His initiative, quite rightly, has been seen as an act of imitatio imperii. Novus Constantinus was not merely a posthumous epithet applied to Clovis by Gregory of Tours. The Frankish king and his successors made a conscious effort to assume the mantle of the Christian Roman emperors, not only in their political and military initiatives, but in their ecclesiastical and conciliar ones as well. But Clovis had a more immediate precedent than the Christian Roman emperors for his convocation of the Council of Orléans of

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6 Cyprian of Toulon et al., Vita Caesarii Episcopi Arelatensis 1.21–26, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SRM 3 (Hanover, 1896), 465–66.
7 Note William Klingshirn, Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul (Cambridge, 1994), 96: “As bishop of the most influential see in southern Gaul, [Caesarius’s] support for Alaric’s plans was crucial to their success.”
10 The Frankish kings’ desire to imitate their imperial predecessors in their ecclesiastical and conciliar activities is well established. See, e.g., Paul Hinschius, Das Kirchenrecht der katholiken und protestanten in Deutschland (Graz, 1959), 3.539–40; Charles de Clercq, La législation religieuse françoise de Clovis à Charlemagne (507–814) (Louvain, 1936), 99; Jean Gaudemet, Les sources du droit de l’Église en Occident (Paris, 1985), 108; Jean Durliat, Les finances publiques de Dioclétien aux Carolingiens (284–889) (Sigmaringen, 1990), 141.
511, and we can just as rightly consider his act a form of *imitatio Alaricii*. It had been Alaric, an Arian barbarian, who had demonstrated that a *rex* possessed sufficient *auctoritas* to oversee the conciliar life of his *regnum*. Although Alaric’s Arianism prevented him from participating directly in the deliberations of his bishops, Clovis, as a Nicene, had no such obstacle. 11 Prior to the Council of Orléans, he sent *tituli* to the invited bishops to establish—at least in part—the council’s agenda. 12

Clovis’s direct participation in his council’s business is reason enough to suspect that his motivations for convoking the synod extended beyond the mere symbolic act of *imitatio*. In fact, the First Council of Orléans, which inaugurated a new Frankish conciliar tradition, owed both its form and agenda to events far removed from the seclusion of the basilica. Clovis’s victory over Alaric at Vouillé necessitated, for example, the consolidation of Frankish rule over southern Gaul. This task included the integration of Arian clergy and basilicas into the Nicene Gallic church. At Orléans, the Nicene bishops declared that *heretici clericici* who renounced their former beliefs could continue to hold ecclesiastical office with the permission and blessing of orthodox bishops. Additionally, the Arian places of worship located in lands now under Frankish rule would continue to be used following their reconsecration. 13 The bishops who would oversee this integration project would themselves be natives of Aquitaine, who likewise were new to Frankish rule.

Indeed, the primary goal of the Council of Orléans seems to have been the acclimatization of the Gallo-Roman episcopate of the expanded Frankish *regnum* to this new political regime. Clovis’s challenge was to amalgamate the bishops of his recently conquered territories in northern Gaul, many of whom were fresh appointees, with those of the south, who, under Alaric, already had begun the process of adapting their ecclesiastical organization to a postimperial

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11 Alaric, however, did not necessarily play a passive role in the conciliar proceedings of the Nicene synods. In fact, one of the participants at Agde was a certain Petrus, described in the *acta* of Agde as *episcopus de Palatio*, suggesting he might have been an Arian, although other identities also have been proposed, including bishop of Poitiers or Boiatium, for which see respectively Knut Schäferdiek, *Die Kirche in den Reichen der Westgoten und Suewen bis zur Errichtung der westgotischen katholischen Staatskirche* (Berlin, 1967), 244–45 n7; and Charles Munier, “L’énigmatique évêque, ‘Petrus de Palatio’ du Concile d’Agde de 506,” *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 69 (1968): 51–56.

12 Orléans (511), praef. All references to the *acta* of the Council of Orléans are to Charles de Clercq, ed., *Concilia Galliae A.511–A.695*, CCSL 148 (Turnhout, 1963), 4–19.

13 Orléans, chap. 10: *De hereticis clericis, qui ad fidem catholicam plena fide ac voluntate venerint, vel de basilicis, quas in perversitate sua Gotthi hactenus habuerunt, id censusim observari, ut si clereci fideliter convertentur et fidem catholicam integrae confitentur vel ita dignam vitam morum et actuum probitate custodiunt, officium, quo eos episcopus dignos esse censuerit, cum impositis manus benedictione suscipiant; et ecclesias simili, quo nostrae innovari solent, placuit ordine consecrari.*
reality. The Council of Orléans demonstrated to these prelates new to Frankish rule that Clovis intended to take an active role in the religious life of his *regnum* and encouraged their assimilation into a new “Frankish” church.

The notion that Clovis’s recent wars influenced events at Orléans is not a new one. However, it has not gone unchallenged. In the early 1960s, Wallace-Hadrill took a cautious approach to the question, noting that although the council’s attendance and some of its legislation reflected the Frankish victory over Alaric, Clovis had waited a number of years after Vouillé to convok the synod. More recently, Daly systematically attacked the idea that the purpose of the Council of Orléans was to “settle territorial or political problems left over from the conquest of the Visigothic kingdom.” Daly made three explicit charges: first, that the episcopal attendance of the council did not support the idea of an Aquitainian focus; second, that the council’s location was chosen not for its position along the border of the Frankish kingdom and the Visigothic annexed territories, but rather for its centralized location in Clovis’s *regnum*, its substantial population, and its “more established traditions of diocesan life”; and, third, that the council’s legislation did not reflect an attempt to address issues raised by Clovis’s recent victories. The heterodoxy of Daly’s position calls for a response, and this study will answer each of his three points in order to demonstrate that the First Council of Orléans did play a crucial part in Clovis’s efforts to establish his authority over the dioceses of recently conquered territories and to bring ecclesiastical unity to his expanded kingdom.

The thirty-two bishops whom Clovis summoned to Orléans had their sees in seven Gallic provinces: Novempopulana, Aquitania Prima, Aquitania Secunda, Lugdunensis Secunda, Lugdunensis Tertia, Lugdunensis Senonia, and Belgica Secunda. The civitates represented thus lay in both the older and the more recently conquered parts of Clovis’s *regnum*. It is instructive to compare this attendance distribution to that of the Council of Agde, which drew bishops from the two Aquitainian provinces, Novempopulana, and Narbonensis Prima and Secunda. If one lays a map of the attendance distribution of the Council of Orléans atop one depicting that of Agde, a clear picture emerges. The Franks’ military victories allowed them to seize control of a wide swath of southern Gaul, yet a number of the bishoprics represented at Alaric’s council, including those in Narbonensis Prima and Secunda, southern Novempopulana, and southern Aquitania Prima, were not represented at the Council of Orléans. In


17 Ibid., 658.
Novempopulana, for example, Clovis established his authority at the metropolitan *civitas* of Eauze as well as the cities of Bazas and Auch. The remaining cities of the province, Dax, Lectoure, Saint Bertrand-de-Comminges, Couserans, Lescar, Aire, Bigorre, and Oloron—all of which were represented at Agde—seem to have been outside his direct control in 511. Similarly, to the east in Aquitania Prima, Toulouse and Albi, which were captured by Clovis and his son Theuderic respectively after Vouillé, were represented neither at Orléans nor at any Frankish council until the mid- to later 6th century. We probably can credit Ostrogothic military operations in Gaul, which lasted through 511, as well as a continued Visigothic presence in Septimania, for disrupting the integration of these southern *civitates* into the Frankish *regnum*. Similar difficulties may also explain the absence of the bishop of Gévaudan (Javols) from the council. Harder to explain is the absence of the bishop of Limoges. The most plausible explanation that has been proposed for his absence is that the occupant of the seat in 511 was the elderly Bishop Ruricius, whose poor health prevented his attendance. In Aquitania Secunda, however, which Clovis seems to have completely absorbed into his realm, the situation was different. Both bishops who had been present at the Council of Agde were also present at Orléans, i.e., Cyprian of Bordeaux and Cronopius of Périgueux, as were all those—save the bishop of Agen—who had not attended the prior synod.

One can draw, in fact, a fairly straight latitudinal line from the westernmost point of the border between Novempopulana and Aquitania Secunda (save a short dip at the *civitates* of Eauze and Auch), through southern Aquitania Prima, and along the northern border of Septimania, which marks the southernmost extent of episcopal representation at the Council of Orléans. This

18 Michel Rouche, *L’Aquitaine des Wisigoths aux Arabes* (Paris, 1979), 50, observes that following the Ostrogothic invasion of Gaul: “We do not know whether or not all of Novempopulana was occupied by the Franks.”
19 Albi was first represented (by an archdeacon) at the Council of Orléans (549). Toulouse was represented at the Council of Mâcon (585).
21 R. W. Mathisen, *Ruricius of Limoges and Friends: A Collection of Letters from Visigothic Gaul* (Liverpool, 1999), 44. Mathisen believes it unlikely that Ruricius was boycotting the council. As for Velay (Le Puy), there is no known bishop in the first half of the 6th century.
22 i.e., bishops Lupicinus of Angoulême, Petrus of Saintes, and Adelfius of Poitiers. The bishop of Agen did not attend either the Council of Agde or the First Council of Orléans.
line also seems to mark the southernmost extent of Frankish military control of southern Gaul in the year 511. Meanwhile, in northern Gaul, Clovis’s more recent territorial acquisitions in Lugdunensis Secunda, Tertia, and Senonia were heavily represented at the council, with the majority of bishops from each of the provinces in attendance (a total of sixteen prelates). Clovis had probably acquired most these cities during, or in connection with, his campaign in Armorica shortly after his invasion of Burgundy in 500. In contrast, the civitates that lay northeast of Paris—that is, in territories Clovis had controlled since at least the 490s (and in some cases earlier)—had a far less substantial presence at the council, with fewer than half of the cities of Belgica Secunda, for example, participating. Among the absent, surprisingly, was the metropolitan bishop of the province, Remigius of Reims. No prelates from Belgica Prima or the German provinces attended, and in Belgica Prima, at least, this lack of representation does not seem due to vacant episcopal seats. Thus, the


24 For the dating, see Bachrach, Merovingian Military Organization, 10.

25 The participating civitates were Amiens, Senlis, Soissons, and Vermand/Noisson. Later hagiographical sources credit Remigius with appointing bishops to the seats of Arras (Vedastus) and Laon (Gennobaudis). See respectively, Vita Vedastis Episcopi Atrebatensis 5, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SRM 3.409 (7th century); and Hincmar of Reims, Vita Remigii Episcopi Remensis 16, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SRM 3.300–306 (9th century). Although sometimes credited too with the consecration of Eleutherius of Tournai, this was a postmedieval attribution; see Vita Sancti Eleutherii Prima, AASS Feb. 3, 187, note n.

26 Nancy Gauthier, L’évangélisation des pays de la Moselle: La province romaine de Première Belgique entre Antiquité et Moyen-Âge (IIIe–VIIIe siècles) (Paris, 1980), 156. The suggestion of Heuclin, “Le Concile d’Orléans de 511,” 439, that hermetic civil disobedience kept the Belgian bishops away from the council is unconvincing. See also Kurth, Clovis, 2.139–41, who argues that it was the breakdown of diocesan hierarchy in Germany Prima and Secunda and Belgica Prima that caused their total lack of representation. Kurth’s argument applies better to Gemania, where there is limited evidence for diocesan stability ca. 500, than to Belgica. The episcopal lists of Belgica Prima, in fact, do not suggest significant breaks in succession; see Louis Duchesne, Faites épiscopaux de l’ancienne Gaule (Paris, 1907–15), 3.32–33, 37–38 (Trier); 3.46–47, 54–55 (Metz); 3.61–63 (Toul); 3.68–70 (Verdun). Heuclin argues that Bishop Vito of Verdun was ordained after the time of Clovis following a break in episcopal succession. But a reference in Bertarius, Gesta Episcoporum Virdunensium 4, ed. D. G. Waitz, MGH SS 4 (Hanover, 1841), 41, to Vito as the nepos of the presbyter Euspicius, who did live in the time of Clovis, and who refused the episcopal seat, is not strong evidence for this conclusion since (a) the meaning of nepos is not immediately clear from the context, (b) there is no mention of a delay before Vito’s ordination, and (c), Bertarius was drawing...
geographic distribution of the attendees of the Council of Orléans would seem to indicate that Clovis particularly sought the representation of bishops and cities newly integrated into the Frankish *regnum*. In contrast, he appears to have made a less concerted effort to include bishops like Remigius, with whom he had a well-established relationship.

This conclusion is supported by the episcopal subscriptions attached to the council’s *acta*. These are listed according to seniority (but with the metropolitan bishops signing first). Their order indicates that the northern bishops in attendance were more likely to be recent appointees than their southern counterparts.\(^{27}\) Thus, following the subscriptions of the bishops of Bordeaux, Bourges, Tours, and Rouen, eight out of the ten subsequent names belong to bishops from either Aquitania or Novempopulana.\(^{28}\) Of the final ten subscriptions attached to the conciliar *acta*, all belong to bishops from northern Gaul.\(^{29}\) The northern prelates’ comparatively brief tenures in office have encouraged some to argue that Clovis personally appointed a number of them to their sees,\(^{30}\) but although Clovis’s Merovingian descendents certainly did interfere in episcopal elections, it is impossible to say for certain how many, if any, of these northern bishops owed their offices to the king’s good graces.\(^{31}\)

Regardless, what is important is that a substantial number of the northern bishops who attended the council were either recent appointees, newcomers to Frankish rule, or both. Among the bishops of Belgica Secunda, for example, which had long been under Clovis’s control, the four bishops in attendance all appear to have been relatively recent appointees.\(^{32}\) If Clovis’s primary concern was to consolidate his political and ecclesiastical control over newly absorbed sees or sees with newly appointed bishops, this explains why so many of the other prelates resident in Belgica Prima and Secunda, provinces that Clovis had controlled for decades, were absent from the council.\(^{33}\) While one cannot


\(^{28}\) I.e., the bishops of Clermont, Rodez, Saintes, Cahors, Périgueux, Auch, Eauze, and Bazas. The bishops of Troyes and Paris (from Lugdunensis Senonia) also number among the first ten post-metropolitan subscriptions.

\(^{29}\) I.e., the bishops of Sées, Soissons, Avranches, Amiens, Noyon, Senlis, Coutances, Évreux, Auxerre, and Chartres.


\(^{31}\) On Merovingian interference in episcopal elections, see Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, 77–79.

\(^{32}\) I.e., Edibius of Amiens, Libanius of Senlis, Lupus of Soissons, and Suffronius of Noyon.

\(^{33}\) On Clovis’s control of most of Belgica Secunda since the 480s, see Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, 40–41. Bachrach, *Merovingian Military Organization*, 5, dates the com-
completely discount the possibility that recent conflicts with rival Frankish kings and the Alamanni had destabilized the region, the conciliar subscriptions suggest a conscious plan to exclude bishops already integrated into the Frankish regnum.34

The presence at Orléans of both the newly appointed bishops of the north, with their lack of competing political loyalties, and the Aquitanian bishops of the south, with their long-established spiritual and pastoral authority, both of which groups were to a greater or lesser degree now beholden to the Frankish king, ensured that the council’s decisions would both conform to Clovis’s agenda and possess the necessary auctoritas to be considered binding. So, whereas it is clear that the First Council of Orléans was no mere “Aquitainian occasion,” to use Wallace-Hadrill’s phrase, especially when one considers that nearly two-thirds of its total attendance came from northern Gaul, it was Clovis’s recent victories that made the synod in its existing form possible as well as preferable, for it allowed the Frankish king to lay the foundation for a unified episcopal community consisting of both northern and southern Gallic prelates.35 Furthermore, one might speculate on the basis of the absence of bishops from the Frankish homeland that Clovis was hoping to use this meeting as a means of validating his authority over prelates who would have remembered a time when the Frankish king himself was at best a pagan and at worst a near Arian, and who, unlike Remigius, were as yet unfamiliar with Clovis’s willingness to rule in accordance with the counsel of Nicene bishops.

The location of the first Frankish council was as much a conscious decision on Clovis’s part as was its attendance. Daly is certainly correct that Orléans was partly selected because of its centralized location in the southernmost tip of Lugdunensis Senonia, connected by Roman roads to civitates in both the north

34 On Clovis’s conflicts with Chararic and Ragnachar, see Greg. DLH 2.41–42 (Krusch and Levison, 91–93). Michel Rouche, Clovis (Paris, 1996), 206, suggests that Chararic, like Ragnachar, was established near Belgica Secunda. For the most recent account of Clovis’s wars with the Alamanni, see John F. Drinkwater, The Alamanni and Rome, 213–496: Caracalla to Clovis (Oxford, 2007), 335–45.

and south. But Daly’s argument that the city’s proximity to former-Visigothic Aquitania was not a factor in its selection and that the city’s population and more established diocesan life were has less evidence to support it. Certainly, Orléans was a city with well-established ecclesiastical traditions. The city’s cathedral is said to have been built in the later 4th century by Bishop Evurtius, although bishop lists record the names of earlier prelates going back to the mid-4th century. The city’s venerable Christian past did not, however, set it notably apart from other potential locations for Clovis’s council. Tours, Bourges, and Poitiers, for example, all shared Orléans’s general proximity to the other participating civitates, and all had lengthy ecclesiastical traditions stretching back into the Roman period. But all three had been part of the Visigothic kingdom prior to 507. Furthermore, Daly’s emphasis on population, for which he cites no sources, is questionable, given our poor estimates for any of the cities of Gaul in the early 6th century.

Orléans, it is important to note, was neither the religious center of its province—that designation belonged to the metropolitan see of Sens—nor was it the most important political center: Clovis has made Paris his capital following Vouillé. In general, for the convokers of 6th-century Gallic councils, location seems to have been at least as important, and perhaps even more important, than a given city’s size or prestige. In the year 517, for example, a major Burgundian council, uniting twenty-four bishops, met in the parrochia of Epaon, rather than in a larger civitas such as Vienne or Lyons. Avitus of Vienne, in his convocation letter for the council, noted that the site had been chosen on account of its being “a central and opportune location for the meeting when we considered the fatigue of everyone.” Similarly, the bishops at the Second Council of Mâcon in 585, in scheduling a follow-up synod, ordered it to be convoked at a central location agreeable to all of the participants.

38 Greg. DLH 10.31 (Krusch and Levison 526) records that Cattanus, the first bishop of Tours, took his seat in ca. A.D. 250. Additionally, he names Ursinus (fl. late 3rd century) as the first bishop of Bourges; Gregory of Tours, Liber in Gloria Confessorum 79, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SRM 1.2 (Hanover, 1885), 346–48; Greg. DLH 1.31 (Krusch and Levison 24). As for Poitiers, although its episcopal list names bishops prior to Hilary (d. 367/368), Duchesne, Fastes épiscopaux de l’ancienne Gaule, 2.79–82, argues that there is little compelling evidence for their holding of episcopal office.
39 Greg. DLH 2.38 (Krusch and Levison 89).
40 Epaone (517), praef.
41 De Clercq, Concilia Galliae, 22–23.
42 Mâcon (585), chap. 20.
Gregory of Tours also describes a council held in the Auvergne in the year 590, as meeting in confinio vero termini Arverni, Gabalitani atque Ruteni for the convenience of the attendees. Proximity to land or water routes was a necessity in order to ease the burden of travel for attendees who might have to journey hundreds of miles in order to attend a council. Orléans, with its ease of access and central location close to Clovis’s own seat of power, thus proved a suitable location for the first Frankish synod.

But suitability alone does not entirely explain Clovis’s choice. Orléans often has been described as a frontier city lying between the Frankish kingdom and the Visigothic annexed territories. It initially had come into Clovis’s hands following his incorporation of Armorica, several years before his war with the Visigoths. It was also a city that lay on the very edge of the traditional zone of Gallic conciliar life. No councils had been held in the old diocese of Gallia since the 4th century, and its representation at other synods up until that point had been virtually nonexistent. In choosing a location in northern Gaul for his council, Clovis was sending an unambiguous message that the Frankish church was not going to be merely a southern affair. On the other hand, however, the presiding bishop was a southerner, Cyprian of Bordeaux, whom Clovis would have met during his sojourn in Bordeaux in winter 507–8, rather than a senior northerner, such as the absent Remigius of Reims. But from the perspective of ecclesiastical politics, the choice of Cyprian over Remigius makes sense, assuming that one of Clovis’s primary reasons for convoking the council was to use it to forge relationships with (and between) those bishops unfamiliar with his rule. Furthermore, in choosing Cyprian as council president, Clovis was implicitly acknowledging the experience and prestige of the southern attendees. Although northern bishops did dominate the Council of Orléans in numbers, southerners filled over one-third of the seats and, more importantly, brought with them a deeper familiarity with and connection to Gallic conciliar tradition. Both groups, however, needed to be assured that their voices would be heard in the ecclesiastical governance of Clovis’s regnum. Thus, to use a modern analogy,

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43 Greg. DLH 10.8 (Krusch and Levison 489).
44 Pontal, Histoire des conciles mérovingiens, 50. Heuclin, “Le Concile d’Orléans de 511,” 438, acknowledges this point, but puts a greater emphasis on the city’s central location.
46 Evurtius of Orléans possibly attended the Council of Valence in 374. Additionally, Declpetus of Orléans’s subscription is attached to the acta of the pseudo–Council of Cologne (346).
47 Klingshirn, Caesarius of Arles, 259.
48 Kurth, Clovis, 2.136. It is possible that Clovis met Cyprian even earlier, when the Franks captured Bordeaux in 498. Unfortunately, we do not know what year Cyprian took office, so this is mere conjecture.
the _civitas_ of Orléans served much the same purpose for the early Frankish church as Washington DC did for the founders of the American republic: a capital geographically situated so as to unite two disparate regions in common governance. It was, for Clovis, the southernmost northern city. Its location encouraged integration, not further alienation between the bishops of southern and northern Gaul.

The same observation can be made for the council’s legislative program. There has long been general agreement that Clovis played no small role in its formulation, although little agreement on precisely what his role was. Clovis did not attend the council and therefore was not present for either its deliberations or final formulations of policy. On the other hand, his _tituli_ served as the basis for discussion, and his _maior auctoritas_ was deemed necessary by the participants to ensure that the council’s legislation was suitably enforced.

Although Clovis’s influence has been most closely associated with the first ten canons of the council’s record—which address issues of ecclesiastical asylum, clerical ordination, ecclesiastical property management, the prosecution of clerics for civil crimes, and the incorporation of Arian clerics and churches into the Frankish church—there seems no reason to limit his possible input only to those canons concerned with the intersection between ecclesiastical and worldly affairs. For Clovis, governance of his kingdom and the church were not mutually exclusive exercises. Even prior to his baptism, Clovis had been encouraged by Remigius to conceive of a _regnum_ ruled by a king in consultation with his bishops. In his first letter to the Frankish king, written subsequent to the latter’s assumption of power in Belgica Secunda, Remigius advised Clovis that his rule over the province would be better assured if he worked in harmony with his prelates. Similarly, in his second letter to the king, Remigius urged Clovis to govern his _regnum_ vigilantly, with _consilia erectiora_. Given the content of his first letter, it is not unlikely that Remigius had the Gallo-Roman episcopate in mind when he proffered this advice.

If the bishops present at Clovis’s first council can be believed, the king took Remigius’s advice to heart and convoked the synod “out of concern for episcopal opinion.” The ideal king, for Remigius, was one who governed in accordance

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50 Orléans, praef.


52 _Epistolae Austrasicae_ 2, ed. Wilhelm Gundlach, MGH Epist. 3 (Berlin, 1892), 113.

53 _Epistolae Austrasicae_ 1 (Gundlach 112–3).

54 Daly, “Clovis: How Barbaric, How Pagan?” 656, translates _affectu_ as “respect,” which does not convey adequately the emotional connotations of the word.
with the will of the church and its bishops. Clovis adopted this ideal, but, like his model Constantine, his stance toward the church was marked as much by paternalism as deference. Encouraged early on in his rule to see the ecclesiastical and worldly spheres of his regnum as connected, he understood them both to be his responsibility. We can first perceive Clovis’s attitude toward ecclesiastical governance in his letter to the bishops of Aquitania, written around 507/508, but summarizing the contents of an order given to his army at the outset of the Gothic campaign.\(^5^5\) In his letter, Clovis previews some of the concerns of the council he would convoke several years later and demonstrates a “familiarity with the administrative structure and ethos of the church.”\(^5^6\) Specifically, Clovis assured the Aquitanian bishops that property belonging to the church (including slaves) would not be seized unjustly, and he also encouraged the prelates to intercede on behalf of prisoners of war and explained the proper procedures by which they might do so. Over half a dozen of the canons issued at the Council of Orléans would deal with concerns regarding ecclesiastical property, whereas the fifth canon declared that a portion of the revenues from gifts made by Clovis to the church should be allocated specifically for the redemption of prisoners.\(^5^7\) If it is true, as some have suggested, that Clovis’s Nicene baptism did not occur until 508, after his victory over the Visigoths, then the letter becomes an even more telling indicator of the king’s initial realization of his role vis-à-vis the church and the necessity of gaining the support of the Gallic episcopate in order to consolidate his rule.\(^5^8\) Clovis’s paternalism toward the church therefore should not be mistaken for despotism; he was its protector, not its master, and he required its support as much as it required his.

It was at the Council of Orléans that Clovis cemented both his role in ecclesiastical governance and a new identity for the Gallic church itself. It is not so surprising that Clovis waited several years after his victory over Alaric before officially convoking his council, especially if his Nicene baptism did not occur until 508 and if military operations against the Goths distracted him during these intervening years.\(^5^9\) The integration of the southern bishops into the new


\(^{56}\) Daly, “Clovis: How Barbaric, How Pagan?” 646.

\(^{57}\) Those canons dealing with concerns regarding church property are nos. 5, 6, 7, 14, 15, 17, 23. On the redemption of prisoners as a duty of bishops, see William Klingshirn, “Charity and Power: Caesarius of Arles and the Ransoming of Captives in Sub-Roman Gaul,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 75 (1985): 183–203.


Frankish church was an important part of Clovis’s consolidation of Visigothic territory, but it could occur only after certain preconditions were met and after a degree of stability had been established throughout the expanded Frankish *regnum*. The council’s legislative program certainly did not include matters pertinent only to the newly acquired Aquitainian territories, although the repetition of issues similar to those discussed at the Council of Agde may be indicative of an attempt to address some of the specific concerns of the southern prelates, six of whom—Cyprianus of Bordeaux, Tetradius of Bourges, Cronopius of Périgueux, Quintianus of Rodez, Boetius of Cahors, and Nicetius of Auch—attended both the Councils of Agde and Orléans.\(^{60}\) Both synods, for example, forbade laymen from leaving church before the end of the mass,\(^{61}\) both rebuked monks who abandoned their monasteries without permission,\(^{62}\) both legislated the proper observance of Easter, Christmas, and Pentecost,\(^{63}\) and both condemned the practice of divination.\(^{64}\)

With the important exception of the canon regulating the absorption of Arian clerics and basilicas into the Nicene church,\(^{65}\) the majority of the Orléans canons deal implicitly, rather than explicitly with Clovis’s recent victories and the subsequent issues raised by the unification of the Gallic church under Frankish rule. Indeed, the bulk of the canonical legislation promulgated at the council can be read as the result of compromise between royal and episcopal expectations for this new state of affairs. On the one hand, the church’s right to grant asylum was confirmed,\(^{66}\) as was the authority of bishops over ecclesiastical property,\(^{67}\) while on the other hand the council acknowledged the king’s right to have a say in the clerical ordination of laymen\(^{68}\) and permitted the church’s ownership of its landed assets to be challenged in court.\(^{69}\) The conciliar participants also agreed upon the proper use of revenues earned from those *oblationes* and *agri* donated by Clovis to the church and forbade lower clerics

\(^{60}\) For negative assessments of the Council of Agde’s influence on Orléans legislative program, see De Clercq, *La législation religieuse franque*, 9; Daly, “Clovis: How Barbaric, How Pagan?” 657. De Clercq, unlike Daly, does accept the influence of Agde, chap. 47 on Orléans, chap. 26. Bishops Eufrasius of Clermont and Sextilius of Bazas, who were represented at the Council of Agde, attended the Council of Orléans.

\(^{61}\) Agde, chap. 47; Orléans, chap. 26.

\(^{62}\) Agde, chap. 38; Orléans, chap. 22.

\(^{63}\) Agde, chap. 21; Orléans, chap. 25.

\(^{64}\) Agde, chap. 42; Orléans, chap. 30.

\(^{65}\) Orléans, chap. 10.

\(^{66}\) Orléans, chaps. 1–3.

\(^{67}\) Orléans, chaps. 5, 7, 14, 15, 17, 23.

\(^{68}\) Orléans, chap. 4.

\(^{69}\) Orléans, chap. 6.
from receiving *beneficia* from the king without episcopal approval.\(^70\) It therefore
is not surprising that the canonical record of the council has been called a
“concordance” between the Gallic church and the Frankish crown.\(^71\)

But more than a mere concordance, the canons of the First Council of
Orléans were a reflection of Clovis’s realization of a new Frankish church, Gallo-
Roman in spirit and tradition, but forged through victory on the battlefield. As
a result of his conquests, Clovis had inherited a complex and deep-rooted
network of episcopal cities arranged into metropolitan provinces. His victory
necessitated that new political borders be superimposed upon these traditional
provincial units. The organization of the Gallic church, which never was
entirely static, reflected the legacy of stable Roman administration. And while
this legacy did not entirely dissipate in the 6th century, provincial borders and
metropolitan power undeniably lost some of their significance in the political
transition to Frankish rule. Nevertheless, Clovis did not substitute anarchy for
organization. In 511 his goal was to demonstrate to those Gallo-Roman bishops
who recently had found themselves living in a Frankish *regnum* that not only
was there a place for them under his recently catholicized regime, but also that
their church too could be integrated into the new political reality. Thus, merely
in its assembly the Council of Orléans was an unqualified success; that it
succeeded in demonstrating the validity of a Frankish church is a testament to
Clovis’s ability to turn Remigius’s advice into a workable approach to
governance.

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\(^70\) Orléans, chaps. 5, 7. Wallace-Hadrill, *Frankish Church*, 95, assumes that the land being
donated by Clovis was “the property of the Arian clergy of the Visigoths,” although there
is no direct evidence in the canons to suggest that this was the case. De Clercq, *Concilia Galliae*, 6, note canon 5, assumes the same. See also Daly, “Clovis: How Barbarian, How
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