According to his later Carolingian Vita, Avitus of Vienne scribit enim dialogum haeresim illam oppugnans (“wrote a dialogue against that heresy”) – defined as haeresim Arrianam, quae tunc non solum Africam, sed et Galliam Italiamque ex parte occupaverat (“Arianism which at that time had not only occupied Africa, but also, in part, Gaul and Italy”) – countering it fidelissimo et doctissimo immortalique ingenio ad Gundebadum Burgundionum regem, filium Gundovei (“with extremely faithful and wise and immortal skill before king Gundobad, king of the Burgundians, son of Gundioc”).¹ Agobard, in his Liber adversus legem Gundobadi, states: qui cum eodem Gundobado frequenter de fide altercans, et dialogos in praesenti conficiens et epistolis absenti respondens (“he [Avitus] often debated matters of faith with the same Gundobad, holding dialogues in his presence, and replying to him by letter in his absence”).² Here, one might note, the dialogues are actually face-to-face conversations, while the written debate is by letter. But in his Liber de imaginibus Sanctorum Agobard talks of a dialogue ubi cum Gundobado rege loquitur (“in which he [the bishop of Vienne] speaks to king Gundobad”).³ Avitus, then, was remembered as writing at least one Dialogue, addressed to Gundobad. Unfortunately that Dialogue does not survive, and one can even question whether there ever was an Avitan work that was couched in the standard dialogue form.⁴ In one of the Agobard citations the word dialogus clearly refers to a debate and not to a written text.⁵ As for the Vita Aviti, it is a notoriously problematical work, although Angela Kinney has recently defended the Vita Apollinaris, on which it is based, from the mauling delivered by Bruno Krusch.⁶ On its own, however, the testimony of the Vita Aviti is not reliable.

It is possible that Avitus did write a work in dialogue-format. The genre was most certainly in use at the time, as one can see most clearly in the writings of Vigilius of Thapsus.⁷

In what follows, however, I am not concerned with the existence of an Avitan dialogue: I am concerned with his debates with Gundobad, and that will take us into the origins of heresy among the Gibichungs. I use the word Gibichung, and not Burgundian, very deliberately, just as I avoid the phrase Burgundian kingdom – Gundobad and Sigismund occasionally used the term rex: they do not seem to have

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1 Vita Aviti 1 (177,13–16 Peiper).
6 Kinney (2014).
7 Vigilius of Thapsus, Contra Arianos dialogus.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110643503-014
used the term *regnum*: they saw themselves as military governors of a Roman province, acting on behalf of the emperor, and did so down to the 520s.\textsuperscript{8} Having considered the origins of Gibichung heresy, I will return ultimately to the construction of Gundobad as an interlocutor.

\section{Avitus debating with Gundobad}

Agobard may be no more accurate than the author of the *Vita Aviti*, but we can certainly accept his statement that Avitus held face-to-face discussions with Gundobad, and also sent him letters about doctrinal matters. Our best evidence for the face-to-face discussions comes in a letter to Gundobad’s son Sigismund, where the bishop reports belatedly on a discussion between himself and the king.\textsuperscript{9} In addition *Epistula 30*, which is described by Florus of Lyon as a *Liber de Christi divinitate*, and by the eleventh-century Lyon manuscript of Avitus’ works as the *de divinitate filii dei*, refers to a council which has just taken place, apparently in Gundobad’s presence, at the end of which the king had posed a particular question to bishop Cartenius, who passed it on to Avitus himself, which prompted the composition of the letter.\textsuperscript{10}

Other letters from Avitus were written in direct response to questions from the king: thus *Epistula 1* responds to a query about Mark 7,11–12 (and in the course of it misidentifies a verse from *Wisdom*, as coming from *Genesis*),\textsuperscript{11} and *Epistula 7* deals with a royal query about deathbed penance (*De subitanea paenitentia*), where the bishop, wrongly, perhaps deliberately so, ascribes a letter of Faustus of Riez to Faustus the Manichee.\textsuperscript{12} In the case of letters 21 and 22 we have Gundobad’s original question, relating to a passage in the Prophet Micah, which the bishop then misidentifies as coming from *Isaiah*.\textsuperscript{13}

These letters, which illustrate a regular exchange of views between Avitus and Gundobad, in which the latter is directly addressed, and especially those where both sides of the correspondence survive, might well be seen as constituting a dialogue, and they may suggest that the references to dialogues in the *Vita Aviti* and Agobard are actually references to theological letters in which the bishop was responding to a question posed by the king: the rhetoric of the two forms, after all,

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\textsuperscript{8} Wood (2014a).
is the same. It is worth remembering here the fluidity of the terminology used to describe individual works of Avitus: sometimes the word *epistola* is used, and sometimes the word *liber* – such inconsistencies may go some way to explaining the varying estimates of the number of books of letters written by the bishop.¹⁴

The letters that we have been looking at allow us to take seriously Gregory of Tours’ account of debates between Gundobad and Avitus, in which, according to the historian, the bishop effectively convinced the king of the error of his theological position, but was unwilling to convert publically, for fear of alienating his followers.¹⁵ As Gregory tells it, this story is clearly intended to offset Clovis’ acceptance of Catholicism,¹⁶ and arguably to offset Gregory’s own successes in dealing with the heresy of the Visigoth Agilan and the near-heresy of the Frankish king Chilperic.¹⁷ That Gundobad very nearly did convert to Catholicism may be confirmed by Avitus’ own words in *Epistula 1*,¹⁸ as well as by a sermon preached before the king.¹⁹ That Gregory may be using Avitus’ own words is suggested by the emphasis placed on the term *populus*, which in Gundobad’s legislation has particular force – *populus noster* is one of his preferred terms (alongside *barbari*) for Burgundiones.²⁰

Avitus was not the only person consulted by Gundobad. We have already noted the latter’s approach to Cartenius.²¹ We also hear of a debate held before the king, at which Avitus himself was not present, but where his friend, the layman Heraclius, distinguished himself.²² In addition to debates held in Gundobad’s presence, it would appear that Sigismund established an annual forum for debate between Homoians and Catholics.²³ Avitus also makes an obscure reference to some interchange of ideas between Stephanus of Lyon and the heretics.²⁴

The Rhône valley in the days of Gundobad and Sigismund would, therefore, seem to have been a hotbed of theological debate, in which the king and his son played a leading role, both in facilitating discussion, and also in prompting it. This, however, did not come out of the blue. There had been a good deal of epistolary

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¹⁵ Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 2,34 (81,14–84,4 Krusch/Levison).
¹⁶ Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 2,29–31 (74,4–78,4 K./L.).
debate in previous generations, not least over the *De spiritu sancto* of Faustus of Riez, and the response of the Vienne priest Claudianus Mamertus in the *De statu animae*. There had also been public debate, as noted by Sidonius Apollinaris in his reference to that between Modaharius and Basil of Aix. But even if the theological discussions of Avitus’ day can be placed within a broader context, what is remarkable is the personal role ascribed to Gundobad, who was apparently cautiously evaluating different positions himself.

2 Reputation of Gundobad

The question that follows is whether this image is only a construct, created by Avitus, or whether Gundobad genuinely was a judicious figure. For evidence of his reputation as a wise and thoughtful ruler one can turn to the *Vita Epifanii* of Ennodius, where Epiphanius addresses him as *probatissime princeps*, while Ennodius himself calls him *venerandus rex*, and goes so far as to say that he was *rex probatissimus*, *ut erat fando locuples et ex eloquentiae dives opibus et facundus adsertor* (“a most commendable king, since he was skilled in speaking, rich in eloquence, and an eloquent advocate”), and he gives Gundobad a reasonably long and eloquent speech. Against this we have to balance the image of the spineless ruler portrayed by Gregory of Tours, whose account of the discussion between Gundobad and Avitus we have already noted. And to Gregory’s representation of the Gibichung we can add the disparaging letters of Theodoric to Gundobad, concocted by Cassiodorus in the *Variae* – which show a complete disregard for the Burgundian’s career in Italy.

It is of course possible that the presentation of Gundobad in the *Vita Epifanii* is deliberate flattery in a particular political context. Here there is the problem of the dating of Ennodius’ works: the standard view is that they all date to Ennodius’ diaconate (c. 495–513) – while the *Vita Epifanii* must also follow the saint’s death (c. 496/9). If the *terminus ante quem* is correct, the hagiographical work was written before the death of Gundobad, despite the use of the past tense to describe him. Given the changing relations between Theodoric and Gundobad, one should presumably be looking for a moment when the two rulers were on good terms – in which case Ennodius may have been indulging in flattery.

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27 Ennodius, *Vita Epifani* 154 (103,24 Vogel).
28 Ennodius, *Vita Epifani* 171 (105,33 V.).
29 Ennodius, *Vita Epifani* 164–165 (105,3–4 V.).
30 Ennodius, *Vita Epifani* 165–167 (105,4–17 V.).
31 Wood (2014b).
Even so, there is material in Avitus’ letters to support the picture of a learned monarch, trying not just to conciliate his own military followers, but also to establish the truth. Perhaps the most surprising, and indeed the most complicated presentation of Gundobad in this way is to be found at the start of the *Contra Eutychianam haeresim*, where the king appears to have been approached by the emperor Anastasius for his views on the doctrinal issues underlyng the Acacian Schism, or the Trishagion Crisis, prompting Gundobad to ask Avitus to prepare a tract on the subject. Here the key sentences in the preamble to the resulting *Contra Eutychianam haeresim* are as follows:

> Vnicum simul et multiplex donum saeculo nostro nutu divinitatis indultum est, ut inter regias ordinaciones gloriosissimi principatus vestri principaliter de tuendo catholicae partis veritate curetis. De cuius studii pietate processit, quod dimissa nuper clementis praecepti auctoritate iussistis, ut contra Eutychiani dogmatis redivivum furorem velut ab extincto resurgentis incendii fomite pullulantem de sacros scripturarum caelestium fonte exemplorum flumina derivem [...] cum devincti vobis imperatoris patriam personamque non, ut regibus ceteris moris est, tantummodo ad commodum mundae pacis amatis: sed dum carum vobis praeveniri timetis errore [...] Cumque se ad tenendum veritatem vobis reddiderit docilem, ad expugnanda propriae regionis contagia praedicationis vestrae factum se gaudeat adiutorem. /

A gift both unique and manifold has been granted to us by the dispensation of the Divinity – namely that, among the many matters of royal business in your glorious princeedom, you take special care to preserve the orthodoxy of the Catholics. It is because of this pious concern of yours that, in a recent and clement authorisation-[letter], you have ordered me to divert waves of examples from the sacred fount of heavenly scripture [to quench] the renewed madness of Eutychianism that is pullulating as if from the dead tinder of a rising conflagration. [...] For you love the country and the person of the emperor (Anastasius I), who is bound to you, not exclusively for the convenience of political peace, as other kings usually are, but, because you fear that someone dear to you is being deceived by error [...]. Since he has made himself your student in order to maintain the truth, he should rejoice that he has become one who helps your preaching in order to fight the [heretical] diseases of his own land.\(^{33}\)

This would seem to suggest that the emperor had consulted the Burgundian ruler over a question of doctrine. The implications of this are extraordinary for an understanding of relations between Anastasius and Gundobad,\(^{34}\) yet in typically Avitan fashion the argument would seem in the closing paragraph of the second *Liber contra Eutychianam haeresim* to be twisted to call upon the Homoians of the Rhône valley to learn from the preceding florilegium.\(^{35}\)

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\(^{34}\) Wood (2014a).

3 Catholicism and “Arianism” among the Gibichungs

If we are to understand Gundobad’s reputation for wisdom, we should look at his formation. We know little about his father, Gundioc: he is usually claimed to have been arian following Gregory of Tours, but this is questionable – certainly the deployment of the description of Burgundian religion directly after the account of Clovis’ conversion and baptism is part of a deliberate attempt to elevate the Frankish king. As *magister militum* Gundioc was involved in the conflict between the metropolitanans of Arles and Vienne over the appointment of a bishop of Die – here his involvement was regarded as exemplary by the pope. Although this does not prove he was orthodox, the references to his actions and the responses to them would be more easily squared with someone who was known or thought to be Catholic.

We know a bit more about Gundobad’s uncle, Chilperic, who gets a good press from Sidonius, who states that the ruler enjoyed the feasts of bishop Patiens of Lyon, while his wife appreciated the clergyman’s fasts. Again Chilperic is usually thought to have been arian, but the natural reading of Sidonius’ letter is that the Gibichung was not a heretic. And the same can be said of the representation of his encounter with abbot Lupicinus of the Jura monasteries in the *Vita Patrum Iurensium*. There the Gibichung ruler (he was actually *magister militum* and *patricius*) is envisaged as a judge dressed in animal skins, but he is also described as *virum singularis ingenii et praecipuae bonitatis* (“a man of singular intelligence and notable goodness”). This is a particularly interesting portrayal of Chilperic, because historians have sometimes assumed that he and Gundobad must have been at loggerheads after 474 – an assumption that scarcely fits with the fact that the *Vita Patrum Iurensium* was probably written in Gundobad’s reign, and that its composition was somehow associated with Sigismund’s foundation of the monastery of Agaune. It would not have been politic to have singled Chilperic out for praise, if he had been opposed, and perhaps even killed, by his nephew Gundobad.

To these passages one can add the fact that when Sidonius complained at the transfer of the *civitas* of Clermont from what had been the jurisdiction of Chilperic as *magister militum* to that of Euric, he claimed that the city was being given to

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36 Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 2,32 (78,5 – 80,13 K./L.).
38 *Epistulae Arelatensis genuinae* 19 (28,6 – 29,4 Gundlach).
40 *Vita Patrum Iurensium* 93 (2,10) (338,8 Martine); see also Gregory of Tours, *Liber Vitae Patrum* 1,5 (216,29 – 217,19 Krusch).
the Arians. Clearly he did not categorise the governance of the Gibichungs as that of heretics.

At this point it is worth noting that there may have been one or two Chilperics – Gregory is the only person who implies that there were two –, one the brother of Gundioc and the other the brother of Gundobad and the father of Chrotechildis and Chrona: it is possible that the two Chilperics are in fact one person – one reason for thinking this is the fact that the *magister militum* would seem, from Sidonius and the *Vita Patrum Iurensium*, to have been Catholic, and one or both of the parents of Chrotechildis and Chrona must surely have been Catholic. Given that when we first meet the two girls they were under the care of Gundobad, their parents must have already died. It is therefore possible that they were relatively late offspring of Chilperic, the brother of Gundioc, which would remove any chronological difficulties in the reconstruction of the family. If, however, we accept that there was only one Chilperic, we must surely reject the fate ascribed to the father of Chrotechildis by Gregory of Tours. According to the historian, Gundobad killed his brother and threw his body down a well. Certainly we know from Avitus that Gundobad did have problems with his brothers (and not just Godegisel, who fought against him in 500); but the letter that refers to those problems does not indicate the king’s responsibility for their deaths, which he rather laments. It is not impossible that Gregory invented the murder of Chilperic to justify the killing of Sigismund by Chlodomer, the son of Chrotechildis, which the bishop of Tours sets up as part of a vendetta, to exonerate the Frankish queen. Sigismund’s body, one should note, was thrown down a well.

In other words, the contemporary sources for Gundioc and Chilperic seem to imply that they were both Catholic – and since the account of the Burgundians by Gregory of Tours unquestionably has the rhetorical purpose of downgrading them, we should beware of reading the evidence in the light of his later testimony. Other possible indications that the Burgundians were heretics when they first converted will scarcely bear any weight. Salvian, of course, in the *De Gubernatione Dei* suggests that all barbarians are heretics – but at the time of writing (c. 440) the Burgundians were a negligible force, and could easily have been overlooked. As for the penultimate entry in the *Chronicle of 452*, the statement that the Arians were everywhere, it makes no sense in the 450s, before the major expansion of both the Goths and the Burgundians, but would make a lot of sense in the period between 470 and 508, which may provide the most likely context for the composition of the text.

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41 Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistula* 7.6 (43 – 46 L.).
42 Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 2.28 (73,6 – 74,3 K./L.).
43 Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 2.32 – 33 (78,5 – 81,13 K./L.); Marius of Avenches, *Chronicon* a. 500 (68 Favrod).
And when Avitus himself states that Sigismund *adhuc de regibus solus est, quem in bonum transisse non pudeat* ("is still the only one of the kings who has not been ashamed to come over to the good side"),\(^{47}\) we should not think that he has in mind a comparison with all rulers of the past century and a half, but rather with his contemporaries, including Gundobad himself and Clovis. With this in mind let us look at Burgundian religion.

Uta Heil has provided a very useful examination of known Burgundian Catholics in the royal family – and, as she notes, there is also at least one known Burgundian Catholic outside the royal family: Hymnemodus, the first abbot of Agaune.\(^ {48}\) We should, however, ask the opposite question: which named Burgundians are known to have been Arians? Only Gundobad and Sigismund, before his conversion. We also know that Gundobad had Arian clergy,\(^ {49}\) and following Gregory of Tours we can believe that there were members of his military following who were Arian.\(^ {50}\) We can conjecture that this was an influential group: Gregory says Gundobad was frightened of alienating them, and this can be backed up from Avitus’ writings – above all the bishop was concerned that they might make a come-back in the future, after Sigismund’s death.\(^ {51}\) To these men we can probably add Godegisel, since he died in an Arian church, where he had taken refuge.\(^ {52}\) Put another way, all known women of Burgundian origin were Catholic – though Gundioc’s non-Burgundian queen is likely to have been Arian, as we shall see: the only Burgundian males known to have been Homoian were active after 474.

We should remember that Orosius\(^ {53}\) and Socrates Scholasticus\(^ {54}\) both describe the Burgundians as having been converted to Catholicism. Certainly, the chronologies they offer are contradictory: for Orosius the conversion must simply come before the composition of his *Histories*, which is usually placed in 416 – 417, while for Socrates the conversion took place in the context of a war against the Huns, apparently in the 430s. Whichever one follows, the Burgundians would seem to have been converted in the Rhineland, in other words in a milieu where Gothic or Homoian influence is less likely than Roman. A conversion to Catholicism fits well with what we have already seen of the reputations of Gundioc and Chilperic.


\(^{50}\) Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 2,34 (81,14 – 84,4 K./L.).


\(^{52}\) Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum* 2,33 (80,14 – 81,13 K./L.).

\(^{53}\) Orosius, *Historia adversus paganos* 7,32,13; 41,8 (3,87; 122 Arnaud-Lindet).

\(^{54}\) Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* 7,30 (378,20 – 379,4 Hansen).
This, however, leaves us with the problem of the clear Henoian affiliation of Gundobad, Sigismund, and probably of Goedgisel. Heil explains the changing depictions of Burgundian religion by saying that in the early fifth century there was no clear awareness among the Burgundians of the distinction between Catholic and Homoian, and that they only defined themselves as Henoian in the second half of the fifth century. Although there is much in this that I would agree with, it fails to explain the consistent Catholicism of Burgundian royal women – I would suggest a more specific explanation.

Burgundian Arianism would seem to be associated specifically with Gundobad, his son, and one or perhaps two of his brothers. How should we explain this? Simply: Gundobad’s mother, according to Malalas, was the sister of the unquestionably Henoian Ricimer (though the exact relationship is differently described in other sources), and we may guess that she shared her brother’s doctrinal position, and even that her presence in the Gibichung family must have had an influence on the religious affiliation of her children.

There was certainly Henoian debate in the Rhône valley before 474. The fourth-century disputes continued into the first years of the fifth century, but Arianism would seem to have become more of a live issue in the years after 450. This is implied by the De spiritu sancto of Faustus of Riez, which was challenged by Claudianus Mamtus in his De statu animae. Since Claudianus died in c. 474, we have a firm terminus ante quem for Faustus’ work. The De spiritu sancto is usually discussed primarily in terms of its argument about the corporeality of the soul, because of the critique provided by Claudianus in the De statu animae, but of course to write about the Holy Spirit was automatically to address a central aspect of the conflict between Henoians and Catholics, and the first chapter refers directly to Arians and Macedonians.

It is worth noting that although Faustus tends to be understood in a Visigothic context, before 475 he was to be found in territory controlled by Gundic and then by Chilperic (as magistri militum per Gallias and as patricii), and not by Euric. Certainly towards the very end of his life Faustus was in exile in Aquitaine, where he received some support from Ruricius of Limoges among others. Unlike Sidonius, during his initial period of exile, which involved house-arrest, he seems to have been at liberty to move freely in Visigothic Aquitaine. It is generally assumed that he was exiled by Euric, but he never names his persecutor in his letters, nor does

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55 Heil (2011) 56.  
56 Malalas, Chronographia 14,33 (290,55–57 Thurn).  
57 E.g. John of Antioch, fr. 209, 1 and 2 (= Excerpta de insidiis 93) (372, Nr. 64, and 372–374, Nr. 65 Blockley).  
59 Fortin (1959).  
60 Faustus, De spiritu sancto 1,1 (102,19–20 Engelbrecht); also 2,4 (138,17–18 E.).  
Gennadius in the entry on Faustus in the *De viris illustribus*. In the last decades of the fifth and the first decade of the sixth century, however, we do not know whether Riez was in Gibichung or Visigothic hands. The borderline between the two powers is uncertain: Gundobad unquestionably had control of the territory as far south as Orange, Carpentras, and even Sisteron and Bevons, a mere fifty kilometres from Riez, though Pentadius of the neighbouring see of Digne attended the Council of Agde in 506. Unfortunately no bishop of Riez signed the canons of either Agde or the Burgundian Council of Epaon. Riez is thus as likely to have been in Burgundian hands as Visigothic in the 470s and 480s. Perhaps the city was disputed.

Clearly, because it was written before Claudianus Mamertus’ death, the *De sancto spiritu* was composed while Faustus was in territory controlled by the Gibichungs. It surely indicates that there was a Homoian presence in the Rhône valley – though, as we have noted, there is no reason to think that Gundioc or Chilperic were Homoian, although the former’s wife and sons were, as presumably were the Alans of Valence. Nor do we need to conclude that Faustus’ exile was related to his theology. He may well have fallen foul of the Gibichung rulers for political reasons: he was an emissary of Julius Nepos, whose arrival was bitterly resented by Chilperic, which prompted considerable alarm among Sidonius’ family, even though the elevation of Ecdicius, Sidonius’ brother-in-law as Nepos’ *magister militum* was a source of pride. As emissary of the emperor Faustus was one of four bishops who negotiated the transfer of Clermont, which had been under Burgundian control, to Euric. He may, therefore, have been driven out of his see by the Gibichungs for political reasons. Regardless of the author and cause of Faustus’ exile, we should understand his anti-Arian works, and notably the surviving *De spiritu sancto*, at least in part, against the backdrop of debate in the Rhône valley which was not just based on the question of the corporeality of the soul.

If we wish to find a context for the apparently growing concern over “Arianism” in the third quarter of the fifth century, we might look to the family alliance between Gundioc and Ricimer. We may guess that Gundioc’s marriage should be dated to the 450s: we should probably see it as a political alliance from the time of the Battle of Catalaunian Plains against Attila in 451, since Gundobad was already at the heart of politics by 472. Gundioc’s family relations with Ricimer, I think, also has an important bearing on Sidonius’ panegyric for Anthemius, which is largely about Ricimer’s later marriage to the emperor’s daughter – the presence of Sidonius, who had come directly from Gundioc’s Lyon, surely suggests Gibichung acceptance of the new mar-

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63 Dynamius, *Vita Marii* 1,2 (27 Migne). See also the signatories to the *Council of Epaon* (517) (122–125 Gaudemet/Basdevant).

64 *Council of Agde a. 506* (213,32; 214,22; 215,22; 216,16; 217,24; 217,12; 218,22 Munier).


67 Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistula* 7,6,10; 7,7 (46; 47–49 L.).

riage. Perhaps Sidonius was very close to the Gibichungs, despite the silences of his letters.⁶⁹

While we may suspect that Gundioc’s wife introduced Homoian clergy and doctrine into the Gibichung household, we should also remember that Gundobad was mentored by Ricimer, probably since the mid 460s, and he survived to become Ricimer’s successor, before leaving Italy for Gaul in 474.⁷⁰ Given that the only evidence for Burgundian Arianism comes from the period of Gundobad’s rule, and the very start of that of Sigismund, I would suggest that Gundobad’s return to Gaul radically strengthened the position of the Homoians. No doubt he came back with an entourage of Ricimer’s followers, who would have constituted a very significant element in the Gibichung polity, though they would not have been ethnic Burgundians (whatever that may mean). In addition, it is possible that all the Gibichungs made use of the body of Alans, who had been settled in the city of Valence around the year 440, and who may well have been Arian. This picture of a mixed body of followers ties in with Gundobad’s legislation, which talks of populi nostri and barbari as often as Burgundiones.⁷¹ We should, in other words, talk of Gundobadine and not of Burgundian Homoians.

4 Ramifications

This has important ramifications: although there were Homoians among the Burgundians, Arianism was not the specific doctrine of the gens. In this respect the situation was different from that to be found among the Goths. The Homoians among Gundobad’s followers, many of whom would not have been Burgundians, had no attachment to a foundational document like Ulfilas’ Bible – despite the fact that Ricimer himself was of Visigothic descent, being the son of the Suevic king Rechila, and (on his mother’s side) the grandson of Wallia.⁷² Instead the Arians under Gundobad were a faction, perhaps united by some past attachment to Ricimer: indeed one might wonder whether their religious affiliation was an aspect of their military culture. They were defending the churches and oratories they (and their leader) had built, and doing so through a meticulous reading of the Latin Bible that they shared with their opponents. Although Avitus was unable to identify two of their quotations (he confuses Micah and Isaiah,⁷³ and Wisdom for Genesis),⁷⁴ that was his failing: and he never otherwise challenges the wording of the texts under scrutiny.

⁶⁹ Wood (forthcoming).
As for Gundobad himself, if he is to be seen first and foremost as the successor to Ricimer: Does that mean that he was no more than a warleader? That he was much more, can be seen in the correspondence between him and Avitus. Of course, there is a danger of circularity in claiming that Gundobad was an intelligent participant in the correspondence simply because the bishop of Vienne says as much, but there are specific statements in Avitus’ writings which surely provide evidence of the intellectual impact of the Gibichung’s stay in Italy, and which back up the image of the wise ruler presented by Ennodius.

Avitus makes it clear that Gundobad understands some Greek: he knows that the king can understand the Trishagion,⁷⁵ as well as the Greek term cenos.⁷⁶ Avitus, in fact, makes an interesting distinction between the word cenos, which is a word that he is sure the Gundobad knows, and the Hebrew terms corban and racha, for which he provides full interpretations. This does not necessarily mean that the Gibichung could speak Greek or read it, but he was certainly aware of and understood certain words and phrases in the language. One might guess that his knowledge of Greek derives from his period at the imperial court in Italy (Anthemius, after all had been sent from the East).

That he had learnt much during his years in Italy may also be implied by the inclusion within the Lex Romana Burgundionum (or, more properly the Forma et expositionis legum) of citations of Novels of Valentinian III, Majorian, Marcian, Leo and Severus.⁷⁷ And law brings us to one of the fragments of Avitus, preserved by Agobard. In his Liber adversus legem Gundobadi the later bishop of Lyon talks of the discussion (inter utrum sermo) held between Gundobad and Avitus on the subject of trial by battle. This presumably is the record of a debate prompted by the Gibichung’s edict issued in 502, De his qui obiecta sibi negaverint et praebendum obtulerint ius iurandum (“concerning those who will have denied the charges made against them, and will have offered to taken an oath”),⁷⁸ substituting judicial duel for oath-taking, because Gundobad’s men (homines nostros) had been happily committing perjury. Avitus’ critique turns into a much broader discussion of the role of God in conflict.⁷⁹ Assuming that Agobard has provided the correct context for the Avitus fragment, we see the bishop and the ruler deep in discussion over divine justice.

In all the exchanges between Gundobad and Avitus the king emerges as a worthy interlocutor,⁸⁰ so even if Avitus did not himself categorise any of his works as dialogi, we can see dialogue or debate taking place at the Gibichung court, at a remarkable level of sophistication. There may have been a lost dialogus, of which fragments sur-

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77 Wood (2016).
78 Liber Constitutionum 45 (75,6–76,8 de Salis).
vive in Agobard, Florus and Gregory of Tours, but, even if there was not, there was certainly dialogue of a remarkably civilised kind, which no doubt reflects the complexity of Gibichung religious affiliation.

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