

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Conversion Politics: Motivations Behind Clovis' Baptism and the Religious and Political Repercussions

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This study examines the history of Gaul during a period of transition from Roman rule to the sovereignty of Germanic warrior kings, as well as from a society composed of individuals from multiple faiths to the establishment of Catholicism as the official religion of this region. In doing so, this work focuses on the conversion of King Clovis, first king of the Franks, to Catholicism in the early fifth century. It examines the religious environment of the area that he conquered, his ultimate conversion to Catholicism including his potential motivations for doing so, and the repercussions of his decision on Gallic society, the Catholic Church, as well as the Frankish monarchy. It argues that, while it is likely there were several factors that influenced his decision, his eventual public adoption of the Catholic faith was primarily motivated by the aid that an alliance with the Catholic Church could bring him in achieving his territorial and authoritative expansion goals. By publically committing to the Catholic faith, Clovis established Catholicism as the official religion of the France, thereby helping to set the foundation for Western Europe to become a Christendom during the medieval period. Along with this, he established a relationship between the Catholic Church and the Frankish, later French, monarchy that would persist for over a millennium and would greatly benefit both entities involved.