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Annette Chapman-Adisho, *Patriot and Priest: Jean-Baptiste Volfius and the Constitutional Church in the Côte-d'Or*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019. xxvi + 246 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, and index. \$120.00 U.S (hb). ISBN 978-0-7735-5870-0; \$34.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-0-7735-5871-7.

Response by Annette Chapman-Adisho, Salem State University.

Living with a project for several years, one turns it over in the mind's eye many times, so it is refreshing finally, to send it out into the world and see how others respond. I would like to thank Edward Woell for his thoughtful review of *Patriot and Priest: Jean-Baptiste Volfius & the Constitutional Church in the Côte-d'Or*, and Lynne Taylor, Chief Editor of *H-France Review*, for the opportunity to respond to his essay. Professor Woell raises the question of the book's overall argument and contribution to our understanding of the Revolution's religious history. To this query, I would like to offer what I hope will be a helpful response.

Patriot and Priest examines the career of Jean-Baptiste Volfius, constitutional bishop of the Côte-d'Or over the lifespan of the Constitutional Church, from the Ecclesiastical Oath of 1791 to the Concordat of 1801. The Constitutional Church, its bishops, and the revolution's religious history have attracted increased attention since the bicentennial. *Patriot and Priest* joins this conversation at a regional level, adding a study of Volfius and the Côte-d'Or to the ongoing analysis. In the book, I argue that Volfius and a small core of constitutional priests in his diocese were committed patriots, as well as priests. The expression of their commitment to the Revolution and its ambitious ecclesiastical legislation evolved across the tumultuous decade of the Constitutional and then Gallican Church.

In its focus on the Côte-d'Or and Volfius, the study expands existing historical work on the Constitutional Church by bringing northern Burgundy into the conversation. It also considers a department where the Constitutional Church was well positioned for success. Volfius, priest and professor of rhetoric and eloquence at the local *collège* before the revolution, was one of only 33 constitutional bishops (out of 116) who served across the lifespan of the Constitutional and then Gallican Church. He was one of only 31 who remained in the same diocese. Volfius not only served the entire ten years as bishop of the department, he remained in his diocese, not absenting himself for long periods in Paris. Further, this priest-professor was articulate. His published speeches and pastoral letters provide insight into his evolving understanding of the revolutionary times in which he lived and the challenges he faced leading his diocese. In addition to the stability of leadership in the department, the Côte-d'Or also offered a strong foundation of clergy who swore the ecclesiastical oath, with 62 percent juring in the spring of 1791, a figure that fell only

to 58 percent after the retractions following Pius VI's condemnation of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.[1]

We learn, through this study of Volfius and the Constitutional Church in the Côte-d'Or, that the schism in the French Catholic Church was never as clearcut as oath-taking rates might suggest. In addition, through the varied difficulties faced by Volfius and the constitutional clergy in the department, we see the unfolding of this reorganization of the French Catholic Church. From the beginning of his episcopacy, Volfius sought inroads with his refractory colleagues. A native of Dijon with a substantial pre-revolutionary career—he was 59 at the time he swore the ecclesiastical oath—Volfius was working with many he knew. He also welcomed to his diocese juring clergy from other areas when local candidates were not available to fill parishes. The revolutionary change the Constitutional Church represented for the diocese is apparent when considered against the conservative nature of benefices in the diocese of Dijon before the revolution. Volfius's work to lead the new church demanded that he embrace multiple changes in the ecclesiastical organization of the diocese and its parishes, cultivate a mostly reluctant clergy (regardless of oath-taking status), welcome newcomers, and develop productive relationships with secular authorities at the departmental level. His efforts to work through a long and seemingly never-ending series of challenges, demonstrate the radical impact of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy on France's Catholic Church at the level of the diocese and the parish. To make this thing work was a devil of a task, and, just when it was getting up and running, the revolution changed course.

Because *Patriot and Priest* carries its analysis through the Gallican Church, we see the experiences of former constitutional, now Gallican clergy in the less studied post-Terror period. Living within easy reach of Switzerland, Volfius and his Gallican colleagues report on a steady flow of missionaries working to rally the clergy aligned with Rome and to receive the retractions of those who have taken, by that time, several oaths.

The convictions and experiences of Volfius and the small cadre of constitutional priests in the Côte-d'Or who stayed the course offer important insights into the evolution of a revolutionary discourse. In the heady days of '91, Volfius celebrated the Civil Constitution of the Clergy as returning the church to its primitive roots, and argued that building on this foundation, the Constitutional Church would be a pillar of the new order. During the Terror most—if not all—of the department's constitutional clergy resigned and submitted their *lettres de prétrise*. Included among them was their bishop. Following the state's declaration of religious neutrality with the law of 3 *Ventôse* [21 February 1795], a group of Paris-based constitutional bishops, known as the United Bishops, re-organized the revolutionary experiment, minus state support, as the Gallican Church. Contrite, discouraged, and shaken by his experience, Volfius eventually returned to serve the new church, but found himself troubled by the Jansenist tone of the United Bishops' two encyclical letters. He cautioned against building obstacles to reunion with Rome.

The Acts of the Diocesan Synod of 1800 present us with one of the last statements of the Constitutional/Gallican Church of the Côte-d'Or. Here we find Volfius and a small group of clergy planning for a future that envisions a diocese united under their leadership. In their aspirations, they were not so different from the national Gallican Church as it met a year later in a second national council.[2] In hindsight, Volfius's confidence, like that of the second national council, that the Gallican church could lead the effort to reunite France's priests appears wishful, if not delusional. However, it does indicate the tenacity of the most stalwart constitutional, then

Gallican clergy. They believed that this church, born in the revolution's first days, sent packing after the Terror, and reorganized without state support in Thermidor, had a role to play in shaping French Catholicism for a new revolutionary age.

A staid, regional study perhaps, but one that grew from the idea that to understand anything as radical as the Constituent Assembly's effort to reorganize the French Catholic Church, one needed to look closely.

NOTES

[1] These figures rely on the conclusions of Timothy Tackett in *Religion, Revolution, and Regional Culture in Eighteenth-Century France: The Ecclesiastical Oath of 1791* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), 41, 320. While not revising Tackett's figures for the Côte-d'Or, I do engage in an examination of the incomplete and contradictory evidence we have for oath-taking in the department in Appendix B, which looks at the Abbé Reinert's research. Reinert, an early twentieth century priest in the diocese of Dijon, devoted his career to researching the church's revolutionary history in northern Burgundy. For a discussion of his papers, see, Sébastien Langlois, "Un fonds d'archives inédit à la bibliothèque municipale de Dijon: les papiers de l'abbé Reinert," in Christine Lamarre, Claude Farenc, and Frank Laidié, eds., *Religion et Révolution en Côte-d'Or* (Dijon: Archives départementales de la Côte-d'Or, 2012), pp. 3-17.

[2] For a careful accounting of these negotiations and thwarted ambitions, see Rodney J. Dean's *L'église constitutionnel: Napoléon et le concordat de 1801* (Paris: R. J. Dean, 2004), 262-277.

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