



Annette Chapman-Adisho. *Patriot and Priest: Jean-Baptiste Volfius and the Constitutional Church in the Côte-d'Or.* McGill-Queen's Studies in the History of Religion Series. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019. 272 pp. \$34.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-7735-5871-7.

Reviewed by Caroline Hackett (Florida State University)

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Commissioned by Evan C. Rothera (University of Arkansas - Fort Smith)

Patriot and Priest: Jean-Baptiste Volfius and the Constitutional Church in the Côte-d'Or depicts the history of the French Catholic Church in Côte-d'Or. Specifically, Annette Chapman-Adisho highlights the life of intellectual, revolutionary patriot, and priest Jean-Baptiste Volfius. Set in the provincial Côte-d'Or, *Patriot and Priest* follows the experiences of Volfius and other locals throughout the revolutionary decade, with particular attention devoted to church reform. Chapman-Adisho demonstrates the lived impact of legislation such as the Civil Constitution of the Clergy on individuals like Volfius, the clergy in general, and the broader inhabitants of the region. In this way, she successfully portrays the French Revolution from a personal and local vantage point. Prior to the publication of *Patriot and Priest*, historians focused mostly on political, theological, social, and intellectual facets of religion during the Revolution. A select few wrote about other notable clergymen. However, Chapman-Adisho's contribution is the use of a smaller-scale regional lens and a focus on a previously understudied figure, Volfius. *Patriot and Priest* adds a personal quality to a historiography that was previously dominated by political and social approaches. Further, Chapman-Adisho's work on the Côte-d'Or helps decentralize the scholarly focus away from Paris. The

overall body of work on the French Revolution is highly skewed toward scholarship based on events that occurred in Paris. *Patriot and Priest* is a welcome addition to the historiography because it shows that the Parisian revolutionary experience cannot speak for the whole of France. The clergy of Côte-d'Or had a distinct experience, and Chapman-Adisho portrays it well.

Volfius was a scholar and politician in addition to his role as a priest. Throughout his life, he took these three roles equally seriously. Assuming the role of Côte-d'Or's bishop in 1791, he felt devotion to both God and the early Revolution and believed in a version of Catholicism that was compatible with the new, more egalitarian order that the revolutionaries promised. Throughout the book, Chapman-Adisho returns to Volfius's dealings with turbulence; she explains how his letters contained "strategic silences"; his measured approach likely helped Volfius persist and survive a decade that could have otherwise claimed his life (p. 81). Volfius and several of his contemporaries maintained their dual allegiance to the Catholic Church and Revolution throughout the constant chaos that the decade dealt them; many of them survived by employing a strategy similar to that of Volfius.

Chapman-Adisho provides nuances to our understanding of French Catholic clergy by delving into the experiences and beliefs of the humans that comprised this class that was hardly monolithic yet sometimes depicted as such. Individuals like Volfius thought it possible to swear allegiance to the revolutionary government and retain Catholicism's longevity in France. Because they thought the Revolution and the church were compatible, they also saw themselves in a complex light: simultaneously as patriots and priests. Chapman-Adisho's attention to the personal convictions of the clergy in Côte-d'Or is evident throughout the book. This, along with the decision to decentralize her study away from Paris, is a major departure from similar works. Extant literature on religion and the Revolution often portrays clergy in monolithic terms, or prioritizes the Parisian experience, extrapolating it to stand in for the rest of France. *Patriot and Priest* combats these limitations, insinuating that there was a multitude of revolutionary experiences. The Revolution played out differently in various regions of France, and this is especially true when looking at religion in Côte-d'Or. The revolutionary religious experience in Dijon and the broader Côte-d'Or differed from the whole of France. For example, a higher percentage of clergy took the oath in Côte-d'Or than the national average, and the region was close to the Swiss border, making emigration uniquely possible. Chapman-Adisho also addresses the tensions and interactions between local and national leadership. All in all, Chapman-Adisho provides a good case for future regional case studies of various cross-sections of the Revolution, whether thematic or geographical.

Through Volfius's experience and that of the region's inhabitants in general, Chapman-Adisho portrays the Revolution's influence on the church as a tumultuous experience. Individuals like Volfius routinely found themselves in trying situations, including suspicion from other clergy, disdain from radical revolutionaries, and even imprisonment. Chapman-Adisho's source base, which in-

cludes church documents, administrative deliberations, and correspondence, allows her to provide a thorough account of the administrative changes that the Catholic Church underwent as well as their impact on clergy and broader society. *Patriot and Priest* is a study of how the clergy and the church became caught up and intensely involved in the Revolution's tumultuous tides. Yet while the Revolution inspired plenty of disarray, it also provided opportunity to individuals like Volfius, who might never have become a bishop without revolutionary change. Thus, *Patriot and Priest* demonstrates the complicated and varied effects of the French Revolution on regions, entities, and individuals.

This study of the Catholic Church in Côte-d'Or during the French Revolution reveals a unique social quality of this region of France: these revolutionaries and clerics were particularly resourceful, persistent, and hopeful. They believed in the revolutionary tenets of liberty, equality, and brotherhood, but they equally believed in the veracity and longevity of Catholicism. The idea of patriotic, idealistic priests is scarcely mentioned in existing literature but features heavily in this book. The local and personal approach to history matters, because it reveals what prevailing documents do not. Chapman-Adisho explains that in today's world, we might easily judge these clergy members as opportunists, perhaps even naive. After all, their vision of a constitutional church ultimately failed. Yet when we look through their human eyes, and consider their predicament, their convictions become more feasible. This, in my opinion, is why it is so crucial that Chapman-Adisho privileged their perspectives and experiences. Though the constitutional church that Volfius and his peers dreamt of did not come to fruition, it had lasting effects on religion in France. This book would be ideal for any scholar of the French Revolution looking to study its effects on localities over time and those wishing to learn more about the intricacies of evolving Catholic theology in Côte-d'Or.

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