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Desecration, Secularization, Restoration: Cologne's Churches during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1792–1815

Michael Rowe

On Monday, 30 September 1811, a small procession wound its way to the incomplete hulk of Cologne Cathedral. Sulpiz Boisserée and Georg Moller are, for art historians, two of the more interesting figures amongst the team sent to inspect the structure. The former, a native of Cologne, is associated with the rediscovery of medieval art. His collection forms the basis of Munich's Alte Pinakothek. Moller, a professional architect, is thought of chiefly in connection with his neoclassical oeuvre, especially in Darmstadt. Cologne, until recently a proud Imperial City (*Reichsstadt*), was in 1811 a mere district capital on the edge of Napoleon's empire, and it was in obedience to French legislation on church maintenance that the inspection was held. Its findings made for grim reading, as we will discover, but marked the beginning of efforts that would see the cathedral preserved and later completed. Napoleon was the beginning, even with regard to church preservation.¹ This despite the fact that today his ascendancy is associated with the looting of churches or their repurposing as cavalry stables, memories of which still shape the people of Cologne's view of the so-called 'French period', from 1794 to 1814.

Churches assume a particular importance during war. They serve as a venue for observance and prayer, and their peeling bells register danger and deliverance. The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars tied ordinary people to their churches for many reasons, whilst also shattering Europe's wider religious order. Those living through the period made comparisons with the sixteenth-century Reformation. Some went back further, to Nero and Julian the Apostate. Scholars have long recognized the religious dimension to the politics and wars of this era. A whole strand of historiography devoted to 1789 foregrounds its origins in debates about Jansenism. Histories of Spain and Italy stress the centrality of religion in inspiring resistance to Napoleonic imperialism. Within the German-speaking lands, we see the Tyrol, which rose in revolt in 1809 to preserve, amongst other things, the true faith.²

¹ Thomas Nipperdey famously opened his magisterial survey of nineteenth-century Germany with the sentence 'Am Anfang war Napoleon' (In the beginning was Napoleon); see T. Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1800–1866: Bürgerwelt und starker Staat* (Munich, 1983), p. 11.

² The relevant literature is vast. The more important contributions include O. Chadwick, *The Popes and European Revolution* (Oxford, 1981); J. McManners, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century France*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1998); M. Vovelle, *The Revolution against the Church* (Columbus, OH, 1991); M. Broers, *The Politics of Religion in Napoleonic Italy: The War against God, 1801–1814* (London, 2002); J.-O. Boudon, *Napoléon et les cultes: Les religions en Europe à l'aube du XIXe siècle, 1800–1815* (Paris, 2002); C. Esdaile, *Fighting Napoleon: Guerrillas, Bandits and Adventurers in Spain 1808–1814* (New Haven, 2004); F. G. Eyck, *Loyal Rebels: Andreas Hofer and the Tyrolean Uprising of 1809* (Lanham, MD, 1986); and A. A. Caiani, *To Kidnap a Pope: Napoleon and Pius VII* (New Haven and London, 2021).

Cologne, despite its relatively low status in Napoleon's empire, was nonetheless the largest Rhenish city. In the pre-French period, it lent its name to the electorate governed from nearby Bonn. As an Imperial City, 'Holy Cologne' (*dat hillige Kölle*) enjoyed a great deal of independence. Well-established merchant interests dominated its government. Yet irrespective of its independence and commercial heritage, eighteenth-century Cologne hardly constituted a paradigm of dynamism. For a variety of reasons, it failed to benefit fully from the booming Atlantic economy. Contemporaries identified its religious intolerance, which debarred non-Catholics from civic rights, as a major problem. This intolerance, along with much else, was swept away during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars and provides the wider religious-political context for the fate of its churches.

The following engages with several debates. One is about periodization and more especially the French period's position in the debate about Germany's supposed 'second confessional age'. In its classic formulation, the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars marked the culmination of a low point in religiosity, with revival starting only after 1815.³ This article challenges that view. Despite its drama and destruction, there was much continuity and construction under French rule, especially at the parish level. This, arguably, made the Catholic Church much better equipped to face challenges thrown up later. Second, this piece contributes to debates about Napoleonic imperialism and religion. Readers interested in self-appointed 'civilizing' missionaries and what in other contexts (notably Napoleonic Egypt) is referred to as 'Orientalism' will hopefully find this discussion of interest.⁴ Third, and more specifically related to the churches themselves, this essay seeks to explore through their fate the power dynamics between key actors, including ordinary parishioners and elite art connoisseurs, during a cultural revolution.⁵ What follows adopts a chronological approach, as any other structure would obscure Cologne's journey from Imperial City, to a place under military occupation, to an outpost of an empire at war.

³ O. Blaschke, 'Das 19. Jahrhundert: ein zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter?', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 26, 1 (2000), pp. 38–75. For a critique see A. J. Steinhoff, 'Ein zweites konfessionelles Zeitalter? Nachdenken über die Religion im langen 19. Jahrhundert', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 30, 4 (2004), pp. 549–71.

⁴ The literature lavished on Napoleonic imperialism is vast. A good recently published summary is M. Rapport, 'Crossing Borders: Encounters with the Other', in A. Forrest and P. Hicks (eds), *The Cambridge History of the Napoleonic Wars*, vol. 3: *Experience, Culture and Memory* (Cambridge, 2022), pp. 142–61. For the Rhineland in this period: H. Molitor, *Vom Untertan zum Administré: Studien zur französischen Herrschaft und zum Verhalten der Bevölkerung im Rhein-Mosel-Raum von den Revolutionskriegen bis zum Ende der napoleonischen Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1980); T. C. W. Blanning, *The French Revolution in Germany: Occupation and Resistance in the Rhineland 1792–1802* (Oxford, 1983); M. Rowe, *From Reich to State: The Rhineland in the Revolutionary Age, 1780–1830* (Cambridge, 2003); P. Horn, *Le défi de l'enracinement napoléonien entre Rhin et Meuse, 1810–1814: l'opinion publique dans les départements de la Roër, de l'Ourthe, des Forêts et de la Moselle* (Berlin, 2017).

⁵ The following sources underpin this article. Published material: J. Hansen, *Quellen zur Geschichte des Rheinlandes im Zeitalter der französischen Revolution, 1780–1801*, 4 vols (Cologne, 1931–1938); J. P. Delhoven, *Die Rheinische Dorfchronik des Joan Peter Delhoven aus Dormagen (1783–1823)*, ed. H. Cardauns and R. Müller (Dormagen, 1966), and the reflections of Anna Catharina Rederscheid, published as R. Hönerlage and T. P. Becker (eds), 'Die Aufzeichnungen der Anna Catharina Rederscheid (1792–1817)', *Bonner Geschichtsblätter*, 43/44 (1993/94), pp. 133–62. The main archival collection used is the *Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln* (henceforth HASK), Bestand 350, Französische Verwaltung (henceforth FV).

I. Holy Cologne

Even a cursory glance at images of Old Regime *hillige Kölle* will recognize its status as a Catholic stronghold. Legend had it that its medieval circuit enclosed as many churches as the year had days. This was an exaggeration, but the true figure of 116 still equates to an extraordinary number given an estimated population of just over 40,000. All of them were Catholic, as Protestants were forbidden from maintaining a place of worship within the city. Jews, for their part, had been debarred from residency since 1424. Of the churches, only a small fraction, just sixteen, served parishes. The vast majority were collegiate or monastic, including the more impressive, whose upkeep was supported by endowments built up over centuries.⁶

Foreign travellers to Cologne in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries denounced the dirt and decay of the city.⁷ It was an image seemingly justified by the incomplete Gothic cathedral, construction of which had halted in the sixteenth century. In reality, Old Regime Cologne was not frozen in time. Its other churches underwent constant restoration to meet changing demands, whether liturgical or aesthetic. An example is St. Kolumba, which served Cologne's largest eighteenth-century parish. Here, renovations in the final decades of the Old Regime replaced baroque exuberance with austere classicism. A fixed tabernacle took the place of the baroque monstrance (a vessel used to display the consecrated host) and other mainly medieval 'accretions' were removed as they were deemed superfluous. Decorators used white and gold for the overall church interior.⁸ These changes illustrated the Catholic Enlightenment in Germany. They aligned with Josephinism generally and its return to first principles, which involved removing things of no public utility. This included a radical pruning of religious holidays on the grounds that they harmed economic growth. In Cologne, they were reduced from thirty-seven to eighteen on the eve of the French invasion. Reformers also encouraged the use of the German language in religious services and discouraged processions and pilgrimages.⁹ The discouragement of these external manifestations transformed churches from extensions of civic spaces where religion, politics and identity were intertwined into specialized buildings designated for religious worship.

Furthermore, these specialized spaces now had to contend with potential non-Catholic and even non-Christian competition. Tolerance, at least of Protestants if not of Jews, became a major bone of contention in Cologne in its final years as an Imperial City. Protestants already lived in the city, where they constituted an increasingly important

⁶ F. E. von Mering und L. Reischert, *Die Bischöfe und Erzbischöfe von Köln nach ihrer Reihenfolge: nebst Geschichte des Ursprunges, des Fortganges und Verfalles der Kirchen und Klöster innerhalb der Stadt Köln; mit besonderer Bezugnahme auf die Kirchen und Klöster der Erzdiözese*, 2 vols (Cologne, 1844), vol. 1, p. x.

⁷ A typical English example is C. E. Dodd, *An Autumn near the Rhine: or Sketches of Courts, Society, Scenery, & c. in Some of the German States Bordering the Rhine* (London, 1818).

⁸ E. Hegel, 'Stadtkölnischer Pfarrgottesdienst zwischen Barock und Aufklärung: Peter Hausmanns Pfarrbuch von St. Kolumba', in E. Hegel, *Ecclesiastica Rhenana: Aufsätze zur rheinischen Kirchengeschichte*, ed. S. Corsten and G. Knopp (Bonn, 1986), pp. 135–64, here pp. 137, 155–8.

⁹ For reform Catholicism, albeit in Mainz, not Cologne, see T. C. W. Blanning, *Reform and Revolution in Mainz 1743–1803* (Cambridge, 1974).

component of the mercantile elite.¹⁰ In many ways, this was part of the problem: the eighteenth century witnessed a growing gap between a small wealthy elite of businessmen and the mass of craftsmen and small merchants, who felt aggrieved by their marginalization. This sociological and political problem became a religious one when, in 1787, Protestants decided to lobby for permission to acquire a ‘prayer house’ within Cologne. They justified their request both generally, through reference to the progressive character of the age, and specifically, by pointing to the material advantages that Cologne might derive from tolerance. The petition pointed to the turmoil in the neighbouring United Provinces, from where, it was argued, wealthy refugees might be lured for the benefit of the city’s economy. At the same time, to assuage Catholic fears, the petition disavowed any intention of requesting political representation.¹¹

The city council considered the request in its sitting of 28 November 1787. It voted twenty-one to eighteen in favour of a Protestant prayer house and school. This was a very narrow margin but attracted positive publicity from the progressive regional press. Members of the Catholic clergy were also supportive. Dissenting voices complained that city councillors were breaking their oath, by which they had pledged to preserve Catholicism as it had been handed down from ages past. This opposition found institutional expression in a civic deputation which gave voice to the middling sort. The whole issue of a Protestant church now assumed constitutional importance and became bound up with political struggles between a small elite and the wider citizenry. The deputation reminded the council that no new church, whether Catholic or not, could be built without the agreement of the city’s burghers. This opposition from the Catholic majority was unrelenting and insurmountable. It dominated everyday street politics, including during the annual carnival celebrations in February 1788.¹² The student body planned to create a model of the Protestant church for the parade, which they then intended to burn in front of the mayor’s house. The authorities got wind of the plot at the last minute and prevented the affront.¹³ But the level of opposition finally caused Protestants themselves to suspend their efforts, and nothing more was achieved before the French invasion.¹⁴

II. The French Revolutionary Wars

Cologne’s convulsions about accepting a Protestant church within the city coincided with the collapse of Old Regime France. Rhinelanders only looked on as the Bastille was stormed, and crisis erupted in France. This changed in April 1792, when the Revolutionary Wars started; these would later morph into the Napoleonic Wars and roll

¹⁰ B. Becker-Jäckli, *Die Protestanten in Köln: die Entwicklung einer religiösen Minderheit von der Mitte des 18. bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne, 1983).

¹¹ Hansen, *Quellen*, vol. 1, pp. 209–13.

¹² For Cologne Carnival, especially in its post-Napoleonic form, see C. Frohn, *Der organisierte Narr: Karneval in Aachen, Düsseldorf und Köln von 1823 bis 1914* (Marburg, 2000); J. M. Brophy, ‘Carnival and Citizenship: The Politics of Carnival Culture in the Prussian Rhineland, 1823–1848’, *Journal of Social History*, 30, 4 (1997), pp. 873–904; E. G. Spencer, ‘Regimenting Revelry: Rhenish Carnival in the Early Nineteenth Century’, *Central European History*, 28, 4 (1995), pp. 457–81.

¹³ Delhoven, *Die Rheinische Dorfchronik*, p. 47.

¹⁴ The whole dispute is best followed in Hansen, *Quellen*, vol. 1, pp. 217–95.

on until the Battle of Waterloo, on 18 June 1815. The Rhineland constituted a frontline in this conflict. In the 1790s, the whole region became one of the primary zones of military operations between the French Republic (as it became on 21 September 1792) and the coalition dominated by Austria. After Napoleon's seizure of power in France, on 9 November 1799, the fighting shifted elsewhere. However, the Rhine formed the frontline in the Anglo-French economic war, fought out by smugglers and customs men.¹⁵

The French army marched into Cologne on 6 October 1794, a few days after its decisive victory at Aldenhoven. The inhabitants of Cologne and the neighbouring towns faced the French advance with trepidation. Collective memories of earlier wars remained alive, and with them recognition of the dangers of military occupation. At one level, this fear extended as much to being overrun by the Prussians and the Austrians as it did to conquest by the French. However, what set the French apart was their hostility to religion in general and Catholicism in particular. Tales of French outrages against religious sensibilities preceded their actual advance and lost nothing in the telling. They included vandalism against churches, such as breaking down doors, smashing windows and destroying furniture, treatment meted out to secular buildings too. The reports also included, however, such gratuitous activities as defecation into tabernacles and sexual acts performed with statues of the Virgin Mary. Especially outrageous were profanities against the consecrated host, including feeding it to horses and, on one occasion at least, stuffing it up the anus of a donkey. These nightmarish accounts primed Cologne's inhabitants to expect the worst as the French marched in.¹⁶

What followed in nearby Bonn and in the small town of Dormagen as well as in Cologne itself showed that such extremism was far from universal within the French army. Joan Peter Delhoven, a notable resident of Dormagen, painted a rather different picture. One striking feature of his chronicle, which covers the period from 1783 to 1823, is a lack of solidarity with the nearby Premonstratensian abbey of Knechtsteden. The abbey church became something of a contested site, but within the wider Catholic community rather than between Rhinelanders and French soldiers. The church remains an architectural jewel, an imposing Romanesque structure dating back to the twelfth century. The abbey itself was financially secure in the eighteenth century, and the church was well maintained. It far surpassed in visual splendour parish churches in the vicinity and so quite naturally symbolized wealth, accrued, allegedly, at the expense of surrounding communities. There were various irritants that troubled relations, but the main one appears to have been about access—or the lack of it—to the woods owned by the abbey. It might be assumed that Delhoven, like many enlightened Catholics of his time, was generally hostile to monasticism. However, this argument is undermined by the fact that his sister was a nun, based in Schledenhorst, and they were on good terms. So, the more likely explanation is that the trouble between Knechtsteden and its surrounds was essentially to do with the moral economy, not monasticism in principle.¹⁷

¹⁵ J. R. Hayworth, *Revolutionary France's War of Conquest in the Rhineland: Conquering the Natural Frontier, 1792–1797* (Cambridge, 2019).

¹⁶ Blanning, *French Revolution in Germany*, pp. 218–22.

¹⁷ Delhoven, *Die Rheinische Dorfchronik*, pp. 7–10, 13, 19, 49, 61, 78.

The advance of the French allowed a settling of scores with Knechtsteden. The monks abandoned the abbey before they arrived. The French billeted 500 troops in the monastic buildings, which were subjected to vandalism: doors were broken open and books from the library scattered about. More startling is the damage inflicted by the inhabitants of the surrounding area, who in March 1795 (after the French had moved on) proceeded to loot whatever remained. Delhoven writes of a thousand peasants stripping the abbey, including the church, of its wooden contents. Even the altar and organ appear to have been dismantled and carried off. Two confessionals somehow ended up in Dormagen. Whether all these stolen objects were retained for liturgical use, sold to art dealers or simply broken up for firewood is unclear. The monks returned later in 1795 and went to the French to demand justice. Amazingly, these cooperated, even despatching troops who were billeted on surrounding areas to force the return of stolen property. The village of Delven, today incorporated into Dormagen, was especially marked out for punishment by both the French and the monks. The latter threatened to terminate tenancies held by farmers, who in turn formed a compact that committed itself to burn down the house of anyone who took up a terminated tenancy.¹⁸ The whole Knechtsteden episode, in which the supposedly anticlerical revolutionary army sided with monks, undermines narratives about devout Rhinelanders facing off against godless French.

In Dormagen itself, the French army respected the sanctity of the parish church. Dedicated to Saint Michael, it dated back to the twelfth century in terms of foundations, though a substantial part of the edifice in the Napoleonic period was relatively new, most of the older building having burnt down during the Thirty Years War. The French Revolutionary Wars, in contrast, were kinder. There is no reference to looting. Indeed, preserving the church's status as a centre of communal life made sense to the occupation army, which used its pulpit to publicize decrees. French troops in the town behaved respectfully during religious services, which many of them even attended. These services continued with their usual regularity, following the familiar cycle of holy days. As before, the church remained the focal point for the celebration of rites of passage like first communion. Local youth and French soldiers shared in the fun of carnival in February 1796, a month that witnessed also the marriage of a French sergeant to a local woman. The French military participated in the Corpus Christi procession, with Delhoven noting approvingly that soldiers took off their hats and knelt at the appropriate juncture. Even pilgrimages continued, especially to the Marian shrine at Kevelaer, which historically was by far the most important destination in the region. All this was vital for maintaining morale in troubling times.¹⁹

The regional importance of Kevelaer highlights the fact that Dormagen (and indeed, Cologne) lay in a larger landscape of chapels and shrines that extended across some distance. Many of these chapels and shrines served a particular devotional purpose, intended to mitigate some misfortune or bring a benefit. For example, if bitten by a rabid dog, Dormagen's devout were most likely to travel to nearby Zons, where Saint Hubert was venerated. Armies brought with them epidemics, which afflicted humans and livestock. These too were occasions for intense religious devotion, usually centred

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 101–7, 114, 118, 120, 126–7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 128–33, 149.

on churches. Delhoven's chronicle makes clear that parish churches and their contents were not only an expression of communal solidarity but had real power in the minds of many as places of relief. The loss of a parish church was the equivalent of the closure of a local hospital today. Additionally, their physical state and particular contents—pictures, statues and other objects of veneration—were the fruit of collective effort. So too were the periodic parish church renovations, which in Dormagen's case occurred in 1727, 1779 and 1791/92.²⁰

Dormagen's experience appears to have been peculiarly benign, at least so far as the fate of its parish church was concerned. In Bonn and Cologne, there is greater evidence of upheaval and damage. In Bonn, Anna Catharina Rederscheidt, the daughter of a prosperous baker, recorded that imperial (Austrian) troops requisitioned churches in the city for use as magazines in advance of the French occupation. The (former) Jesuit church and St. Martin were thus employed in 1793, and later also St. Remigius (where Beethoven had been baptized and took organ lessons) and the minster. As for the French, Rederscheidt's first comments relating to the start of their occupation focus on the inflation and their curious paper money. She lists the price of basic commodities and consumables like coffee, sugar and rice. Rederscheidt also relays the material damage to vineyards, orchards and gardens. She did, however, single out the French for their inappropriate behaviour in church, where they were accustomed to smoke and drink even during services, and their vandalism on country roads, where they damaged crucifixes and statues of the Virgin.²¹

Cologne's churches escaped the worst of French Jacobin anticlericalism. This proved a lucky consequence of the timing of the French military occupation, which started just over two months *after* the fall of Maximilien Robespierre's radical regime on 27/28 July 1794. What followed was the more moderate Thermidorian phase of the Revolution, and the 'First Directory' (1795–1797). This regime eased up on anti-religious policies. For example, it passed a law on 21 February 1795 which allowed again for Christian worship in the Republic, albeit with continuing restrictions on bell ringing and processions outside of church. French legislation did not apply in the occupied territories in any event, but the more relaxed post-Thermidorian context was nonetheless reflected in the general attitude of the occupying army. Not only did the French allow the Corpus Christi procession to go ahead in 1795, but the commandant in Cologne ordered his troops to kneel and to take off their hats as it passed by.²²

Expressions of respect did not mean that the French exempted the Catholic Church from the financial burdens of occupation, which inevitably had an impact on the physical maintenance of church buildings. More positively, it also encouraged administrative solutions to church maintenance that would leave a more lasting legacy. The French Revolution was largely the product of fiscal-military crisis, which the new regime in Paris partially resolved by nationalizing church property within France. Again, this legislation was not at this stage extended to the Rhineland, but Cologne's clergy was nonetheless treated as a privileged order that like the nobility was subject to especially burdensome demands for money. One consequence was an impoverishment of the

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 15–19, 37 n. 67, 46, 48, 64–5, 74, 142.

²¹ Hönerlage and Becker, 'Die Aufzeichnungen der Anna Catharina Rederscheidt', p. 147.

²² Hansen, *Quellen*, vol. 3, pp. 528–9.

clergy. A second was that the clergy started to organize. They did so in part to present a unified front in dealing with the French and in part to take out collective loans with which to meet French demands. In late 1796, Johann Theodor Klein of St. Kunibert, who served as the clerical committee's secretary, lamented the dire situation that he and his fellow clerics now faced: 'We begin Year V encumbered by debt, without revenue, without pensions, without the necessities of life, and in a situation where one has loaded on the clergy all the costs of supporting religious worship.'²³

It is interesting that Klein should in this instance employ the French Republican dating system. Historians of the French Revolution have long recognized the importance of the Republic's strategy of destroying the power of the Catholic Church by creating in effect an ersatz religion.²⁴ Most dramatically, this project included repurposing Christian places of worship to serve as republican temples. This effort went through several iterations, including most famously the Cult of Reason but also the Cult of the Supreme Being, which briefly held sway in 1794. Both subsequently lost their importance, and Napoleon consigned them to history's dustbin in 1802. However, the effort to enforce a whole new calendar—one that effaced the biblical seven-day week and replaced religious holidays with a new secularized festive cycle—continued after 1794. Indeed, under the more radical Second Directory (1797–1799), enforcement intensified, even to an extent in the Rhineland. In occupied Cologne this included efforts to enforce a ban on the sale of Gregorian calendars in bookshops.²⁵ Imposition of the new calendar involved repurposing buildings as temples where new holidays and festivals might be celebrated. In Aachen, the French used the Altes Kurhaus on the Komphausbadstraße as their Temple of Reason in 1794 and 1795. This secular building housed public spaces and a ballroom that in peacetime entertained visitors to the city's famous spa.²⁶ More often than not the French requisitioned churches. In Cologne, they selected the former Jesuit church (today St. Mariä Himmelfahrt) for use as a temple, in which role it served from 1794 to 1796. Ironically, this repurposing might have saved the building from worse. Even the interior decoration remained largely intact, much to the annoyance of committed republicans. Nonetheless, this misuse of churches figured among the most prominent items of complaint in the anti-French and anti-radical literature in circulation in Cologne at this time.²⁷

Cologne confronted the most intense period of structured de-Christianization in the two years starting with the coup of 18 Fructidor V (4 September 1797), which benefited the political left. There followed a renewed enforcement of legislation against the clergy. However, ironically, the dissemination of this new legislation in one way reinforced the importance of parish churches in Cologne and beyond as community centres: public pronouncements on the new legislation were made in churches rather

²³ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 863. The beginning of Year V fell on 22 Sept. 1796.

²⁴ J. F. Byrnes, 'Celebration of the Revolutionary Festivals under the Directory: A Failure of Sacrality', *Church History*, 63, 2 (1994), pp. 201–20. This is a convincing critique of M. Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire, 1789–1799* (Paris, 1976).

²⁵ HASK, Best. 350 FV, A326. For French secular festivals under both the Republic and the Empire, see C. Buchholz, *Französischer Staatskult 1792–1813 im linksrheinischen Deutschland: mit Vergleichen zu den Nachbardepartements der habsburgischen Niederlande* (Frankfurt/Main, 1997).

²⁶ Hansen, *Quellen*, vol. 3, p. 335 n. 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 1161.

than in government buildings. The justification for this choice of location was made explicit, albeit in documents meant only for internal consumption: churches were the only places in the city where people were used to gathering in large numbers and where their immediate surroundings instilled in them a sense of respect and obedience for authority.²⁸

The usual practice that developed in these years was to requisition churches on the decade-days (*décadi*), corresponding to the tenth day of the week, which was supposed to displace the Christian Sunday. To these ‘weekly’ days were added special annual festive days. Some of these honoured major recent political events like the storming of the Bastille, the fall of the monarchy and, controversially, the execution of Louis XVI. Others celebrated categories of people, including the young, the old, and married couples. On all these occasions, the format included speech-giving by worthies, who focused on appropriately themed subjects and whose oratory was then printed in newspapers and pamphlets for wider distribution.²⁹ Significantly, local radicals—the so-called German Jacobins and *Cisrhenan*—tended to be the greatest enthusiasts for these events, which they saw as a means of breaking the hold of the Catholic Church. They often went further than the French occupation authorities were happy to go. For example, radicals in Cologne wanted to remove religious objects in churches during the republican festivities. They were prevented from doing so by the French, who strove to avoid actions that might poison public opinion unnecessarily.³⁰ Ironically, even the republican festivities backfired in the sense that they heightened the public visibility of existing places of worship, though in a way that greatly offended local sensibilities.

III. Napoleon

Napoleon’s coup of 18 Brumaire VIII (9 November 1799) marked an important caesura. Unlike earlier republican governments, the new regime assumed that certain things are immutable and need to be accepted by the state.³¹ In practical terms, this meant that the regime looked far more traditional than its revolutionary predecessors. The regime embraced the patriarchal nuclear family, which it reinforced, and co-opted propertied elites (or ‘notables’) to run local government. One of the first victims of this policy shift was the republican calendar. Non-compliance with the calendar was endemic, including in the Rhineland, where even civil servants failed to follow it.³² The new regime did not immediately abolish it, and it would run until the end of 1805. But it no longer enforced it, which meant that it slowly died a natural death. Napoleon’s prior experience as an army commander in Italy and Egypt had taught him the importance of respecting local religious sensibilities, and now he extended this principle to France as a whole. This approach motivated his settlement with the Catholic Church, negotiated directly with the recently elected pope, Pius VII (1800–1823). The negotiations

²⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 825.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 43*.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 825, 921.

³¹ M. Rowe, ‘Administration, Police and Governance’, in M. Broers and P. Dwyer (eds), *The Cambridge History of the Napoleonic Wars*, vol. 1: *Politics and Diplomacy* (Cambridge, 2022), pp. 188–207.

³² Hansen, *Quellen*, vol. 4, p. 992.

of the most poignant observations is of the mass of impoverished monks and nuns thrown onto public charity by Napoleon's dissolution of the monasteries. The native Rhinelanders among them were at least accorded pensions, though at a meagre level; non-natives, including those from Germany across the Rhine, were not entitled to any support. A good proportion of Rederscheidt's writings from this period focus on the fate of churches. We learn, for example, about the Franciscan friary next door to her home, which was turned into a textile factory. We also learn that some of Bonn's other collegiate and monastic churches were demolished or turned into military barracks, factories and, in one case, a bakery. Rederscheidt also followed avidly changes to the parish structure and the reassignment of churches to serve specific districts. She records meticulously the fate of particular church objects and furniture, such as altars, choir benches, confessionals and organs, many of which were rescued for use by the parishes. She notes how the parishes were required to take inventories of the contents of their churches and that members of the laity stood surety for items so that they could continue to be used for religious celebrations and not be taken by the French. She also expresses concern for the souls of the dead whose bodies lay under churches that were being demolished: their fate, for which she prayed, rather than any aesthetic improvement to the cityscape, which she ignored, was her main concern.³⁸

Delhoven's account of the Napoleonic reforms in Dormagen throws up similar observations, though with a tone that is more optimistic. Whereas Rederscheidt tends to see the problems, Delhoven dwells on opportunities. Not the least of these was the opportunity to embellish further Dormagen's parish church by acquiring religious objects from less fortunate places of worship. Dormagen's mayor allocated 600 francs from the municipal budget for this purpose. Purchases included an organ from the chapel of St. Margaretha in Cologne and an altar, communion bench and pulpit from St. Laurenz (also in Cologne). Dormagen's notables organized the necessary transport of the effects free of charge. In addition, Dormagen's leaders agreed with their counterparts in Zons upon the division of effects from the dissolved Franciscan friary of Zons. The intention was that henceforth natives of Dormagen could spare themselves the journey to Zons in order to fulfil various devotional requirements. All this reinforced Dormagen's sense of importance, which had already been boosted by the French making it a cantonal seat. This promotion within the civilian administrative structure resulted in its parish being rated 'first class', making it superior to those of neighbouring settlements. The crowning moment came on 13 September 1804, when Napoleon himself passed through Dormagen on his way to Cologne, and the town's worthies felt confident enough to ask for the authorization of a supplementary tax to fund the construction of a larger church, given that the existing one could no longer accommodate the growing congregation.³⁹

Within Cologne, the revival of Christian religiosity not surprisingly focused on the incomplete Gothic cathedral (the *Dom*). An important ceremony was held there on Sunday, 3 July 1803, marking the feast of Saints Peter and Paul. Amongst the participants was Marc-Antoine Berdolet, the recently installed bishop of Aachen, to which Cologne—until then an archdiocese—was now subordinate. However, the day's

³⁸ Hönerlage and Becker, 'Die Aufzeichnungen der Anna Catharina Rederscheidt', pp. 149–51.

³⁹ Delhoven, *Die Rheinische Dorfchronik*, pp. 184–5, 188.

proceedings dwelt not on this dramatic demotion of Cologne, but rather on Napoleon's achievement as restorer of religious peace.⁴⁰ Following the service, the authorities provided details of the new parish structure in Cologne. There were to be four main parishes (St. Maria im Kapitol, St. Peter, St. Kolumba and Dom), with roughly equal-sized congregations (ranging from 9,600 to 11,883). Each of the four main parishes would in addition contain four subsidiary parishes, with their own churches and priests. This came close to the number of parishes under the Old Regime. The new distribution of parish churches, which made much greater sense now than the previous unevenness, is striking. All churches beyond those required for parish use were to be sold off.⁴¹

The next stage in the process was to decide which churches should survive. The seemingly simple solution of keeping the existing parish churches and auctioning off the collegiate and monastic ones made no sense: first, it would have hindered the fairly even geographical distribution that was clearly desirable; and second, the collegiate and monastic structures tended to be larger and from an art-historical standpoint more valuable. Cologne was fortunate at this juncture to have within its walls the polymath Ferdinand Franz Wallraf, a canon at St. Maria im Kapitol. Amongst his many areas of expertise was art history. Cologne's administration wisely solicited his advice before presenting a preferred list for approval by the bishop and prefect.⁴² As a consequence, only four of the original parish churches (St. Alban, St. Johann-Baptist, St. Mauritius and St. Peter) continued as such. The rest were replaced by the impressive collegiate and monastic churches that to this day represent the most important part of Cologne's cultural patrimony.⁴³ One of the many losers in this process was St. Maria ad Gradus, a small medieval church sandwiched between the cathedral and the Rhine. Its location made conversion into a parish church undesirable, so it was turned into a storage facility for tobacco, the processing of which then constituted one of Cologne's more important industries.⁴⁴

The Napoleonic regime instituted important reforms for the management of parish affairs by decreeing the formation of church councils.⁴⁵ Their creation would set on a firmer footing the long-term maintenance of churches. Initial legislation was fleshed out in the detailed imperial decree of 30 December 1809, which ran to 114 separate articles. The councils would meet quarterly, although either the bishop or prefect could

⁴⁰ *Kölnische Zeitung*, 142 (4 July 1803).

⁴¹ The more logical parochial distribution can best be seen in the maps of the city presented in J. Oepen, 'Karten: Stifte, Klöster und Pfarreien in Köln vor und nach 1802—Vorbemerkungen', in G. Mölich, J. Oepen and W. Rosen (eds), *Klosterkultur und Säkularisation im Rheinland* (Essen, 2002), pp. 29–34. For further details see J. Bayer, *Die Franzosen in Köln: Bilder aus den Jahren 1794–1814. Mit Verzeichnis der Kölner Strassen und Kirchen in damaliger Zeit* (Cologne, 1925), pp. 98–113.

⁴² HASK, Best. 350 FV, A2160. For the minutes of the relevant city council meeting of 3 Aug. 1804, see HASK, Best. 350 FV, A4445. For Wallraf, whose art collection formed the basis of the Wallraf-Richartz Museum, see K. Müller, *Ferdinand Franz Wallraf: Gelehrter, Sammler, Kölner Ehrenbürger 1748–1824* (Cologne, 2017).

⁴³ Bayer, *Die Franzosen in Köln*, p. 106.

⁴⁴ A digitized contemporary plan of the ex-church in its new function is accessible online courtesy of the Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen. Landesarchiv NRW Abteilung Rheinland, RW Karten/ RW Karten, Nr. 8056. 'Grundriß und Ansicht der Kapellen der ehemaligen Kirche St. Maria ad gradus in Köln, eingerichtet als Tabaklager'. To access the image online, search for 'RW Karten, Nr. 8056' at <https://www.archive.nrw.de/archivsuche> (accessed 13 Dec. 2023).

⁴⁵ The term used in Napoleonic legislation was 'Conseil de fabrique'. The full decree is produced in *Bulletin des lois de l'Empire française*, series 4, vol. 13, no. 303.

convoke extraordinary gatherings as needed. Their main function was to manage parish accounts. The decree set their membership at five or nine, depending on the size of the parish. These members were to be resident Catholic notables, plus the mayor and parish priest. The bishop would choose five or three members, depending on the council's size, and the prefect four or two. However, both were dependent upon suggestions made by the municipalities. These were directed to put forward the names of men of substance who enjoyed the respect of the wider community. Those who had previously served as parish managers were favoured.⁴⁶ A sense of the business transacted by these parish councils in Napoleonic Cologne can be gleaned from a review of the accounts of St. Kolumba. In 1810 and 1811, the council managed an annual expenditure of approximately 16,000 francs, which was covered by an equivalent income, the bulk of which came from various forms of rent and interest. The expenditure included personnel costs for various parish office holders, church repairs and the maintenance of the organ.⁴⁷ Church repairs figured prominently amongst the councils' responsibilities. French legislation instructed that wardens and the parish treasurer make biannual inspections of their church in the company of an architect, with one inspection at the beginning of spring and the other at the start of autumn. It was in compliance with this requirement that Boisserée and Moller made their autumn inspection in September 1811.

Cologne Cathedral occupies a central place in nineteenth-century medieval revivalism.⁴⁸ As early as 1790, the naturalist and later radical Georg Forster had an ecstatic experience when visiting the structure. Greek architecture might be the most beautiful, he subsequently wrote, but what one encountered in Cologne cathedral was otherworldly.⁴⁹ During the 1790s, the cathedral's fortunes were not dissimilar to those of other churches within the city. It served as a place of spiritual solace for a community afflicted by war. In July 1795, for example, a special ten-hour prayer service was held for peace, an event reported in the local press because of the tumult provoked by the inappropriate behaviour of a French soldier present.⁵⁰ The following year the cathedral was requisitioned to serve as an army depot, and religious services were transferred to the nearby St. Maria im Pesch.⁵¹ Fortunately, the chapter had taken care on the eve of the occupation to evacuate across the Rhine the moveable treasures housed in the cathedral, most of which were transferred to Prague.⁵² Had this not occurred, then it is likely that the French would have seized what they considered the most valuable items for public display in the recently established museum in the Louvre. Some important works from Cologne churches, including notably Peter Paul Rubens's *The Crucifixion of*

⁴⁶ HASK, Best. 350 FV, A1572.

⁴⁷ HASK, Best. 350 FV, A1572A, 'Compte Général des recettes & dépenses de la Fabrique de l'Eglise paroissiale de St. Colombe à Cologne'.

⁴⁸ The scholarly literature devoted to the history of Cologne Cathedral is considerable. For the purposes of this article, most relevant is T. Nipperdey, 'Der Kölner Dom als Nationaldenkmal', in T. Nipperdey, *Nachdenken über die deutsche Geschichte: Essays* (Munich, 1986), pp. 156–71. See also K. Pilger, *Der Kölner Zentral-Dombauverein im 19. Jahrhundert: Konstituierung des Bürgertums durch formale Organisation* (Cologne, 2004).

⁴⁹ G. Forster, *Ansichten vom Niederrhein, von Brabant, Flandern, Holland, England und Frankreich, im April, Mai und Junius 1790*, 3 vols (Berlin, 1791–1794), vol. 1, pp. 70–3.

⁵⁰ Hansen, *Quellen*, vol. 3, p. 546.

⁵¹ K. Müller, *Köln von der französischen zur preußischen Herrschaft 1794–1814* (Cologne, 2005), p. 284.

⁵² Hansen, *Quellen*, vol. 3, pp. 196–7.

St Peter (taken from the church of St. Peter, Cologne, where Rubens had been baptized), had already taken this route, to join other treasures of European art sourced above all from Italy.

The establishment of the Louvre was intended to turn Paris into a world capital where the best artists might gather and there, inspired by humanity's greatest achievements, hone their own skills and thereby contribute to civilization. Amongst the first beneficiaries of this French concept was Sulpiz Boisserée, who paid an extended visit to Paris in autumn 1803. Boisserée, thanks in part to the influence of Ludwig Tieck, was already at this point receptive to Gothic as a uniquely German style that immortalized the *Volk*. Whilst in Paris, Boisserée attended a series of lectures given by Friedrich Schlegel in what was to prove an important moment in the history of medieval revivalism.⁵³ Schlegel would return to Cologne with Boisserée, who over the winter of 1803/4 embarked upon his career as an art collector. This was a propitious moment given the flood of artefacts onto the market caused by the secularization of many churches. Much adjudged artistically valuable could not be rescued, including wall paintings tantalizingly made visible as the covering plaster fell off as churches were demolished. Boisserée drew on his local knowledge, and in particular on his connections with Cologne's clergy, who were best placed to know where valuable items might be found. His activities were complemented by Schlegel's lectures on art history, which included reflections on the cathedral's significance.⁵⁴ The completion of this edifice now became something of an obsession for Boisserée, who over the next years engaged in a variety of initiatives. These included researching what the completed cathedral should look like, based in part on a detailed survey of the existing structure and on studies of other buildings from the period that might provide a sense of patterns and principles. Boisserée also reached out to the German cultural influencers of the period, including Goethe, which went some way in compensating for the surprising lack of interest from Cologne's elite.⁵⁵

It was hence logical that Boisserée join Moller in the 1811 inspection. They were accompanied by two other architects from Cologne, and together they focused on the choir, the western facade and the supporting structure around the bells. Their findings were concerning, with warnings that the entire bell support might collapse in stormy weather. They urged remedial work before the winter, not least because of the building's importance as a prime example of the 'genre gothéque'. The municipality did authorize sums, though modest ones in the grand scheme of things. They came nowhere close to the vast amount lavished by Napoleon's government (420,000 francs in 1812 alone) for completion of Cologne's all-weather harbour, which showed where the regime's real priorities lay.⁵⁶ This miserliness proved all too

⁵³ R. Matthaëi, *Sulpiz Boisserée und die Vollendung des Kölner Doms: eine Biographie* (Norderstedt, 2016), pp. 18–23.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 26–34.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 34–43, 59–65.

⁵⁶ HASK, Best. 350 FV, A2076. See also HASK, Best. 350 FV, A2074, 'Unterhalt der Dächer der hohen Domkirche'. It is worth reflecting that the total expenses of the municipality amounted to around half a million francs annually, with the outlays devoted to the cathedral generally falling under 3,000 francs. Street lighting cost about 28,000 francs, and 2,500 francs were spent on fire-fighting pumps, HASK, Best. 350 FV, A1239. 'Budget der Stadt, 1811'.

much for Boisserée, who complained to Moller that nothing was to be expected from his ‘Philistine compatriots’ (*spießbürgerlichen Landsleute*).⁵⁷ In the end, nothing much was achieved in the Napoleonic period. Optimism revived only in 1813, at least within cultural circles, against the background of the so-called Wars of Liberation. Boisserée’s careful handling of Goethe then bore fruit in the form of a public pronouncement from this oracle in favour of the vision. Yet, despite further lobbying of major political figures in 1814 and 1815, nothing much beyond essential preservation work and the chance discovery of the original building plans was achieved at this juncture.⁵⁸

Cologne’s Catholics might not have achieved completion of their cathedral, but the city’s Protestants finally got their church. As noted above, the small but relatively wealthy minority gave up its attempts to acquire a prayer house in 1789. The French invasion brought hope for change. In particular, General Lazare Hoche, who was the senior military commander in the region in 1797, applied considerable pressure on the city to rectify what he considered to be a gross injustice. During meetings with city leaders in April and May 1797, Hoche threatened to exempt Protestants from military requisitioning unless they be allowed to build a church.⁵⁹ This pressure eased off when Hoche died of tuberculosis on 19 September that year. Though Cologne’s government accorded Protestants full civic rights a few months later, a contemporary observer noted that the minority was reluctant to petition the French more openly for fear of arousing the hatred of the Catholic majority.⁶⁰

Cologne’s Protestants made progress only after the Treaty of Lunéville, at which point they became French citizens with all the rights and obligations that implied. Things moved fast at this point. Lutheranism and Calvinism were both recognized as approved religions by the regime in the aforementioned law of 8 April 1802. Little more than a month later, on 23 May, Cologne’s first Protestant place of worship was opened in a civic event attended by dignitaries including the mayor and sub-prefect. The culmination came with the obligatory eulogies to Napoleon. These emphasized the importance of religious morality, condemned the Cult of Reason and argued that religious tolerance furthered economic prosperity. The prayer house itself was the rather inconspicuous former hall of the guild of brewers, located off the Schildergasse. The Protestant community considered this a temporary arrangement whilst they secured a more appropriate structure to serve the needs of a community estimated at between 500 and 600 souls. They feared Catholic sensibilities if they acquired a secularized church, but proceeded nonetheless, and quickly decided upon the Antoniterkirche, a fourteenth-century church similarly located on the Schildergasse. The legal transfer of ownership took place on 6 August 1802, in an uneventful, low-key event.⁶¹ Significantly,

⁵⁷ Sulpiz Boisserée to Georg Moller, 29 July 1813, in S. Boisserée, *Der Briefwechsel mit Moller, Schinkel und Zwirner, unter Verwendung der Vorarbeiten von Elisabeth Christern und Herbert Rode*, ed. A. Wolff (Cologne, 2008), p. 43. For Moller’s activities at the cathedral in the Napoleonic period, including his advice about the removal of baroque accretions (which was then authorized by the prefect), see T. Schumacher, *Grossbaustelle Kölner Dom: Technik des 19. Jahrhunderts bei der Vollendung einer gotischen Kathedrale* (Cologne, 1993), p. 16.

⁵⁸ Matthaei, *Sulpiz Boisserée*, pp. 89–116.

⁵⁹ Hansen, *Quellen*, vol. 3, pp. 941–3, 1008–9.

⁶⁰ Hansen, *Quellen*, vol. 4, pp. 294–9, 453 n. 1.

⁶¹ HASK, Best. 350 FV, A1764. For an account of the inauguration see *Journal général de politique, de littérature et de commerce* 244 (4 Prairial X/24 May 1802). For the Protestant clergy in the region, see A. Becker, *Napoleonische*

and reflective of a degree of interconfessional harmony in elite circles, the refurbishment of the church was assisted by Wallraf. Once complete, the Antoniterkirche was inaugurated on 19 May 1805 with a public musical event in which compositions by the assistant kapellmeister of Munich, Franz Danzi, were especially prominent. Indicative of the general tone is the memorable verse ‘Schutz Staat und Kirche, Haus und Thron/ Noch lange durch Napoleon!’ (Protect State and Church, Home and Throne/ For ages, through Napoleon).⁶²

A Protestant church’s appearance in Cologne challenged the traditional Catholic monopoly. Trouble arose on 15 August 1807, when Catholics celebrated the Assumption but onto which the imperial regime grafted the feast of Saint Napoleon. The (Catholic) procession passed the new Protestant church just as its congregation was leaving its own service, forcing its members to jostle their way through. The local Lutheran consistory complained to Berdolet and accused Catholics of having purposefully changed their route. The consistory also accused Cologne’s mayor, Johann Jakob von Wittgenstein (a Catholic), of having asked Protestants to ring their church bells and scatter flowers on the street as the procession passed by. Berdolet largely brushed off the matter by stating that religious manifestations outside a church were a matter for the secular authority and referred the issue to Wittgenstein. He concluded that the procession had passed off without incident and that there had been no complaints from Protestants about Catholic behaviour. Protestants, the report added, had not followed the request to ring bells or scatter flowers, even though these acts were intended to honour Saint Napoleon.⁶³ There is no indication that the issue was taken any further. Maybe the Protestant community decided to drop the matter lest it be accused of profaning the emperor. Ordinary Catholics, one suspects, had repurposed the imperial cult to reassert their dominance of Cologne’s public spaces.

The breakthrough for Protestants encouraged Cologne’s tiny Jewish community. The community was entirely new: Cologne had expelled its Jewish inhabitants in 1424, and the ban on their settlement remained until the French period, when a new community started to form. The initial focus was on the acquisition of land to serve as a cemetery. Community leaders petitioned the sub-prefect to this effect in December 1802.⁶⁴ In the exchanges that followed, it came to light that Cologne’s mayor had already allowed the burial of three guillotined Jews in the grounds of a dissolved convent. Their interment went against Napoleonic legislation, which forbade burials within cities for public health reasons.⁶⁵ Interestingly, the site in question was Maria im Tempel, in the

Elitenpolitik im Rheinland: die protestantische Geistlichkeit im Roerdepartement 1802–1814 (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2011).

⁶² HASK, Best. 350 FV, A1769, ‘Einweihungsoratorium in der protestantischen Kirche (XIII flor. 29).

⁶³ HASK, Best. 350 FV, A1773, ‘Vermeidung der Störung des Gottesdienstes der Protestanten durch vorübergehende Prozessionen der Katholiken’.

⁶⁴ H. Molitor, ‘Die Juden im französischen Rheinland’, in J. Bohnke-Kollwitz, W. P. Eckert, F. Golczewski and H. Greive (eds), *Köln und das rheinische Judentum: Festschrift Germania Judaica 1959–1984* (Cologne, 1984), pp. 87–94. See also A. Küntzel, *Fremde in Köln: Integration und Ausgrenzung zwischen 1750 und 1814* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2008), pp. 60–4, 201–8, and S. S. Magnus, *Jewish Emancipation in a German City: Cologne, 1798–1871* (Stanford, CA, 1997), pp. 27–45.

⁶⁵ HASK, Best. 350 FV, A1572. For the immensely detailed official guidelines on burials in Napoleonic Cologne, see HASK, Best. 350N FV Nachtrag, A27, ‘Reglement über die Polizei der Begräbnisse auf dem neuen Kirchhofe in Melaten’.

Glockengasse. Part of this location was acquired a year later by the Jewish community and served as the site for a synagogue constructed under the sponsorship of Abraham Oppenheim in the 1850s. As for a Jewish place of burial, it appears from correspondence in 1810 that whilst Cologne's Catholics and Protestants now enjoyed the use of newly established cemeteries, no such provision had been made for Jews, who instead were buried in Deutz.⁶⁶

Catholic churches continued to dominate Cologne as they had before. The difference was that their management and use were minutely determined by authorities outside of the city. They regulated in detail those practices that came under the heading 'the practice of Catholic religion outside' (*l'exercice extérieur du culte catholique*). For example, the timing and extent of church bell ringing was set out with a precision that is obsessive. The frequent repetition of instructions nonetheless leaves the impression that much was ignored and that old practices continued.⁶⁷ Churches in general, and the cathedral in particular, served as focal points for celebration of the Napoleonic personality cult. An expenses claim covering 1 January 1809 to 17 April 1814 provides a useful summary of the occasions and anniversaries deemed proper for celebration with *Te Deums* (charged by the parish council at 100 francs each) and processions (250 francs).⁶⁸ The cathedral hosted annual festivities for Corpus Christi, Saint Napoleon and the anniversary of the imperial coronation. It furthermore provided the backdrop for the celebration of key dynastic events, like Napoleon's marriage to Marie Louise of Austria (1810) and the birth of their son (1811). The final category of celebrations concerned the military and political and tended to occur during major campaigns. These include battles and triumphal entries into enemy cities like Madrid (1808), Vienna (1809) and Moscow (1812). What is especially striking is the inclusion of two anti-Napoleonic festivities: on 6 April 1814, to mark the Allied entry into Paris; and on 17 April 1814, to commemorate the 'liberation of Germany' (*Befreiung Deutschlands*). Cologne's authorities could draw on centuries of experience in managing wars and occupations. They were practised in twisting and turning to conform to new political realities. This latest about-face was forced by the successful Coalition invasion across the Rhine, which occurred in January 1814. The fact that the seemingly timeless cathedral presided over all provided welcome stability for those living within its shadow.

IV. Conclusion

The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars changed Cologne's religious landscape. The transformation was as dramatic as anything seen since the establishment of Christianity in the city. Direct war-induced damage to churches was not especially important, despite some lurid profanities committed by the French revolutionary army. Use by the French of Cologne's churches to stable horses has entered into local folklore. However,

⁶⁶ See HASK, Best. 350 Französische Verwaltung, A1572, sub-prefect of Cologne to mayor of Cologne, 10 Sept. 1810. Also, Magnus, *Jewish Emancipation*, pp. 39–40.

⁶⁷ HASK, Best. 350 FV, A1807, 1905 and A1907.

⁶⁸ HASK, Best. 350 FV, A2078. A *Te Deum* in this context refers to a thanksgiving service centred on the Latin hymn *Te Deum laudamus* ('Thee, O God, we praise').

the long-term damage was insignificant when compared to the Allied bombing of the Second World War. Far more transformative were the Napoleonic reforms. These were enabled by the Revolutionary Wars and helped cover the cost of both those wars and of those that came to bear Napoleon's name.

As for the wider debates about the nature of French imperialism in this period and about Germany's later religious revival, the following conclusions can be drawn from a study of churches. The story of Knechtsteden in particular belies any simple narrative of Catholic Rhinelanders versus godless French invaders. Neither side was a homogenous entity. What is also clear is that French imperialism was an elitist project. It rested upon collaboration from local 'notables', men of property and influence, like Delhoven of Dormagen. They had the wherewithal to exploit the opportunities thrown up by war and occupation. Confessional affiliation, in contrast, was largely irrelevant. This proved beneficial to Cologne's religious minorities, and Protestants in particular, for whom French rule proved transformative. Their possession of a church on the Schildergasse made visible their status. The poor and women like Rederscheidt had little or no agency in this imperial order. They looked on in bewilderment as their familiar surroundings changed. These surroundings included especially churches, with which they enjoyed an intimacy like that with their own home. The fact that a city planner, conservationist and public-health official approved of the French changes would have left Rederscheidt as unimpressed as if they had on similar grounds broken into her home and rearranged all the furniture.

In terms of religious revival, and more specifically its periodization in Germany, the French-era reforms resulted in a more logical parish structure and in many ways more rational distribution of resources within the church. New institutions co-opted local notables into the upkeep of churches, whose survival and renovation in the century of 'bourgeois' associations that lay ahead was thus assured. Ordinary Catholics within Cologne were now likely to find themselves worshipping in more magnificent and for the art historian more valuable surroundings after the Revolutionary/Napoleonic wars than under the Holy Roman Empire. The same was true in Dormagen, where the parish church benefitted from important acquisitions made possible by secularization. It was also true of Bonn, though as noted, it can be speculated that worshippers like Rederscheidt would have preferred to keep the familiar, whatever the experts said. What is not supported here is the argument that religiosity was somehow weak before the French period and that revolutionary excess in the 1790s sparked a revival. This version might work at the level of political ideas, which saw the works of François-René de Chateaubriand and the conversion (in Cologne) of Friedrich Schlegel. However, at the less elevated level of popular religiosity, the analyst of Napoleonic Cologne is struck as much by the continuities. Even if the churches were new to their worshippers, the religious holidays were celebrated in the old way, church bells rung as before, and pilgrimages made to shrines. Ordinary people found comfort in anything familiar they could retain when confronted with the upheaval brought by empire and war.

Abstract

The Napoleonic era was transformative for Cologne's churches. The wars that characterized this period brought destruction and upheaval. The invading French army that occupied the city in 1794 was an agent of the new Republic, a polity then at war with Catholicism. Most spectacularly, this resulted in the desacralization of Cologne's churches, some of which were turned into storage depots for the army or made into temples for the new republican cult. However, once Napoleon seized control of the Republic in 1799, a new French policy was enforced in the city and surrounding region. It restored many aspects of the old familiar religious order, but at the same time created new institutions of church management and preservation that survived the end of French rule in 1814.

King's College London, UK
michael.rowe@kcl.ac.uk