Document generated on 04/25/2024 12:34 a.m.

Mémoires du livre
Studies in Book Culture

Religious Books, the French Revolution and the Printer Jean-Baptiste Collignon in Metz

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Volume 6, Number 2, Spring 2015

Livre et religion
Religion and the Book

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1032710ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/1032710ar

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Publisher(s)

Groupe de recherches et d'études sur le livre au Québec

ISSN

1920-602X (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

McLeod, J. & Girard, R. (2015). Religious Books, the French Revolution and the Printer Jean-Baptiste Collignon in Metz. *Mémoires du livre / Studies in Book Culture*, *6*(2). https://doi.org/10.7202/1032710ar

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MÉMOIRES DU LIVRE
STUDIES IN BOOK CULTURE

RELIGIOUS BOOKS, THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE PRINTER JEAN-BAPTISTE COLLIGNON IN METZ

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ABSTRACT

When the Revolutionary government in France declared Freedom of the Press in 1789 it did not anticipate the flow of counter-revolutionary pamphlets attacking its decision to nationalize the French Church and require all clergy to swear an oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. This article examines the conditions surrounding the printing of these religious pamphlets by investigating the career of one provincial printer in the border town of Metz—Jean-Baptiste Collignon—who worked with émigré bishops to produce them and who was guillotined in 1794 for counterrevolutionary activities. The authors explore the production and distribution of religious pamphlets, the ideological commitment of revolutionary printers, and the regional nature of censorship in the early French Revolution.

RÉSUMÉ

Alors qu'en 1789, le gouvernement révolutionnaire décrétait la liberté de la presse, il était difficile pour lui de prévoir l'ampleur de la diffusion de pamphlets contrerévolutionnaires produits peu après en réaction à la décision de l'Assemblée de nationaliser l'Église de France et d'imposer à son clergé un serment de soutien à la Constitution civile du clergé. Dans cet article, les auteures examinent le contexte de publication des pamphlets religieux par l'entremise de la carrière d'un imprimeur messin, Jean-Baptiste Collignon, qui s'associa aux évêques émigrés afin de produire ce type d'écrits et qui fut guillotiné en 1794 pour activités contrerévolutionnaires. Elles analysent la production et la distribution des

pamphlets religieux, la motivation idéologique des imprimeurs et le système de censure régional aux débuts de la Révolution française.

In October 1793, in the middle of the Terror in the French Revolution, Jean-Baptiste Collignon was arrested in the northern border town of Metz and accused of "printing works (*écrits*) attacking the government," and of helping the enemies of the Republic.[1] The police in Metz raided his printing house and seized a number of letters that provided damning evidence against him. Municipal authorities decided that the activities of this 61-year-old established Metz printer were too serious to handle locally and, in February, ordered him sent to Paris where, after a short trial, he was guillotined on March 29, 1794, at Place de la République, making him one of eleven provincial printers executed during the French Revolution for counter-revolutionary activity.[2] At the heart of his crimes were his activities printing counter-revolutionary pamphlets in Metz and exporting them across the border to Luxembourg and Trèves. These pamphlets were religious works. This paper will analyze Collignon's story to investigate the relatively unknown subject of printers in the French Revolution and the place of religious printing and ideological commitment in the work and lives of some of them. Printers in the French Revolution have received some historical attention.[3] One recent tendency is to describe revolutionary printers as opportunists or trimmers and to decry their lack of ideological commitment.[4] Another is to focus on Paris and on the national context. The international character of the eighteenth-century book trade in France has received the attention of many historians who have identified a number of publishing houses in Switzerland, the Netherlands, and London, that produced titles for the French market that arguably played a role in the French Revolution by wearing away at public respect for the monarchy.[5] What is much less studied is the cross-border movement of books after 1789. How did the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the collapse of royal censorship in Versailles and Paris affect this trade? [6] This study of a French printer in the border town of Metz provides insight into the ways in which the Revolution transformed his business, taking him into the world of clandestine printing for both foreign and domestic markets. Printers before the Revolution had ways of adapting, coping, and avoiding persecution, and Collignon's story shows the continuity of these practices into the Revolution. In addition to shedding light on the cross-border movement of

pamphlets and books, and on the role of religious texts in revolutionary printing, it also suggests that the reintroduction of censorship, after the summer of 1789, may best be understood regionally and that Collignon's conservatism and his actions reflect Metz political life.

Jean-Baptiste Collignon was a member of long-established printing dynasty in Metz, an important garrison town of some 33,000 people that had a Parlement, a bishop, and an intendant. For most of the eighteenth century, the Collignon family held one of the only two printing licences awarded to the town. Like elsewhere in France in the late reign of Louis XIV, the royal council became involved in setting quotas on the numbers of printers and regulating printers' affairs. In Metz, it endorsed the claims of both the Antoine and Collignon families in 1704.[7] In 1742, Jean-Baptiste's grandfather, Joseph, took over from his widowed mother and grandmother and ran a major printing establishment in Metz, "à la Bible d'Or, Place Saint Jacques," which was on the Rue des Clercs, a location that was very near the Parlement of Metz. He printed religious texts and gradually began to focus on judicial printing, much of it for the Parlement. Joseph Collignon's judicial printing and his King's Printer business expanded greatly in the 1760s,[8] but the suppression of the Parlement of Metz in 1771 led to the collapse of Joseph's legal business printing. It was at this point that Joseph passed on his business to his cousin, Jean-Baptiste. An initial attempt to make the transfer met with resistance from the local guild because Jean-Baptiste was a goldsmith like his father and not a printer.[9] But fortunately his father was able to make a case for himself as a printer's son, a designation, although contested, which was used to smooth the way. The issue of the father's profession mattered less to Versailles officials than the status of the family, the patrons, and Joseph's professed intention to pass on the business to his cousin, so in 1772, Jean-Baptiste Collignon received a royal printer licence.[10]

Jean-Baptiste Collignon thus began a career as a printer in 1772 with a large printing house on the Place Saint Jacques and, six years later, was employing fifteen workers.[11] In 1761, he married Françoise Alexandre, the daughter of a *conseiller du roi* and *commissaire au siège royal de la police*, and they had several children.[12] The rival Antoine family handled the King's printing from 1772 and printed for the Parlement of Metz when it returned in 1775. Collignon turned to the Bishop for work and became the official printer of the Bishop of Metz, Louis-Joseph de Montmorency-Laval, for whom he provided all

sorts of diocesan printing (*missels, graduels, rituels*).[13] This relationship would influence his future. From the beginning of his episcopate the Bishop had not been very present in Metz, a situation that worsened in 1786 when his function as the *grand-aumônier du Roi* demanded that he stay in Versailles.[14] While Montmorency-Laval was busy serving the King in Paris, he counted on his protégé, Monseigneur d'Orope, Henri de Chambre d'Urgons, *grand archidiacre de l'Église* of Metz, to manage the diocese. Montmorency-Laval was a valued client for whom Collignon printed religious works such as *L'office de l'église en français et en latin contenant les offices du matin et du soir pour le principaux dimanches et le fêtes de l'année… imprimé par l'ordre de Monseigneur l'Evêque pour l'usage de son Diocèse*. In 1788, he printed *Catéchisme du diocèse de Metz, imprimé par l'ordre de monseigneur l'illustrissime & révérendissime évêque de Metz, prince du Saint Empire; pour être seul enseigné dans tout son diocèse*.[15] An analysis of a collection of Collignon's printing between 1773 and 1790 shows that religious texts made up some 36% of his production, a category far larger than any other.[16]

While his main work seems to have been as a printer for the ecclesiastical and military authorities of ancien-régime France, Collignon also did a significant business printing for other clients. Early in his career, he printed a 703-page *Histoire générale de Metz* by a group of Benedictines.[17] As official printer for the Monnaie Court, from 1785 he printed works on coins, medals, and on military subjects, notably on artillery. Between 1783 and 1790, he printed an important almanac for the town, *Almanach des Trois Evêchés* that contained a wide range of practical information. This was a roughly 350-page annual publication, a sort of eighteenth-century directory and calendar combined, that named all-important dates in the year as well as all administrations and administrative personnel in the region. In addition, he printed *factums*, legal briefs that were sold to the judges in the courts and to the public, which publicized legal disputes in an unprecedented manner in the last years of the ancien régime.[18] An example of one of these in 1778 was *À nossgrs de Parlement … Louis Charbonnier, capitaine ingénieur… contre dame Jeanne Marie de Mesmay*. In 1787, he also printed a response by Isaie Ben Bing to an anti-Semitic pamphlet which was entitled *Lettre de S.I.B.B., juif de Metz, à l'auteur anonyme d'un écrit intitulé: "Le cri du citoyen contre les juifs français."*[19] Collignon had a thriving business intimately associated with the work of legal, military and religious authorities.

It is difficult to discern Collignon's views in the early days of the Revolution, as there are modest signs that he supported some of the new developments. We do not know how he reacted to the pre-revolutionary struggles between the Parlements and the King's ministers that led to the Revolution, nor how he reacted to the first developments of the Revolution. He printed an early edition of the *Cahiers de doléances* of the Third Estate of Metz, dated April 16, 1789.[20] Later, his younger son joined the National Guard.[21] He bought nationalized property. His almanac changed name and became the *Almanac of the Department of Metz*. The titles of works he printed—and on which he included the name of his printing house—suggest that he was printing for the military and, by 1792, calling himself *imprimeur du commandement*. In this capacity, he rushed the news of the French victory at Valmy into print in brochures offering General Kellerman's account.[22] He also printed copies of letters from General Wimpffen to Kellerman and of a letter of the *Conseil de Guerre* in Thionville to the King's brothers.

These meagre signs of Collignon's endorsement of the Revolution must be placed alongside his role supporting the conservatives and counter-revolutionaries. In 1790, he printed *Relation de ce qui s'est passé à Nanci le 31 août 1790*. This was an account of a mutiny in Nancy that was brutally put down by General Bouillé, an event that was picked up by the conservative press and publicized as a symbol of the anarchy and chaos the Revolution brought.[23] Royalist journalists (and perhaps Collignon) were very fearful that the popular revolution would lead to a military dictatorship and believed it was very important that the army stay under the control of the King and his generals.[24] Collignon had many relations with counter-revolutionaries and participated in the campaign to oppose the Revolutionary government's policy toward the French Church—the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. While the meeting of the Estates Generals had raised hopes of positive change, the decision of the newly formed National Assembly to restructure the French Church disenchanted many. In November 1789, the National Assembly took over church property and reorganized church government under the state in a very radical fashion. In February 1790, most monastic orders were dissolved. In July 1790, it passed the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and, in November 1790, it required the clergy to swear an oath of loyalty to the Constitution. King Louis XVI was forced to sign the Civil Consitution of the Clergy on December 26, 1790. The Pope resisted these changes and eventually came out against them in the spring of 1791. These

developments helped push Collignon into the camp of counter-revolution and eventually led to his arrest.

In this context, Collignon printed the writings of Martin-François Thiébault, the curé of Saint Croix who was chosen to represent the clergy of Metz at the Estates General. Thiébault was a well-published conservative intellectual whose works the Collignon printing house had been publishing since the 1760s. Thiébault was part of the conservative right in Versailles and tried hard to resist the passing of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, producing titles such as *Examen impartial de la constitution civile du clergé* and *Adresse aux membres honorables de l'Assemblée sur la liberté du divorce et sur le célibat clerical*. In 1790, Collignon printed these and other similar works. He knew that Thiébault's *Examen impartial de la constitution civile du clergé* was an implicit condemnation of the proposal of the Assembly and that it would provide support and information to many priests in the countryside to help them attack the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in their sermons.[25] Collignon continued to print Thiébault's works, long after their author abandoned hope of influencing developments in Paris and returned home to Metz, where he worked hard to persuade fellow clergymen to refuse to co-operate with the National Assembly. Eventually Thiébault emigrated.[26] Secrecy surrounded the printing of pamphlets, like Montmorency's *Instruction Pastorale*, and his *Mandement*, because Montmorency and d'Orope had requested discretion; they wanted the works distributed "par des porteurs sûrs."[27] From very early on, Collignon printed potentially risky criticism of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy when asked to by his longstanding clients.

Thiébault was far from alone in his opposition to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, as most of the Metz clergy refused the oath.[28] In October 1789, Monseigneur d'Orope decided to organize a huge protest in Metz against the Assembly's intrusion into the affairs of the church and produced a "mémoire d'opposition."[29] Despite strong resistance from the municipal council, Collignon published *Mémoire du chapitre de la cathédrale de Metz au Roi,* a pamphlet that insisted on the independence of the church from the state.[30] It argued that the National Assembly could not dispose of the goods of the Church of Metz, as these had been acquired before the city was part of France and that the northeastern provinces were already greatly disadvantaged compared to the southern provinces. The last sentence,

"Nous nous arrêtons au point où notre conscience nous arrête. . . . Nous sommes prêtres, nous avons tout donné à la patrie, nous saurons mourrir pour la justice," gives an idea of the tone. [31] The municipality of Metz did not endorse the *Mémoire* and hesitated to send it to the King and the Assembly.[32] The following autumn the Bishop of Metz, Montmorency-Laval, came out strongly against the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and tried to drum up opposition by secretly printing a brochure entitled *L'Instruction de l'évêque de Boulogne* and his own *Petit mandement*. Because of another publication in January 1791, the town prosecutor accused Montmorency-Laval of rebellion for producing a scandalous work that "annonce hautement la révolte."[33] Montmorency-Laval joined other émigré bishops in publishing the papal brief by which the Pope condemned the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in 1791.[34]

The situation in Metz became tense as local opposition to the religious policy of the National Assembly grew. The town's reputation as a centre of royalism and counter-revolution only increased in subsequent years: the municipality protested when crowds invaded the Tuileries palace on June 20, 1792, threatening the King and his family, and the Metz *Société des Amis* had a difficult job trying to counter their town's terrible reputation in Jacobin circles in Paris. Metz was for many the place where General Bouillé was based when he set out to help the King's family escape from France in the Flight to Varennes, and it was also where the émigrés of Coblentz planned to meet once the invasion of France by the Austrians and Prussians began.[35]

After 1790, Collignon's acknowledged printing (items which included his name) fell off drastically. He did not follow the pattern of many other printers who adapted to the changes of the Revolution by replacing their pre-revolutionary printing with newspapers and the massive quantities of administrative printing that the Revolutionary governments needed to inform French men and woman about their new government. But his acknowledged printing was only a small part of Jean-Baptiste's activities because he joined an underground network of printers, booksellers and clergymen who engaged in a pamphlet war with the government and the constitutional clergy who had accepted the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Both sides in this conflict used texts the way that Protestants and Catholics had during the Wars of Religion, each side responding to the other, a well-

worn practice in the eighteenth century in the many political disputes between the King and the Parlements, or between Jansenists and Jesuits.[36] It was Collignon's participation in these networks that led to his arrest and execution in 1793.

On October 1, 1793, with a mandate from the Committee of Surveillance, the police raided Collignon's printing house, sealed his papers, and instructed him to follow them to St. Vincent prison.[37] At first, Jean-Baptiste expected a quick release but, when these hopes were dashed, he summoned his son Christophe-Gabriel, a printer in Châlons, to rejoin the family in Metz and charged him and his mother with overseeing the police search of his papers.[38] Over two days (October 25–26), the police went through the papers and removed some 23 items they regarded as incriminating. By mid-November, things had progressed significantly: the committee of surveillance decided they had ample proof to proceed against Collignon and referred the matter to the revolutionary tribunal:[39] they claimed to have found correspondence with émigrés, and corrected proofs of a pamphlet written by the former Bishop of Nancy addressed to the clergy of his diocese. In the view of the committee, these materials proved that Collignon was "the printer of fanatical writings that were disseminated in the Department of the Moselle and in the neighbouring departments." Fortunately for us, Collignon's letters remain in his dossier in the Archives nationales in Paris and the remainder of this paper will be an examination of them for what they tell us about clandestine religious printing in the early French Revolution.[40]

Jean-Baptiste corresponded with two émigré bishops in Trèves: Henri-Louis-René DesNos, Bishop of Verdun, and Anne-Louis-Henri de La Fare, Bishop of Nancy, and with two Luxembourg printers: Widow Kleber and Pierre Brück. Both bishops, whom Collignon had known well in the pre-revolutionary era, had emigrated to Trèves in January 1791 and were later joined there in May by Louis-Joseph de Montmorency-Laval and his protégé, Monseigneur d'Orope.[41] Some 108 bishops emigrated following the passing of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and others had left even earlier.[42] For the Bishops of Metz, Nancy and Verdun, Trèves was a logical choice: their three bishoprics, along with Toul and Saint-Dié, were under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Trèves, Clément Wenceslas de Saxe, Louis XVI's uncle. This first wave of emigration was heavily noble and

clerical, and those who took part in it were called the "émigrés of legend," who acted on principle.[43] These early emigrants would be joined later by a much larger and more socially diverse group of refugees from the Revolution. The émigré bishops in Trèves had to deal with many challenges which included a wary host government that feared their ideology, their penury, and their warmongering. Over time the émigrés would be blamed for pushing the Revolutionaries to extremes by engaging in a host of activities hostile to the Revolutionary governments: denunciations, support of the royal family, of foreign powers, and for the Flight to Varennes.[44] Most émigrés were politically passive, leaving political action to a minority, but this minority included the Bishops of Verdun and Nancy who vigorously defended their faith and drew Jean-Baptiste into their activism.

By 1791, La Fare and DesNos were working together against the Civil Constitution of the Clergy but they had arrived at this alliance through different paths. La Fare, who had been Bishop of Nancy since 1788, was one of the few bishops (only 51 of the 130) who had been elected to represent the Clergy in the Estates-General.[45] Louis XVI had chosen him over the famous Talleyrand to pronounce the sermon for the opening mass for the Estates-General. La Fare had been an active participant to the meeting of the National Assembly on August 4, 1789, recently described as "the night the old regime ended," where he had emulated the nobility who renounced privileges and seigneurial rights.[46] However, by the end of 1789, things had gone too far for him and he was one of 39 moderate prelates who remained in the Assembly to try to save "la constitution, la royauté, la religion, les moeurs et ce qui reste de propriétés intactes."[47] In April 1790, La Fare made an unsuccessful appeal to the Assembly to recognize the legal supremacy of the Church.[48] Once his efforts failed and the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was put into effect, La Fare fled to Trèves.

Henri-Louis-René DesNos was born in Maine in 1717, appointed Bishop of Rennes in 1761, and transferred to the See of Verdun in 1770. Well appreciated by the Verdunnois and recognized for his generosity, DesNos had been considered as a possible deputy for the Estates General but refused the honour, arguing that he was too old.[49] However, his 70 years did not prevent him from being the first to openly express his dissatisfaction at the restructuring of the dioceses proposed by the National Assembly. In 1789, he published *Observations de M. l'évêque de Verdun H.-L.-R. Desnos, du*

chapitre cathédral et de la collégiale de la Madeleine de cette ville, sur les articles 1er et 5e des arrêtés des 4, 6, 7, 8 et 11 août 1789, in which he argued that the properties of the Church were guaranteed by the Treaty of Westphalia and that he would not recognize the new dioceses created by the Assembly.[50]

After arriving in Trèves in January 1791, both DesNos and La Fare contacted Collignon. Their letters reveal much about clandestine religious printing in that year. In his letter to Collignon dated March 11, 1791, DesNos informed the printer that he had received his two recent letters and a parcel. He then went on to report on the ongoing pamphlet war: after criticizing a pamphlet by a monk who was a "mauvaise tête" and who lacked "esprit," DeNos went on to praise his own *Apologie*, which he described as "un fort bon ouvrage et très capable d'ouvrir les yeux de quiconque n'est pas fanatique et vendu aux horribles principes de la constitution."[51] DesNos informed Collignon that "l'infâme Fouquerel" had been rightly attacked in a brochure that was being distributed widely in Verdun, and in the countryside where it was being read with great pleasure.[52] He then reported that the authorities in Verdun were vigorously pursuing his pamphlet entitled *Instruction pastorale* which was being read by everyone in Metz, but not in Verdun, where informers denounced those who read or published it there. He lamented that Collignon had not let him know the details of the shipment to Trèves of 70 copies of the *Instruction pastorale* as he had yet to receive a single copy. DesNos asked Collignon to make every effort possible to find the lost shipment. He signed off with "vous connaissez, mon cher Collignon, tout l'attachement et toute l'amitié que j'ai pour vous," suggesting there was a definite link of friendship or respect between the two men. In a letter, just three days later, DesNos was able to report that he had finally received the shipment of his *Instruction pastorale* and concurred with Collignon that the messengers they were forced to use could be unreliable. Messengers, he said, were paid to denounce everything intended to "instruct or disabuse the people" and to transmit only the "productions infernales qui outragent l'Église, la religion et le Trône." DesNos expressed his pleasure that Collignon had offered to print everything he sent him that "supported the truth and [our] faltering church," an offer he hoped to take him up on shortly.[53]

Bishop La Fare's letter, dated April 1, 1791, included a printing order for Collignon to fill. He enclosed the corrected proofs of his *Lettre de Louis*

Henry De La Fare, Évêque de Nancy addressée à MM. les curés de la Ville Épiscopale et à tout le clergé de son diocèse sur l'instruction de l'Assemblée nationale, concernant la Constitution civile du Clergé and asked Collignon to print 400 copies. The handwritten corrections that La Fare provided included an addition at the end: "Fait à Trèves où les circonstances m'ont forcé de me retirer, ce neuf Février 1791, La Fare évêque de Nancy." La Fare apologized for the messiness of his work and expressed confidence that Collignon would polish the piece. This letter provides an indication on the network used by La Fare, who gave instructions to send 300 copies to "Abbé Bourgeois aumônier de l'hôpital St. Charles," (presumably in Nancy) but to address the package to Abbé Georgin who would pass it on. 100 copies were to be sent to him in Trèves, but first must go to Bruno Senzy, at the address of the merchant Abel in Thionville, a town situated between Metz and Luxembourg.[54] Collignon's printing was destined both for French and émigré markets. La Fare closed this letter saying that both he and the Bishop of Verdun would be sending Collignon a further work and that his loyalty and principals inspired their confidence and gratitude.

In the text of his pamphlet, La Fare warned his clergy against being deceived by the government. In the first sentence he claimed that the National Assembly was using the newspapers to "set a new trap" for the pastors of France. Having seen that the tactics they had been using (penalties and poor treatment) were not working, and were in fact only strengthening the convictions of the clergy, the National Assembly was now turning to a new strategy: deception. La Fare counselled his flock to heed the Apostle Peter's warnings and be on their guard. They were not to be misled into thinking that the Civil Constitution of the Clergy did not touch on doctrine. Those who said this were lying. No assembly of laymen could change the "belle hiérarchie que la sagesse de l'église avait consacrée." The bishops alone had this authority. After decrying all sorts of changes in the dioceses, La Fare claimed that the true clergy were being ousted from their rightful place. He reiterated his plea that his clergy not be deceived. Presumably this was a typical piece of the pamphlet literature that Collignon printed for the bishops: passionate and powerful rhetoric intended to persuade the clergy.

The bishops provided the texts that Collignon printed, but the distribution circuit required the work of other printers and booksellers who participated in the networks of counter-revolutionary print culture. The letters seized

from Collignon's printing house include several from two printers and booksellers in Luxembourg. One of these was the Widow Catherine Kleber who was running the family printing house after the death of her husband in 1757.[55] She ordered books from Collignon, mainly French and German grammars and religious publications, including devotional manuals and copies of Thiébault's *Homélies sur les évangiles*. Some of these items she forwarded on to the Bishop of Verdun in Trèves. On March 22, 1791, she wrote to Collignon saying she had received his shipment and the double envelope which had carefully been sent without an address. The intended recipient was only identified by an *incluse*. She reported dealing with this and sending it on to its destination. She seems to have read the brochure in this package and liked it, but claimed that she was too closely supervised by the authorities to undertake such a work herself. She further reported that she did not dare to publish an edition of *L'Etrenne aux français* because she knew the authorities would deny her request for permission. She told Collignon that she wanted to receive "tout ce qui est bon sur les circonstances du temps" for her own use. In a letter dated March 29, 1791, she raised doubts (as had DesNos) about the reliability of the messengers and reported delivering a package to a canon in her neighbourhood. She discussed her book and pamphlet orders, and stated that "tout les ouvrages pour la défense de notre Sainte religion sont de notre goût," here again specifying that these were for her own use. She seemed to regret being "trop scrupuleuse" and having passed on all the copies in a shipment to the Bishop of Verdun and not having kept one for herself. In these and other letters written between March and November 1791, the Widow Kleber showed she was willing to help Collignon not only to distribute his works, but in other matters when she could. Her last letter included orders for a number of pamphlets critical of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Widow Kleber was clearly importing counterrevolutionary stock from France for her émigré clients.

Another member of the printing world, Pierre Brück**,** a printer in Luxembourg, also bought books from Collignon.[56] His letters reveal that in July of 1791 he ordered *Dénonciation aux français catholiques des moyens employés par l'Assemblée nationale pour détruire en France la Religion catholique* by Audainet, and copies of the *Proclamation du Roi pour la constitution civile du clergé*. He agreed to provide Collignon with a subscription to a local gazette. While Brück travelled to Frankfort in the summer of 1791, his agent handled the

correspondence with Collignon. The agent's letters reveal contacts: Collignon was instructed to send copies of *Dénonciation aux Français* to De Lachapelle, *controlleur des postes* in Luxembourg, described as a friend. He reported that a proposed Luxembourg edition of a certain letter that Collignon sought would not be going ahead because the authorities had refused permission. He considered this censorship unwarranted because gazettes elsewhere (Frankfurt, Cologne, Brussels) were carrying the letter in question. Without this obstacle he could have sent Collignon as many copies as he wanted.

One fascinating letter addressed to Collignon, dated June 13, 1792, was from a member of the clergy who signed only "N" and who was in contact with Collignon's brother. By chance, "N" became aware that he was the target of Collignon's criticism of him for continuing as a priest in the Constitutional church. Collignon was pressuring his brother to move into some lodgings he had found and, in this context, had warned his brother to be wary of "N." Stung by the criticism, "N" explained and justified his decision to stay to administer to his parishioners: he felt bound by duty to his flock which he refused to leave in the hands of "mercenaries" who would desecrate the sacraments: marriages, for example, would be nothing more than fornications. He had made a commitment and was "staying at his post," and thus, was not "aussi criminel" as Collignon suggested. He was not being forced to teach doctrine that went against the faith and did not deserve Collignon's harsh words. "N" cared deeply about Collignon's opinion of him and expressed admiration of him and his courage. In different circumstances "N" would have followed his example but, given his obligations, he could not. This letter reveals that Collignon was recognized as a leader (and a rather intransigent one) in the struggle against the Revolution's religious policy. He was a man whose opinion mattered. It also reveals the plight of many clergy still in France who were facing criticism whatever they decided. While initially, refractory priests could remain in their parishes, the situation quickly deteriorated.[57] In August 1792, a few months after "N" had written his letter, a law was passed, retroactively condemning to exile the priests who had not yet taken the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. By 1793, life was dangerous for refractory priests and all those who, like Collignon, supported them.

On November 19, 1793, Collignon went before the tribunal in Metz to be judged *révolutionnairement*. Added to the evidence against him was a copy of a poem on the death of Louis, found in an individual's pocket, which prosecutors had reason to think came from Collignon. Officials referred to him as "Le Grand Coupable Collignon." By the time of his appearance, Collignon must have truly been frightened to hear himself described as a fanatic, an aristocrat, and in correspondence with émigrés. On December 11, he was interrogated and, when asked about the people who wrote to him, he relied heavily on "not remembering," because "it was all so long ago," or on not being able to recognize the handwriting. When he waffled on whether he corresponded with the Bishop of Nancy, the interrogator drew his attention to the presence of the Bishop's letters and Collignon offered the rather improbable explanation that his shop door was always open and someone could have slipped a letter in. He denied that the Bishop of Nancy's pamphlet was printed with his characters, pointing out that, in any event, all characters resemble each other. When pressed to explain what pamphlets he sent to the Bishop of Verdun, he said he sent only those from Paris and from the presses of Citoyen Lamort, another Metz printer. When asked if the correspondent named Gault, who always wrote "cher cousin," was a relative, Collignon replied that he (Gault) claimed to be but that Collignon had not verified this. Clearly, these interrogators were interested to show that he printed for the émigré bishops and that he was involved in sending money to émigrés. The tribunal was quite convinced of Collignon's guilt but concerned that it did not have jurisdiction to try him because the Law of March 10, 1793 had established a tribunal in Paris for those who were in correspondence with the enemies of the Republic. Collignon was transferred to Paris where he was interrogated on February 24, 1794. The interrogators in Paris went over the same ground as had those in Metz, asking about his correspondence with the émigrés, his printing of counter-revolutionary pamphlets, his relationship with the émigré Maret in Coblentz and his wife (who was Collignon's cousin), and about his activities converting the paper money of the Revolution (*assignats*) into coin that could used abroad. On March 26, he went before Antoine-Quentin Fouquier, the famous prosecutor of the Revolutionary Tribunal in Paris established in the Terror. Fouquier presented a lengthy description of Collignon's crimes which included conspiring against liberty, and printing and distributing fanatical and anti-revolutionary works and working with enemies of the Republic both inside and outside France. In his final appearance on March

29, 1794, Collignon had virtually nothing to say when he was convicted and sentenced to be guillotined within 24 hours.

In conclusion, it is fortunate for us, but very unfortunate for Collignon, that his correspondents put their views very openly in their letters. Early in 1791, they had no reason to anticipate the Terror and the repression that was to come. The letters are a window into the thoughts of men and women in 1791 who were unhappy with the course of the Revolution. They engaged in opposition in ways similar to what the pro-parlementary factions in the eighteenth century did in their struggles against the King. They used the same practices, such as trusted agents, codes, and double envelopes, and they wrote about border inspections and disloyal postmen just as printers and booksellers did before 1789. There was nothing new in their lying to interrogators, in their stories about planted items and disloyal workers, and in their frequent occurrences of memory failure. Like many involved in the clandestine trade in the ancien régime, these men and women were part of networks. This is similar to the pre-revolutionary years when printers had close alliances with members of the parlements or clergy who were the major clients of eighteenth-century printers. Collignon had a long history with the Bishops of Verdun, Nancy and Metz. Furthermore, members of his own family were clergymen and émigrés. The decisions around all of this were not individual ones, but rather those of a network of clients, friends, and family. When his entourage objected to the Revolution's religious policy and emigrated, what was a printer like Collignon to do?

In reflecting on Collignon's printing career in the Revolution, one might wonder why he was not arrested earlier. He showed no real willingness to print works in favour of the Revolution. Where were the massive amounts of printing for departments, districts, and clubs that characterized the output of most printers in France after 1789? His public printing and his clandestine printing reveal a remarkably consistent and conservative picture. He was the known printer of émigré bishops and of Thiébault, whose opposition to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was clear and who emigrated in 1791. He felt free to carry on working for his ancien-régime patrons and made little effort to provide much of a cover.[58] His confidence was such that he did not bother to destroy incriminating correspondence that was over two years old. When arrested, he did not expect to be detained long. He seems to have enjoyed protection well into the Revolution, but

failed to see that, even in his very conservative town, he might be arrested. A correspondent referred explicitly to this courageous (arguably foolhardy) behaviour.[59]

Collignon's case suggests that, unlike many printers, he failed to rally the activities of his printing house to the Revolution and chose to take a different course. Most printers juggled multiple identities and their biographers must make sense of all sorts of conflicting and contradictory pieces of evidence. While it is possible that Collignon was skilfully presenting an identity that he cultivated for the benefit of these bishops and others, there is a strong case that Collignon was genuinely loyal to the cause of the King and the Church and a fierce opponent of the Revolution. If there was anything to the accusation that he was printing royalist literature in the middle of the Terror, he was probably very committed indeed and willing to take risks. One wonders about the nature of the conversations between Jean-Baptiste and his son Christophe-Gabriel who was Department printer in Châlons. Both men held deeply conservative views but the younger Collignon publicly supported the Revolution while his father did not. Speculation aside, it is difficult to believe that Jean-Baptiste Collignon was not a major player in a group of like-minded opponents of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy who were ideologically driven.

This correspondence may be revealing about the regional character of censorship in the years following the collapse of royal censorship. Metz was known for counter-revolutionary sentiment and it is perhaps not a surprise that the *Instruction pastorale* of the Bishop of Verdun circulated widely and easily there, when anyone caught with the same item in Verdun was denounced. This regional variation in censorship was true in Hapsburg territories as well: the printer Pierre Brück complained of excessive control in Luxembourg, making it impossible for him to print a letter that was already in the *Gazettes* of Frankfurt, Cologne, and Brussels.[60] Widow Kleber in Luxembourg would have liked to print a brochure sent to her by Collignon but could not because the authorities in Luxembourg were too scrupulous, and she knew not to try. In Metz, counter-revolutionary tracts circulated relatively freely at least until 1791, but not elsewhere in France. [61] It was literature critical of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy—abundant and widely present—that pushed many local authorities to take up the role of censors, even in the heady early days of the Revolution, when many

wanted to adhere to the freedoms offered by the Declaration of the Rights of Man. For eighteenth-century men and women, this was never an unlimited freedom and a variety of forces fostered the re-introduction of censorship, including fear of calumny.[62] But an important factor that ramped up the revolutionaries' fear of the press was printing that was very critical of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. The relative tolerance in Metz, and his own ideological commitment, were a toxic combination for poor Collignon. They led him to think that—well into the Terror—he could act with impunity, a situation that produced tragic results. Collignon's silence at this trial is quite telling. Fouquier decried his printing and "distribution avec profusion dans différentes communes de la République" of "tous les libelles contre le Répresentation Nationale et toutes les Brochures fanatiques qui ont été faites sur la tombe de cy-devant clergé, et qui tendaient à faire méconnaitre la souveraineté du people." Collignon could have complained of exaggeration but not much more.

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Notes

[1] Archives nationales de France (Hereafter AN) W 341, no. 636.

[2] The other provincial printers who were executed were: Simon Lacourt, Antoine-Arnaud Pallandre, Jean-Baptiste Cavazza in Bordeaux; Jean-Marie Bruyset, Claude Faucheux, Jean-Baptiste Delamollière in Lyon; Jean-Joseph Niel and Joseph Agricole Bonnet in Avignon; Castor Belle in Nimes; Jean-Baptiste Vicogne in Arras. See Jane McLeod, "Evolving Loyalties: A Provincial Printer in Revolutionary Bordeaux," *Mémoires du Livre/ Studies in Book Culture* 2 (2010) and "Printers Confront the French Revolution: Profits, Principles and Perils" (Work in Progress).

[3] For some recent work on printers in the French Revolution see Jean-Dominique Mellot, Élisabeth Queval, and Véronique Sarrazin, "La liberté et la mort? Vues sur les métiers du livre parisiens à l'époque révolutionnaire," *Revue de la Bibliothèque Nationale* 49 (1993): 76–85; Carla Hesse, "The Dilemmas of Republican Publishing, 1793–1799," in *Publishing and Readership in Revolutionary France and America,* ed. Carol Armbruster (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), 61–77; Frédéric Barbier, "Livre et Révolution: théorie et pratiques de la législation (1789–1811)" *Revue du Nord* 5, hors série (1989): 209–25; Robert Darnton, "L'Imprimerie de Panckoucke en l'An II," *Revue française d'histoire du livre* 23 (1979): 359-69.

[4] Jérôme Letortu, "L'Imprimeur Charles-Pierre Mame (1747–1825), ou l'ascension d'un opportuniste angevin," *Recherches vendéenes* 8 (2001): 109–32. Pierre Casselle used the term "girouette" in "Imprimeurs et publications des administrations parisiennes, XVI-XIXe siècles," *Paris et Ile de France* 37 (1986): 209; Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment. A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 484–510.

[5] See the many works by Robert Darnton and Elizabeth Eisenstein, *Grub Street Abroad: Aspects of the French Cosmopolitan Press from the Age of Louis XIV to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). More recently new angles on the importation of books from abroad into France in the eighteenth century are being developed with the help of digitization projects such as that on the archives of the *Société typographique de Neuchâtel* by Simon Burrows and Mark Curran: http://fbtee.uws.edu.au/main/.

[6] Too numerous to mention here are the many works on the press in the French Revolution. Two important works on the collapse of censorship are Charles Walton, *Policing Public Opinion in the French Revolution: The Culture of Calumny and the Problem of Free Speech* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) and Carla Hesse, *Publishing and Cultural Politics in Revolutionary Paris, 1789–1810* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). We do know that a vibrant francophone newspaper business set up in London and that some conservative newspapers exported copies. On émigrés and the press see Simon Burrows, *French Exile Journalism and European Politics, 1792–1814* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000). Harvey Chisick, *The Production, Distribution and Readership of a Conservative Journal of the Early French Revolution: The Ami du Roi of the Abbé Royou* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1992), 130–31.

[7] Pierre Collignon obtained authorization from the town council to be a printer in 1641 and became King's Printer. His son Jean took over in 1692 and was followed by Pierre (d. 1731) and then Joseph. Emilie Saunier, "La Dynastie Collignon et la carrière de Joseph Collignon, imprimeur-libraire à Metz au XVIIIe siècle" (mémoire de master, Université Nancy 2, 2008); Albert Ronsin, "La Communauté des imprimeurs-libraires et relieurs de Metz (1656–1791)" *Annales de l'Est* 3 (1960): 203–20; Guillaume Teissier, *Essai philologique sur les commencements de la typographie à Metz* (Metz: C. Dosque, 1828), 155–63; M. de Chanteau, *De la corporation des imprimeurs libraires de la ville de Metz* (Metz: Rousseau-Pallez, 1867); AN, V6, 799, February 16, 1705; V6, 934, July 30, 1742.

[8] Joseph is described by a recent historian thus: "Joseph Collignon correspond au type même de l'imprimeur de province, associé aux administrations ou institutions locales. . . . Il a appartenu à la bourgeoisie messine et a été en étroite relation avec la municipalité." Saunier, "La Dynastie," 13. In 1768 Joseph Collignon was elected *échevin* of Metz and lived until 1798.

[9] Contrat de mariage, April 1, 1761, Archives départementales de La Moselle, 3E, 3794; de Chantau, *De la corporation des imprimeurs,* 38.

[10] AN, V6, 1048, April 6, 1772.

[11] Ronsin, "La Communauté des imprimeurs-libraires," 207.

[12] Jean-Julien Barbé, "L'imprimerie à Metz: Recherches historiques et bibliographiques. Les Collignons et leurs successeurs (1646–1871)," vol. 3, unpublished manuscript, ms. 1551 (Médiathèque du Pontiffroy, Metz, ca. 1902–1924).

[13] Barbé, "L'imprimerie à Metz," 68–77.

[14] Jean Eich, *Histoire Religieuse du Département de la Moselle pendant la Révolution* (Metz: Éditions le Lorrain, 1964), 14.

[15] "À Metz, chez Jean-Baptiste Collignon, imprimeur de Son Excellence Monseigneur l'Evêque, à la Bible d'or," 1788, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, 132 p. http://data.bnf.fr/12435878/louis-joseph_de_montmorency-laval/

[16] Calculated from titles in Barbé, "L'imprimerie à Metz," 64–94.

[17] Guillaume Ferdinand Teissier, *Essai philologique sur les commencements de la typographie à Metz et sur les imprimeurs de cette ville* (Metz: Dosque, 1828), 163.

[18] On judicial memoires see Sara Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[19] Emmanuel Michel, *Histoire du parlement de Metz* (Paris: Techener, 1845), 517.

[20] Barbé, "L'imprimerie à Metz," 90–91; Zoltan-Etienne Harsany, *Metz Pendant la Révolution* (1960), chap. 1, 58, http://documents.irevues.inist.fr/bitstream/handle/2042/33339/ANM_1957-1959_1.pdf?sequence=1.

[21] AN, W, 341, no. 636.

[22] François Kellerman was the French general in 1792 who was a Revolutionary hero because of his success at the battle of Valmy, a decisive victory for the French revolutionary troops against the Prussian army.

[23] Bertaud, *Les Amis du roi* (Paris: Perrin, 1984), 163–65.

[24] Bertaud, *Les Amis du roi,* 165.

[25] Eich, *Histoire Religieuse du Département de la Moselle,* 153–54.

[26] *Œuvres complètes de Thiébault, Curé de Saint-Croix à Metz* (Paris: ed. J.P. Migne, 1858.)

[27] Eich, *Histoire Religieuse du Département de la Moselle,* 149.

[28] By one estimate, only 15 of 67 priests in Metz signed the oath (Harsany, *Metz Pendant la Révolution,* chap. 3, 55), http://documents.irevues.inist.fr/bitstream/handle/2042/34059/ANM_1962_21.pdf?sequence=1.

[29] Eich, *Histoire Religieuse du Département de la Moselle,* 80.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., 81.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Quoted in Harsany, *Metz Pendant la Révolution,* chap. 3, 51.

[34] Nigel Aston, *The End of an Élite: The French Bishops and the Coming of the Revolution 1786–1790,* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1992), 246. On the popularity and profitability of this work see Chisick, *The Production,* 104–14.

[35] René Bour, *Histoire de Metz* (Metz: Éditions Serpentoise, 1989), 175.

[36] There is an extensive literature on these pamphlet wars that cannot be listed here. A recent work that focuses on the role of printers is Luc Racaut, "Nicolas Chesneau, Catholic Printer in Paris during the French Wars of Religion," *The Historical Journal* 52 (2009): 23–24. Racaut uses Pettegree's notion of "printing moment," a concept that may have application to printing in the French Revolution. See Andrew Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 177–84.

[37] On the committees of surveillance in Metz see Bour, *Histoire de Metz,* 178.

[38] Christophe-Gabriel got a bookseller's licence in Metz in 1785 (V6, 1126, December 5, 1785) and a printer licence for Châlons in 1790 (AN V6, 1147, February 22, 1790; AN V1, 553); Amédée Lhote, *Histoire de l'imprimerie à Châlons-sur-Marne: Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les imprimeurs, libraires, relieurs et lithographes (1488–1894) avec marques typographiques et illustrations…*(Châlons-sur-Marne: Martin, 1894): 125–27; 207–13. Gilles Feyel, ed., *Dictionnaire de la presse française pendant la Révolution: La presse départementale 2* (Centre International d'Étude du XVIIIe Siècle: Ferney-Voltaire, 2012), 216–17.

[39] On the tribunal see Bour, *Histoire de Metz,* 178. 150 Messins and Mosellans were condemned to death between 1792 and 1798 (141 in 1794–1795). 64 were convicted and executed in Metz and 86 elsewhere, most often in Paris.

[40] Of these letters, three were written by émigré bishops in Trèves, eight from printers in Luxembourg and the rest from cousins and others seeking help of different sorts. This paper focuses on those letters referring to Collignon's printing activity.

[41] On émigrés see Donald Greer, *The Incidence of Emigration during the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951); Jacques Godechot, *The Counter-Revolution. Doctrine and Action, 1789–1804* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); Timothy Blanning, *The French Revolution in Germany: Occupation and Resistance in the Rhineland,*

1792–1802 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); Kirsty Carpenter and Philip Mansel, eds., *The French Émigrés in Europe in the Struggle against Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Simon Burrows, "The Émigrés and Conspiracy in the French Revolution, 1789–1799," in *Conspiracy in the French Revolution,* eds. Peter R. Campbell, Thomas E. Kaiser, and Marisa Linton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 150–71.

[42] Jean Claude Meyer, "L'impossible soumission du clergé réfractaire (1791–1801)," *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* 1 (2013): 172.

[43] William Doyle, "Introduction" to *The French Emigrés in Europe in the Struggle against Revolution*, eds. Carpenter and Mansel, xv.

[44] Doyle, "Introduction," xvii.

[45] La Fare was from a noble family with connections at court. Bernard de Brye, *Consciences épiscopales en exil, 1789–1814, à travers la correspondance de Mgr de La Fare, évêque de Nancy* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2004), 47.

[46] Michael P. Fitzsimmons, *The Night the Old Regime Ended* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 54; Aston, *The End of an Élite,* 191.

[47] Malouet, "Lettres aux amis de la Paix," January 2, 1790, quoted in Aston, 215.

[48] Aston, *The End of an Élite,* 227.

[49] Nicolas Roussel, *Histoire Écclésiastique de Verdun*, livre 2 (Contant-Laguerre et Cie, 1864), 87–88.

[50] Eich, *Histoire Religieuse du Département de la Moselle,* 78.

[51] We are not sure if this *Apologie* is related to Henri-Louis-René DesNos*, Déclaration de M. L'Évêque de Verdun adressé à MM. les administrateurs du directoire du district de Verdun en réponse à leur lettre du 30 octobre* in the *Catalogue de l'histoire de France,* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1858), 285.

[52] This may have been François Thomas Fouquerel, a former Capuchin who became a vicar under the constitutional bishop and municipal officer in Verdun (*Réimpression de l'Ancien Moniteur de la Révolution Française* 20 (Paris: Plon Frères, 1847), 200.

[53] *Instruction Pastorale de M. L'Évêque de Verdun (Henri-René DesNos) qui interdit tous les prêtres de son diocese qui ont prêté serment* (Trèves, February 5, 1791). The *Instruction pastorale* is available online at https://books.google.ca/books?id=nyC1AAAAMAAJ&pg=PA521&lpg=PA521&dq=instruction+pastorale+de+henri+rené+desnos&source=bl&ots=13NhOsshpL&sig=W0YEnz7zVew20CGge5gRPUqph-0&hl=fr&sa=X&ei=Loe1VNPvDrLisATf1YGoBg&ved=0CDkQ6AEwBw#v=onepage&q=instruction%20pastorale%20de%20henri%20rené%20desnos&f=false.

[54] This may have been Chrétien Nicolas Georgin, priest from Metz and secretary to the diocese of Nancy, who was imprisoned in 1793 and deported for refusing the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Imprisoned in 1793 because he refused to take the oath

to the CCC, he was deported. *Le Pays Lorrain (Nancy)* (Nancy: Berger Levrault, 1928), 155, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k124587q.image.r=georgin.f155.hl.

[55] Jean-Baptiste Kleber, *imprimeur du gouvernement*, had a small printing shop in Luxembourg. At his death in 1757 his wife Catherine took over the business as Veuve Kleber. *Publications de la Société pour la Recherche et Conservation des Monuments Historiques dans le Grand-Duché de Luxembourg*, vol. 8 (Luxembourg: V Bück, 1853),https://books.google.ca/books?id=mGNAAAAAcAAJ&pg=RA1-PA8&lpg=RA1PA8&dq=imprimeur+Jean+BaptisteKleber+luxembourg&source=bl&ots=VgIh8Z487a&sig=V9vvd1AwLOmBF4_rBgaDVBaruSo&hl=fr&sa=X&ei=EA3AVM2qJoivggSLloC4AQ&ved=0CCIQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=imprimeur%20Jean%20BaptisteKleber%20luxembourg&f=false.

[56] There was a Pierre Brück imprimeur in Luxembourg in the eighteenth-century.

[57] Meyer, "L'impossible soumission," 172.

[58] The Municipality encouraged people to denounce *discours séditieux* in priests' sermons and received denunciations of *écrits incendiaires* circulating in Metz for the following titles: *Il est encore temps*, *Les adieux de Daphnis à la France*, *Instruction familière sur l'Église en forme de cathéchisme,* and *Lettre de M. l'éveque de Toulon à M.M. les curés et vicaires de son diocese* (Harsany, *Metz Pendant la Révolution,* chap. 3, 53–54).

[59] AN, W 341 no. 636, Letter by "N" cited above.

[60] Some governments in the Rhineland, including Trier, worried about provoking revolutionary France and forbade the émigrés from engaging in active opposition while others left the émigrés considerably more freedom. Blanning, *The French Revolution in Germany,* 52–53.

[61] More research is needed but there is evidence that in some towns criticism of the Civil Consitution of the Clergy was repressed very early (Archives municipale de Bordeaux, Période Révolutionnaire 89, January 24, 1791).
[62] Charles Walton, *Policing Public Opinion.*

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