To my husband David, your support has meant everything to me
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Typical historical constructions like chronology, geography, and faith are helpful in categorizing historical moments, but they are rarely broad enough to properly place any single individual or to make sense of the decisions that they make. Lives are lived at the intersection of multiple, competing identities that are regularly rewritten by time. My dissertation embraces this complexity by examining three families living on the border of France and Germany during the French Revolution and how they reconstruct religious, national, legal, and chronological boundary lines to suit their own needs. The French Revolution was a critical juncture because it opened up new opportunities and ways of thinking that many embraced. Yet even as it attempted to erase older dividing lines, it established new categories that were malleable and unreliable.

Each case examined in this work highlights this duality of accessibility and restriction, of stability and uncertainty. As journalists, educators, lawyers, and religious leaders, the people I investigate actively pursued goals that would directly influence their local communities, their emerging nations, and the world beyond. The routes they selected were dramatic, like the case of Samuel Marx, Trier's rabbi, and his brothers
Heinrich, the father of Karl Marx, and Cerf. They accepted Napoleon’s call for social and occupational integration only to find professional doors to advancement barred by prejudice. Some cases, like Catholic Romantic leader Joseph von Görres and his brother-in-law Franz von Lassaulx, dean of Napoleon’s new law school in Coblenz, reinvented themselves politically and religiously, often switching directions multiple times. For others, like Trier’s first bishop Josef von Hommer, the radical nature of debates left his carefully constructed compromises open to criticism from all sides.

Each chapter deals with an issue with which these gentlemen had to grapple: visits to Paris, life in a border region, shifting definitions of law, religious conversion, and interfaith marriage. Though their answers were quite different, they were all boundary crossers who recognized that they had the ability to rewrite history and did so with astonishing variety.
In a provocative piece in the June 2009 *American Historical Review*, Kate Brown boldly proposed that historians do not like biography as a genre because it frightens them by highlighting the very individual nature of the historical process. “Biography...is all the more suspicious for historians because it exposes the shading of history into autobiography. Yet, in many ways there is no biography—nor history, for that matter—without autobiography.”¹ Existing in that nebulous sphere between the social sciences and the humanities, historians do often back away from all personal pronouncements out of fear that showing their own investment in their subjects will expose their projects to ridicule. “In their quest to explore the human condition, historians can hide behind their subjects, using them as a scrim to project their own sentiments and feelings.”² Are historians indeed on such a “scientific” quest that they ignore the pitfalls of their own prejudices and the ways in which their historical frameworks are shaped by their own histories? Such a challenge is one that should not be ignored. The last several decades of scholarship have become increasingly self-aware, but new trends in historical biography suggest that we could do even more.

Though my own work does not take the form of a traditional biography, I found myself asking what exactly my own approach to the discipline was and the ways in which my paradigm impacted the direction that my project took. I still struggle to make sense of which parts of my own history created my outlook, but I have uncovered some

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¹ Kate Brown, “A Place in Biography for Oneself,” *American Historical Review* 114, no. 3 (June 2009): 599.

² Ibid., 603.
unique threads of thought that weave themselves into my work. The first is a strong sense that individual stories do matter and that we can discover a great deal about history’s path from each distinct life. Yet to make such a claim is not to go back to “big man” history in which only “important” people were discussed because their impact on history’s flow was so unmistakable. Rather biographies can be only relevant when connected into the wider framework of politics, culture, religion, economics, and geography that inform every decision and provide markers for a life’s course. As Karl Marx, nephew and son of three of the subjects of my dissertation observed, “circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances.”

By placing each story into history’s stream one can best observe change and continuity, what space each of us is given to act out our own stories, and just how different each path can be. While some may continue to argue that just a few individual examples can never be broad enough to prove general societal trends, I claim the opposite. Societal movements can be made relevant only on the individual level because that is where trends and movements begin and where they are continually shaped in a myriad of confusing pathways.

The next crucial element of my own work is an awareness that telling a single story is not enough. I do not claim to be writing conventional biography here because that would mean attempting to cover a complete life in all of its facets. Rather, this dissertation unveils the intersection of the lives of three families living in the

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Trier/Coblenz region along the French-German border during the French Revolution. At the time that hostilities broke out, Josef von Hommer was a Coblenz priest whose elite upbringing pretty much guaranteed him a prestigious career. Though he did indeed later became Trier’s first bishop, the French Revolution meant that Hommer had to rewrite his own religious story in order to answer new questions about the role of faith in a secular world, in newly formed nations, and across arbitrary boundary lines. Joseph von Görres, also from Coblenz, was an idealistic, youthful Jacobin supporter who was radically disillusioned by the political realities of his age. He reinvented himself multiple times both politically and religiously as he moved from being a Francophile to a fervent German nationalist to a Catholic Romantic leader across the span of his life. His brother-in-law Franz von Lassaulx also began his political career printing ardent radical tracts and ended it among Coblenz’s firmest supporters of Napoleonic authority and stability as the dean of Coblenz’s new law school. Finally, the lives of three Jewish Marx brothers, Samuel, Cerf and Heinrich, took drastically different paths than they might have in any other age. Samuel was Trier’s rabbi and attended the 1807 Grand Sanhedrin in Paris during which the Jews promised their national fidelity in return for new religious and occupational freedoms. His brothers Heinrich (Karl’s father) and Cerf grabbed onto these promises only to find the path to societal advancement blocked by continued prejudice, especially after the Rhineland reverted to Prussian control.

Typically one chooses the topic for one’s research based upon carefully selected criteria surrounding questions that one already has in mind. My work was somewhat

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more unstructured, especially in the beginning, but I did have several key issues. I began with an event, the French Revolution, and an interest in how it engendered a fundamental rewriting of society and culture while also maintaining links to the past. I then decided upon a region of analysis, a border region that would allow me to see across cultures. I choose the Coblenz-Trier area because political control shifted there during this period, but it was less well known than somewhere like Alsace-Lorraine. Religion was also a critical concern from fairly early on in the process, as I wanted to explore how faith and revolution fit together. I selected individuals to examine somewhat more randomly, based strictly on when and where they had lived and how much material might be easily available. I assembled a seemingly unconnected assortment of personalities: a firebrand writer who appeared to care more about annoying authorities than about whatever position he held at a given moment (von Görres); a lawyer who held up the same Napoleonic regime his brother-in-law despised (von Lassaulx); a peaceful Catholic leader who looked lost in the confusion that swirled around him (von Hommer); and three Jewish brothers (the Marxes) just seeking to improve their circumstances by any means open to them.

Such an unconventional approach to gathering subjects is not without its pitfalls. For instance, in an early meeting with a professor to discuss my ideas, she commented that to examine Jews and Christians simultaneously would be like studying apples and oranges. I found that I loved the analogy – apples and oranges are indeed quite worthy of comparison. The meeting also helped me to realize that the demarcations between faiths acted like borders within and surrounding faith and changed shape often in this period. There were other equally fascinating boundary lines. Just as I was interested in
both Christians and Jews, I was also captivated not by France or Germany individually but by where they intersected. It was for this reason that I was studying the French Revolution – it was both a bridge and a dividing line between ages.

In their quest for knowledge, historians carefully categorize everything from political party to social class to religion to time period to gender to race. Of course, such groupings are critical to the historical enterprise as they allow us to make sense of the past. Indeed, I use such classifications here to divide my own work into arenas to explore: Paris, geographic boundaries, law codes and law schools, religious conversion and interfaith marriage. The topics allow me to more directly compare my subjects’ responses rather than completely laying out each individual story as an unconnected tale. However, we take risks with our own hubris. As Edward Said, one of the founders of postcolonialism, has suggested,

Knowledge means rising above immediacy, beyond self, into the foreign and distant. The object of such knowledge is inherently vulnerable to scrutiny; the object is a ‘fact’ which, if it develops, changes, or otherwise transforms itself in a way that civilizations frequently do, nevertheless is fundamentally, even ontologically stable. To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it.5

If we always aim for stabilizing history through putting it in its proper boxes, we can miss much of its complex fertility. We also can too easily allow our subjects no freedom of movement in an effort to confine them within our classification systems.

Thus another indispensable piece of the puzzle of how these individual lives fit together is the notion of borders. Usually when one thinks of borders it is in terms of physical boundaries between nations, between residences, between towns, etc.

Anthropologists Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson provide a helpful definition of how borders extend and the importance of people living in those regions:

‘Borders’ are those zones, which always extend, to some degree, across borderlines. ‘Borders’ are also the borderlines themselves, i.e., the narrow but long area which delimits the sovereignty of the states which meet each other there….Frontiers, then, are zones of varying widths, in which people have recognizable configurations of relationships to people inside that zone, on both sides of the borderline but within the cultural landscape of the borderlands, and, as a people of the border, special relationships with other people and institutions in their respective nations and states.⁶

Areas around borders are much more than arbitrary lines drawn by distant governments and have no completely recognizable beginning and end points. The people living on both sides of the edge have strong ties to one another that point out just how subjective those lines can be.

The region of Trier and Coblenz fits well within this definition of a border zone. During the French Revolution and its aftermath, the two cities moved from being the seat of a small, but important, archbishopric within the Holy Roman Empire, to being part of France, to being the outer reaches of a growing Prussian state. The historic Trier archbishopric was also part of a much wider Rhineland that contained considerable diversity and whose borders were equally ill defined. The term Rhineland will be used here mainly to focus on the small Trier-Coblenz area and the connection between the cities via the Moselle River. Other Rhenish political entities like the Confederation of the Rhine were also important in this period but had quite different political and cultural connections to the French Revolution and its aftermath.

Area residents had to adjust, and readjust, themselves to multiple situations in which proving their loyalty to each new regime was critical. When the French came Josef von Hommer reluctantly fled across the Rhine River border because he feared what they might do to a priest with other, less worldly and national, allegiances. However, he had equal trouble later with the Prussians who questioned his patriotism as he lay dying. Franz von Lassaulx struggled intellectually with where the Rhineland stood as a nation – it was neither French nor German, yet it was too weak not to be bullied by the others into taking sides. Joseph von Görres wanted to be German but did not find Prussian or French definitions of the nation particularly appealing. Nations were, and are, molded like clay so it can be extremely helpful to look at regions like the Rhineland as multinational or even transnational. Defining historiography merely in terms of a single nation often limits our ability to see just how contentious nation building is and how broad the definition of nation should be.

Yet the dangers of delineating all historical projects in terms of which nation they discuss extends beyond geographical mapping. The idea of borders in various forms permeates all historical enterprises. In addition to questioning national classifications, or at least trying to work in their messiest nether regions, I also probe several other well-worn dividing lines. The first marker is religious. In the twenty first century (though not in the eighteenth), one might easily scoff at the notion that the experiences of Catholics are markedly different than those of Protestants. But what if such claims of interconnectedness are extended to Christians and Jews, or even Christians and Muslims?
To make such a bold assertion is not to deny in any way the critical disparities in religious histories and experiences that color and create various cultures. However, we often overlook similarities in time and place that are equally decisive. Jews Heinrich and Cerf Marx both were forced to convert to Christianity in order to continue their careers. Yet it is clear that Prussian Protestants made similar demands on Catholics in regards to interfaith marriage, and that Josef von Hommer and Joseph von Görres would have understood some of the Marxes’ emotion and frustration. Lacking supreme cultural authority in any geographic area meant all religious minorities, no matter what type of faith, had to compromise and stake out their own smaller claims to religious control. The borders that existed between faiths were as porous as those between nations, especially over questions like conversion and mixed marriage. Individuals who converted or married outside their traditional faiths proved that religion continually changed shape to meet new circumstances and the rise of competing forms of identity like nationalism. Yet religion did not simply die out. It continued to be a critical way for individuals to make sense of their worlds and find answers to the challenges of the age.

Another dividing line is chronological. The span of my study covers three political eras: the Trier archbishopric of the 1780s and early 1790s, the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic period (1794-1814) and the Prussian era from 1814 until around 1840. Yet these markers, like the French Revolution itself, need to remain somewhat fluid, since people living through them did not always demarcate their life stories in this manner. Although historians have often recognized the French Revolution as a turning point in history, the underlying meaning of such a judgment has not always been dealt with sufficiently. Many scholars of the period have pointed out the continuities across
the age to those that would see merely a break with the past. Other works prefer the term “the long eighteenth century” to highlight the fact that century markers and the French Revolution itself were not always the most exact of historical dividing lines.\footnote{Among more recent works taking this approach are Frank O’Gorman, \textit{The Long Eighteenth Century. British Political and Social History, 1688-1832} (London: Arnold, 1997); Hamish Scott and Brendan Simms, eds., \textit{ Cultures of Power in Europe during the Long Eighteenth Century} (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Paul Baines, \textit{The Long Eighteenth Century} (London: Arnold, 2004).} Indeed the “long eighteenth century” has become ubiquitous with hundreds of references and quite varied definitions as to how long the “eighteenth century” really was. However, scholars outside the revolutionary era often use much sharper chronological markers. From job searches to textbooks the boundary remains firm, so much so that historians of the era must declare themselves either early modernists or modernists. To be such a historian border crosser by studying the French Revolution means to not always be fully accepted by either side.

Such questions also apply to the subjects French Revolution historians examine. One must begin with the fact that the impact of the French Revolution was wide and profound. Contemporaries clearly recognized the new educational, professional, political and cultural choices placed before them and many fully embraced those opportunities. Samuel Marx, Josef von Hommer and Joseph von Görres all visited Paris to become part of the new ways of thinking emanating from France. However, the ways in which those decisions played themselves out had deep historical roots. The educational and historical backgrounds of Hommer, Lassaulx, Görres and the Marxes had just as much impact on how they interpreted and dealt with their experiences as the Revolution itself. Hommer regularly credited his upbringing with keeping him from giving in to the temptations of the modern age. Lassaulx’s government lawyer father
probably influenced his decision to latch on to the Napoleonic Code. Ancient myths inspired Joseph von Görres. The Marxes never entirely escaped the bonds that their Jewish heritage placed upon them. What was ultimately most important was the dialogue across time rather than pinning the French Revolution’s participants to one age or the other.

My dissertation is constructed around these bridges across time, space, and faith. It moves chronologically through the lives of my subjects, but loosely rather than strictly, to better embrace the issues that drew them together. Paris, the cultural and political birthplace of all that the French Revolution engendered, provides an excellent starting point. Using the work of Victor Turner, Patrice Higonnet, Jürgen Habermas and Henri Lefebvre, among many others, the chapter explores the interconnectedness of pilgrimage, myth, geography, and self-realization. How did visitors balance expectations and reality, and how did the changing shape of Paris alter their perceptions? By visiting the city before the French Revolution, as Napoleon took power, and when Napoleon was at the height of his authority, Hommer, Görres and Samuel Marx provide markers of how the city evolved across the Revolution. Yet each encounter with Paris did not merely result in easy acceptance of the new opportunities and ways of thinking that the city offered its visitors. Instead visitors used their own backgrounds to make sense of Paris’s enticements and the impact that such an experience might have on imagining their own futures. After visiting Paris Hommer

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better understood the enticements of the world, Görres knew that revolutionary ideals
were dying, and Samuel Marx could better work to improve his community at home.

So if witnessing the center of revolutionary thought did not completely reshape
one’s worldview, what did? As discussed in Chapter 3, where my subjects came from
had as deep an impact on how they perceived their world as any great historical
moment did. As a center of trade and ideas between two different linguistic cultures,
the Rhineland was already a progressive arena of rich diversity even before the
Revolution started. The rich scholarship on borders, ranging from political science, to
anthropology, to history, provides the basis for this chapter. How are borders created
and maintained, and how does the process of demarcation affect individual identity?

When they became part of France, citizens of the Rhineland found themselves
questioning anew where their own culture belonged. They could not completely
convince the French of their loyalty, but neither were they completely German. The
region was too small to imagine itself as a nation on its own. In an era in which nations
were forming for the first time, what did it mean to be part of a nation? Each of the
individuals that I examine reacted to this important question differently using notions of
cosmopolitanism, legal codes, and ancient myth to make sense of the new challenges
that shifting geographic boundaries imposed. Living on a border brought the residents
of the Rhineland face to face with such questions in a way that those living in other
areas of France and Germany could ignore or allow others to answer for them. Their

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responses helped create the framework for nationalism debates throughout the
nineteenth century.

However, nationalism was not the only new principle to evolve out of the French
Revolution that people had to adapt into older paradigms. In order for principles like
equality and freedom that the French Revolution had created and championed to take
hold, a legal and educational framework had to be developed to carry them forward.
The Code Napoléon was just such an agent of change, and it permanently transformed
how law was imagined in the Rhineland. As a translator of the Code into German,
Franz von Lassaulx provided a cultural bridge for his homeland to these new ideas.
The Coblenz Law School that Lassaulx also helped create further connected the
Rhineland to judicial reform as a generation of new lawyers, including Heinrich Marx,
continued to push these innovative legal principles even after the Rhineland reverted to
Prussia. Yet as Chapter 4 demonstrates, translation and adaptation were never easy.

Literary scholars like Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, Walter Benjamin, and Pierre
Legrand have highlighted the pitfalls of translation in both literary and legal contexts due
to the mutability of language. Laws were always easier to compose than to put into
practice, and older, less open ways of thinking continued to dominate. Just as with
physical borders and national identity, legal codes could be manipulated and made to
embody the exact opposite of some of the Revolution’s founding principles. Thus, as

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World, 1968); Paul de Man, “‘Conclusions’ on Walter Benjamin’s ‘Task of the Translator’ Messenger
of Comparative Literature and the Theoretical Problems of Translation,” trans. Eric Prenowitz, Discourse 30,
University Press, 2005), 30-5.
had also been true of visits to Paris, unfulfilled promise could lead to bitter
disappointment.

The first several decades of the nineteenth century were replete with exciting new
ideas about how political and social relationships could be transformed in a more
equitable, free society. However, it was soon obvious that such a future was not
guaranteed, especially in the now Prussian Rhineland. Dissatisfaction led Hommer,
Görres, and Cerf and Heinrich Marx to seriously reexamine their lives’ directions and to
cross yet another boundary line. Despite the weakening hold of religious faith in a
secularized age, all of these men turned toward religion for answers and opportunities.
These conversions, which constitute the focus of Chapter 5, took many different forms.
As scholars like Karl Morrison, Geoffrey Galt Harpham, William James, Peter Brown
have suggested,\textsuperscript{11} conversion is often a long, confusing process with no clear beginning
or ending because it is so individualized. In the case of Josef von Hommer and Joseph
von Görres, it was a strengthening of older beliefs and a new conviction that what one
had once rejected as a youth actually had value. For other converts like Cerf and
Heinrich Marx, long-standing prejudice pushed them toward Christianity and its ability to
legitimize their careers. Yet one cannot merely view these conversions as taking a step
backward into an age that had passed. Rather, there continued to be tangible benefits
to being religious because Christianity provided a legitimate alternative to emerging
modern ideas about national identity. Lewis Rambo and Gauri Viswanathan, among

others, have highlighted the unsettling role religious conversion can play in establishing modern cultural norms. Conversion also pointed out the role individuals played in defining both religion and nation in a new age because they willingly sought membership in two opposing communities simultaneously.

Nationalism might one day replace religious identity as the primary form of societal affiliation, but in the early nineteenth century it had not yet done so. Indeed, the boundary between religion and nation was extremely murky. In Prussia one could not easily be a national citizen without having the correct Protestant religious background. Catholicism continued to provide a more comprehensive, broader definition of nation that conflicted with Prussia's vision. An arena in which the complex relationship between religion and nation was most contentious was the 1830s battle over interfaith marriages in the Rhineland, the focus of the final chapter. By asserting that all children of mixed marriages should be raised in the faith of their fathers (who in the Rhineland were usually Protestant), the Prussian government hoped to solidify the patriotism of their new territory through common religious faith. This plan did not go well and Rhenish Catholics erupted in protest at this blatant attempt to redefine their national identity for them. As he lay dying, Hommer found himself desperately trying to balance the demands of the state with the demands of his Church. Joseph von Görres composed *Athanasius*, a searing political commentary on the right of Catholics to

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envision a state that protected their rights. Even Heinrich Marx felt it necessary to comment on this vital issue because of what it meant to insert state control over something as private as marriage. They all recognized that they had a right to help define what future direction their faith and their nation might take. This assertion was perhaps the greatest legacy of the French Revolution – a belief that every individual had the ability to contribute to the national dialogue.

No boundary line, legal, religious, or national, was above question in the years that followed the French Revolution. Yet it was not just the ideas and events of the French Revolution that brought about this undermining of societal values and institutions. It was also the people who lived through the era and how they defined their relationships in a rapidly changing world. Earlier generations created their identities through their families, their local communities, their religious faith, their occupations, and a distant king or lord. Now each of these categories was rewritten, and all of them were found to overlap with one another. Public and private met in ways that they never had before. One’s national life directly intersected and sometimes competed with one’s religious life. One’s professional life could be rewritten by politics or religion. As individuals wove their way through this wealth of choices and new ideas, they made decisions based not on their lives within one of these arenas but upon all of them simultaneously. By watching these junctures and how and why individuals shifted their priorities, we can discover a great deal about the French Revolution’s continued reverberations throughout society.
On a late fall morning in 1799, young Joseph Görres set off for Paris on a quest. Though only twenty-three years old, Görres was already an experienced radical, hardened by battles, both in print and otherwise. He had begun writing anti-clerical, pro-French pieces at age twelve and had spent the previous year as coeditor, along with his future brother-in-law Franz von Lassaulx, of Coblenz’s radical newspapers, Das Rothe Blatt and Das Rübezahl. Only recently freed from several weeks in prison, Joseph knew that the task ahead of him was a challenging one. Yet Görres embraced the journey whole-heartedly, convinced that he could persuade the leadership in Paris that he and his fellow revolutionaries were true republicans who could be trusted to guard and spread the civic virtues of the French Revolution. In “Der allegemeine Frieden, ein Ideal”, a pamphlet written by Görres in 1798, he spoke hopefully of a scientific amalgamation of the wisdom of German Kantian philosophy and the practical revolution in France. The new philosophical system would generate a truly moral civic society. “Then would the French phlogistons, cemented with German oxides, build a philosophical king like the world has never seen, and prolong eternally the jewel of wisdom, the existence of the nation, that it possesses.”¹ He and his fellow Rhenish patriots would rid Coblenz of the corruption being bred by former local aristocrats and French bureaucrats abusing their power. With help from Paris they could bind the Rhineland to France and make it into a loyal region of the French state.²


² Ibid., xix-xxvi.
This dream would turn into something else as Görres arrived in a chaotic French capital struggling to make sense of a recent Napoleonic coup and uninterested in any minor problems in distant provinces. He rapidly would be transformed from a hopeful young supporter into an embittered foe of the French, cast adrift in a sea of doubts as to how to make anything that he had previously fought for a reality. In December, Görres wrote home to his fiancée Katharina von Lassaulx in desperation.

then I have become old, old and filled to the brim with experiences. I will return with a silver head and a white beard and will creep with a cane. Nevermore will I...provide disobedience and say the truth to the world’s face....

I will nestle myself and bend, lick the feet of the powerful and wag to them, echo every nitwit, be a concave mirror for every small minded person, and spit in the faces of the upright who come to me and say, ‘Go away, I do not know you!’ I will beg for a position and to he who awards it I will bequest my conscience. On top of that I give my principles up to be bought. When I have a position I will sit myself in the grandfather chair and my child should feed and fatten me until I am so fat that I completely fill my place like a snail its house…³

Though overly dramatic, Görres was obviously transformed by his experience, becoming much more wise to new realities than he would have desired.

What is most interesting here, however, is the role that Paris itself played in this journey to self-realization. As a new century began, Paris was a magnet, the center of a web of ideas and possibilities that drew people to it from far beyond the boundaries of France itself. Some visitors would end up, as Görres did, disillusioned and forced to find another path to fulfillment. Others would be luckier and would leave the city brimming with hope that change was happening and that their life paths could be rewritten. Still others would be drawn out of curiosity and would leave less transformed

by the experiencing of visiting Paris than embarrassed that they had imagined that a brief stay in a different city could have any real impact upon their lives. While each of these end results is quite different, their starting points are the same - Paris. Lloyd Kramer’s commentary on later Parisian visitors in exile is helpful here. In his view, Paris provided,

a social-intellectual community that facilitated for exiles the development of new theories about their native national cultures, about France, and about themselves. Parisian realities helped to transform the ideas of outsiders who went there, but their ideas also helped to transform the historical meaning and realities of Paris. Exile provokes new forms of interpretation by defamiliarizing the familiar and familiarizing the unfamiliar.4

What existed between visitor and city was a dialogue, a story that both sides had a critical role in composing and one that could gradually rewire the paradigms of each. Even though the visits of my subjects were quite brief, ranging from a few weeks to a few months, they all added interesting voices into the mix of what Paris was and what it was to become, through reimagining who they were and what they could become.

This chapter examines three specific visits to Paris: Joseph von Hommer in 1786, Joseph von Görres in 1799, and Samuel Marx in 1807. Though these visits occurred at quite different times and for somewhat varied reasons, they nevertheless highlight the central role that Paris could play in how people made sense of their worlds. The city, both the real one and the imagined one, for both those who visited and those who only observed it from a distance, riveted the attention of late eighteenth-century Europe. It was a door that opened and closed on a regular basis to a future only dimly visible. As

such, it fascinated people, drew them in, and then expelled them again filled with new ideas about themselves and the universe in which they lived.

Before looking more closely at these individual visits, one needs to understand both the nature of Paris as a pilgrimage site and the space that the revolutionary city occupied within the minds of its visitors. This task is a surprisingly difficult one. Whereas much has been written about the history of Paris from antiquity to the present and about its visitors, particularly in the nineteenth century, travelers during the French Revolution itself have not received the same amount of attention. Those who have written about visitors during this era have tended to focus upon American diplomats to Paris. There are several clear reasons behind this gap in the historiography – the upheaval in Paris during the Revolution naturally led to its having fewer visitors and those who did travel to the city tended to have very specific, political projects in mind. Yet even in its season of chaos Paris remained the political and cultural epicenter of Europe. To understand how visitors made sense of the city, and its impact upon their

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way of thinking, it helps to turn to another type of historiographical literature for comparison – religious pilgrimage and its principal city, Rome.

It is perhaps dangerous to call Paris a pilgrimage site at all. In the revolutionary and Napoleonic eras, the city could certainly not be compared favorably to Rome, the greatest of all European pilgrimage destinations. Paris did not have Rome’s incredibly rich, layered history or its central place in a religious network extending into every corner of Europe. But by the late eighteenth century, the great medieval age of pilgrimage that bound all Christians into a unified whole via Rome had passed, replaced by a confused mix of travelers no longer brought together on roads leading toward a single destination. Religious pilgrimages did continue in the nineteenth century and, as evidenced by Trier, Marpingen, and Lourdes, even increased in size well beyond the number of pilgrims in earlier ages. However, there was no longer a single religious city like Rome that captured travelers’ imaginations. Instead more secular Paris would slowly evolve into the beacon of Europe, but at the beginning of the nineteenth century it made poor competition for cities like London.

However, applying some of the language of extensive anthropological and historical studies of medieval Roman pilgrimage to revolutionary Paris can lead to some interesting results. Consider Peter Bondanella’s description of the myths surrounding Rome: “the city very nearly represents a form of secular religion, a realm of superhuman affairs where ordinary street clothes are insufficiently elegant for this metropolis of the

mind.\textsuperscript{9} The city in some ways existed outside of itself as an aspiration or dream. Bondanella was fascinated by the way in which the image of Rome could be sculpted by its viewers into "a flexible and limitless source for self-expression, a common heritage which has met the needs of successive generations."\textsuperscript{10} Here the individual self met corporate culture and society and blended into a riotous, colorful, ever-changing portrait of private and public realities.

Yet it was not just Rome itself that caused this re-imagination of one's world – it was also the mere experience of pilgrimage and travel. All travel contains notions of pilgrimage, though sometimes unfocused. Travelers may not be in search of a specific holy community, but they do seek connections with a wider world beyond their everyday lives. These bonds, like those of pilgrimage, are imagined ones connecting individual and community. Travel necessitates moving away from the stable neighborhood in which one lives to face unstructured new experiences. One questions previous thought patterns as one meets different people and viewpoints on the same route. Social class and other distinctions weaken as one experiences a new physical community with new companions. Travelers also endanger societal structure because they exist nowhere. There are no governing structures binding them to a given place and set of norms.\textsuperscript{11}


\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 1.

One leaves the known for the unknown in search of something that is missing. Victor Turner, the renowned anthropologist, described the desire to go on a pilgrimage as follows:

The need to choose between alternative lines of action in an ever more complex social field, the increasing weight, as he matures, of responsibility for his own decisions and their outcomes, prove too much for the individual to endure on his own, and he seeks some transcendental source of support and legitimacy to relieve him from anxieties about his immediate and ultimate fate as a self-conscious entity.12

The young, those in need of finding a connection to the surrounding world, thus engage in pilgrimage or travel more often than others. Yet, unlike in Turner’s upbeat assessment, not all travelers find what they seek. While it is impossible to predict which travelers will succeed in locating that mystical bond, it is obvious that all curious visitors return in some way changed by the experience of leaving the boundaries of the everyday.

Cities like Rome or Paris can bring such moments of self-reflection and growth into even sharper focus because of the cultural connections inherent in the myths enveloping them. Certain locations compete among themselves in importance and in the right to claim that they contain that mysterious element which bonds people into a larger whole. Of course, the most prominent of these spots regularly switch places within the hierarchy of significance, especially at moments in which history seems to be rewriting itself. The French Revolution was one of those moments. Andrew Hussey suggests, “The Revolution made Paris itself into a mythical place….Paris was no longer

12 Ibid., 200.
a mere material reality but also represented a new idea of what humanity could be."\textsuperscript{13} As with Rome, the cultural meaning of Paris was deeply connected to the aspirations of a large segment of society.

Yet what was this myth surrounding Paris and how did it develop? Patrice Higgonet has helpfully suggested that myths are "stories that all societies elaborate to explain to themselves the rise and sometimes the fall of their collective enterprise."\textsuperscript{14} So myths evolve over time to answer basic societal questions, but what issues are they addressing and do they do so successfully? Higgonet goes on to label Parisian mystique as a "phantasmagoria", applying Karl Marx's definition of "an illusion—or better a self-delusion."\textsuperscript{15} Such a definition is interesting on a number of levels. Although Karl Marx himself did not refer to Paris as a phantasmagoria and was using the term in another age for quite different reasons, Higgonet has unwittingly caused an interesting juxtaposition. One subject discussed here, indeed the one who probably most accepted the myth that Paris offered, was Karl's uncle, Samuel Marx. Was Samuel Marx being deluded, hoodwinked by a story about a new "collective enterprise" that he desperately wanted to believe? Higgonet reaches out a bit too far perhaps. Certainly not everyone was taken in by the fantasy Paris created, as is readily seen in Joseph Görres's reaction. It is also difficult to prove that there was no substance behind

\textsuperscript{13} Andrew Hussey, \textit{Paris: The Secret History} (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006), 204. See also Jones, xvi-xvii.


\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 5-6.
the façade or that the myth of Paris was created according to a script to fulfill an emotional need.

However, one can easily find evidence that in the wake of the French Revolution Paris sought for itself a new role on the world stage – the understudy Paris would now replace the defunct leading actor, Rome. The myth of Paris was to become “the universalizing and secularized sequel to collective religious myths that had begun to die.”

Paris would have its pilgrims. Indeed by the mid-nineteenth century it would become the most vital of all European pilgrimage destinations – only these journeys would be secular, cultural and intellectual. Yet how did this transformation take place? Upon what foundation would Paris build its reputation?

In addition to the critical saga of the Revolution itself, Paris intentionally turned to Rome as an inspiration for its future greatness. Even in earlier ages, Rome was the archetype for what Paris wanted to become. Philip Augustus linked his new capital Paris to ancient Rome in early 1200s to firmly solidify his authority. Francis I created triumphal arches in Paris in the mid 1500s to link his own grand parades to those of imperial Rome.

During the reign of Louis XIV, Jean-Baptiste Colbert had worked to create a New Rome that would ensure the city’s immortality (and his own) by evoking power, law, and order through architectural splendor. However, Louis XIV had other

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17 Jones, 45, 104-5.
plans. The monarch turned his attention to Versailles so many of Colbert’s ideas were never completed.  

Early revolutionaries also found their cultural muse for Paris and the French Revolution itself in a different, republican, ancient Rome. Jacques-Louis David, the artistic architect of many revolutionary ideals, used Roman heroes and villains like the Horatii and Brutus to goad his fellow citizens to patriotic service. “With him [David], because of him, Paris makes its revolution within the framework of a Greco-Roman masquerade.” The destructive power of the Revolution was felt throughout Paris as long-standing monuments, prisons and churches were crushed by mob anger. Henri Lefebvre has suggested that having a revolution means clearing a physical space in which it can thrive.

A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential; indeed, it has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses. A social transformation, to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language and on space – though its impact need not occur at the same rate, or with equal force, in each of these areas.

Yet no revolution completely devastates what comes before – instead it builds on the parts of history that it can accept and turn to its own ends. Thus, it was medieval and Gothic Paris that did not survive the Revolution – what was viewed as ancient was usually left intact and regularly reproduced.

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19 René Sédillot, *Paris* (Ottawa: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1962), 199. See also Hussey, 156.

Napoleon continued in a similar vein but with a new emphasis on creating a Roman imperial legacy for himself and for Paris. Stirred by his campaigns in Italy and Egypt, Napoleon brought back to Paris not only ancient statuary like *Laocoön* and *Apollo Belvedere* but also a clear plan to remake the city in Roman style. New historic architecture like the Arc de Triomphe, obelisks, and catacombs began dotting the city. Even plans for improving sewer systems and water transportation were based upon what the ancient Romans had done. From women dressed in silky Empire dresses, to using ancient Roman terms like *senate, legion, consul* and *emperor*, the age was awash in the rich imagery of Rome at its height of power. As René Sédillot has argued, “the passion for antiquity will turn to deliriousness….it is Rome which has resuscitated Paris.”

Of course, physical changes to the city were slow but the rising prestige of Paris was quite noticeable. By the mid-nineteenth century Victor Hugo could write,

> Ever since historic times, there has always been on the earth what we call the City….We have needed the city that thinks….We have needed the city where everybody is citizen….Jerusalem unleashes the True, Athens the Beautiful, Rome the Great. Paris is the sum of all three of these great cities.

Paris became a critical element in how Europe understood itself – in both its physical state and its imagined myth, whether in reality or as a phantasmagoria. It had replaced Rome as a bonding agent between individuals and the culture that defined them.

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A few decades earlier, Josef Ludwig Aloys von Hommer might have visited Rome rather than Paris to learn about the world. He was a young priest only a few years older than Joseph Görres when he visited the French capital in 1786. He had been born in Coblenz in the archbishopric of Trier in 1760, the son of Johann Friedrich Hommer, Coblenz Hofrat (court councilor), Kanzleidirektor (chancellery director) and archivist. His mother was Ursula Cramer von Clauspruch, Johann Friedrich’s third wife and daughter of a Reichskammergericht (Imperial Chamber Court) assessor from Cologne. By the time of Josef’s birth his father was already 57 years old. Johann Friedrich died when his son was thirteen. However, a strong tradition of service to the archbishop of Trier would carry the family into the future. Josef’s older stepbrother, Peter Josef Melchior von Hommer, was seventeen years older than his sibling and would play a major role in Josef’s young adulthood. Peter Melchior was Hofrat like his father and also served as Coblenz’s mayor. His stepsister Maria Anna married a Düsseldorf lawyer and died in 1803. Josef was raised alongside his younger brother Johann Arnold, who also became a priest.

Josef von Hommer’s autobiography, written when he was around 68, speaks reverently of his parents and their dedication to service and piety. His mother, the dutiful German wife, always referred to her husband as “Herr Hommer” and taught her sons strict obedience. She did not allow her sons to go on school outings, to learn to ice skate, or to wrestle and throw balls. In his assessment of his father, Hommer focused on his father’s reputation and social standing. “I had the best father – he was clever, learned, very experienced in state business, highly respected in the state,
honored and loved by high and low."²³ The Hommers thus saw themselves as societal linchpins, guardians of proper values and behavior. It would not be a stretch to call Josef’s parents overprotective of their station, even hiring someone to carry their sons’ books the two blocks from their house to the gymnasium. However, Hommer also mentions that his mother used examples of good behavior among the poor to instruct her sons. “So she instilled in us a known ambition to behave in a dignified fashion without feeding our pride.”²⁴ Whether or not her commentary provided any sense of moral equality among different social classes is difficult to judge, but an abiding concern with a higher ethical code is clear.

This interest in proper manners was especially important because of Hommer’s and his brother’s carefully chosen career paths. Josef’s diary is rife with an almost overwhelming wave of childhood religious instruction. Whereas other mothers dressed their sons as Hussars, Ursula dressed hers as Jesuits. Instead of playing soldiers, he and his brother would make believe that they were saying mass, with their parents or older siblings as the congregation. Hommer did not question the validity of such instructional methods, and indeed praised them as a driving force in his life.

For myself, I am thankful to my God that I was born and raised in an age that a religious education had great importance. It worked out in myself that when I later fell into certain errors and many borderline situations, that I, who was mindful of the principles I had learned, came once again to the right way of thinking.²⁵


²⁴ Ibid., 25.

²⁵ Ibid., 41. See also 25 + 31.
In 1768, when Josef von Hommer was only eight years old, his father requested an open canon seat for his son at St. Kastorkirche in Coblenz. Normal canon candidates at the church had to be at least fourteen and could not become full canons until at least age 21, after receiving holy orders. But Johann Friedrich petitioned Rome for a special dispensation and by July of the same year Josef was already tonsured and installed in his position, ready to become a full canon when he was older. After graduating from the gymnasium in 1776, he entered the theological seminary in Trier. In 1781 he became a full canon at St. Kastorkirche and in 1783 he was consecrated as a full priest. By the time that he visited Paris in the mid 1780s Josef von Hommer already had his first parish at Wallersheim and was serving as an actuary for Archbishop Clemens Wenzeslaus during the archbishop’s yearly tours of the lower archbishopric.26

Yet despite his strict upbringing, Josef von Hommer was less than an ideal young cleric. His autobiography contains example after example of his failure to maintain clerical morality. He often followed the suggestions of others without thinking about the consequences because he wanted to be popular. He speaks of ignoring teachers and being forced to learn lessons by personal experience rather than listening to wisdom from the past. Hommer was most interested in the prizes and prestigious positions and would become angry if someone of a lower station would get an award that he wanted by working harder. His poor behavior became especially pronounced at seminary where he and his fellow seminarians regularly ignored rules against gambling, card playing and wine drinking. While briefly at Heidelberg studying canon law before entering the priesthood, Hommer wasted 900 Gulden in a year and a half playing tarock

26 Ibid., 53-55 (see n. 32-34), 75-125.
and taking horseback riding lessons. Trips into the countryside during this period centered on dancing and joking around with friends while his mother sat at home praying for his morals. Of course, Hommer highlighted his poor behavior in part, as was true of much of the genre of religious autobiography, to emphasize his failures and God’s grace. Still, it is also clear that as a young priest, Hommer had not fully come to terms with his religious vocation.

As is true of many young adults, Josef von Hommer was still searching for himself and his place in the world when he visited Paris in 1786. His older brother Peter Melchior had asked Josef to escort Peter’s thirteen-year-old son Friedrich to Metz where he would learn French and philosophy as part of his preparation for a career in business. During a stopover in Trier, Josef visited a friend, Johann Peter von Hontheim, who invited Hommer to accompany him on a trip to Paris leaving in a few days. The young priest hesitated, knowing the trip’s cost. He spoke with his host Franz Staadt who had spent time in the city in his youth. Staadt enthusiastically urged Hommer to go and gave him 40 Louisdors in travel money, so he relented and readily agreed to the journey.

Though Hommer’s much later autobiography is somewhat vague on his emotional state as he headed for Paris, one can readily imagine the pull that such a famous city had on a new cleric relatively inexperienced in the ways of the world. Paris could remake anyone who came in contact with it.

The capital had built up a specific culture in which habits and behavior were modeled on recent knowledge, and where the chance to meet and

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27 Ibid., 29, 33, 71, 83-93.

28 Ibid., 130-31.
communicate gave a sense of hope....The newcomer, temporary or permanent migrant, found in Paris more than just a city atmosphere, such as a villager might find spending a few hours at his local county town, he entered upon a life of a quite new and different kind, he could become a different man. 29

Paris was an ever-changing source of knowledge about the world and oneself that drew people in to experience the new and different. A young Russian traveler, Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin, who visited Paris a few years after Hommer, speaks to the city's awe-inspiring reputation.

There is the city which for so many centuries has been the model for all Europe, the fount of taste and fashion; the city whose name is pronounced with reverence by the learned and the unlearned, philosophers and fops, artists and fools, in Europe and Asia, in America and Africa, whose name became known to me almost together with my own....

Never have I approached a city with such curiosity, such impatience! 30

Even at this early stage, Paris was a cultural mecca. Louis-Sebastien Mercier, author of the most famous Ancien Régime guidebook to the city, was even more poetic in describing the city's impact. “It has been said that one has to breathe the air of Paris to achieve perfection of any sort. Indeed, those who have never visited the capital have rarely excelled in their craft. If I am not mistaken, Paris air must have something special in it.” 31 Whether in the “Parisian air” or merely in its intangible impact on senses and thought, the city drew to it travelers like Josef von Hommer – young men of some means seeking a little adventure outside the ordinary, a journey into unknown vistas of city and self.

29 Roche, 197.


Hommer’s impressions of Paris were like that of many others, both then and now. Paris was a sometimes overwhelming kaleidoscope of color and experience that bombarded visitors’ senses with rapid activity. He reflected,

In Paris, the highly famous city, the lifestyle of Frenchmen is quite productive but also very restless. There is so much scattering of activity and so many admirable things that the spirit has hardly any leisure and time for deliberation. Since we did not have any business to settle, every day we lingered in the city, looking and investigating what was remarkable.32

Finding oneself in Paris would be difficult because one had so little time for introspection – everything was visceral and on the surface. Hommer would have readily understood with Karamzin’s psychological state: “I felt as though I had fallen, like a tiny grain of sand, into a terrible abyss and was spinning around in a vortex.”33 A visit to Paris required an impression of distance in order to understand it. While one was there it would be difficult to find that sense of place. One instead relied on the physicality of the moment and hoped that the compilation of experiences could add up to something comprehensible.

Hommer was in Paris for around five months and saw a great deal ranging from churches, to institutions for the blind and deaf, to theater performances and the Royal Observatory. Yet his impressions fifty years later focused on two main locations: the Palais-Royal and Fontainebleau. The largest amount of his time in Paris was spent at the famous Palais-Royal, which he called “Paris in miniature” where they “lingered daily.”34 Cardinal Richelieu constructed the palace and the area around it remained the

32 Hommer, Meditationes, 131.
33 Karamzin in Berger, 104.
34 Hommer, Meditationes, 131. Others had a similar impression. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. commented in the 1830s that the Palais-Royal “was to Paris what Paris was to Europe.” (McCullough, 53).
fashionable center of aristocratic life in Paris for the next 200 years. Richelieu donated the property to the royal family and Louis XIV lived there during his childhood until moving out to Versailles.\textsuperscript{35} In the 1780s the long-time Orléans family residence was a gathering place for all Paris. It had been expanded by Louis Philippe II in the early 1780s and reopened as a huge complex of over 145 shops and cafés in 1784. One could find everything there from bizarre circus productions to theaters to animals, marionettes and shadow productions. There were 40 jewelry shops alone. It is rare to find a Parisian visitor of the era who did not mention it in their account. Some were highly impressed by the artwork found in the palace itself, arguing that seeing it could make one cry for joy and made the entire journey worthwhile.\textsuperscript{36}

For others, however, it was less a location for great art on the walls than a theater for enacting the art of living life in abundance, a place to be dazzled and a place to be seen. Mercier echoes Hommer’s interpretation, “A man might be imprisoned within its precincts for a year or two and never miss his liberty….They call it the capital of Paris. Everything is to be found there; a young man with twenty years of life behind him and fifty thousand francs in his pocket need never leave it, not even wish to.”\textsuperscript{37} Adding to the rich scene of shoppers bustling about in search of the latest cultural treasures were the cafés and their transformative mix of newspapers and heated political debates.

\textsuperscript{35} Ranum, 114-6.


\textsuperscript{37} Mercier, 202.
Museums and clubs held lectures and readings as well. The theatrical scene changed shape as one observed it and swept outsiders into its maelstrom.

For all its excitement, however, the Palais-Royal, like Paris itself, had a much darker underside. Above all, it was a thief of one’s time and energy. Karamzin commented, “Here are assembled all the remedies for boredom and all the sweet banes for spiritual and physical health, every method of swindling those with money and tormenting those without it, all means of enjoying and killing time.”38 Fulfilling one’s sensual desires in all their forms was simple here and losing one’s moral compass even easier. Lying and cheating customers was common, as were bankers speculating in stocks, lawyers trying to drum up business, fights, prostitution, robbery and gambling. Mercier labels the palace playground “a pretty Pandora’s box” and “a temple of vice, the brilliance of whose votaries has banished shame, no public place in the world is more exquisitely depraved, or mocks the blush of innocence more cruelly.”39 Many of the criminals were aristocrats so there was little the police could do to control the Palais-Royal.40 What pleasures Hommer engaged in while visiting the Palais-Royal is difficult to say, but for a man from a provincial German town raised in strict isolation from immorality, the entertainment must have been shocking at a bare minimum. After leaving Paris, Hommer could no longer justifiably label himself as pure or naïve. At least in part, he had been corrupted by the theater that was Paris by being a spectator to it.

38 Berger, 128.

39 Mercier, 202-3 and Isherwood, 239-45.

40 Isherwood, 247.
Perhaps some slightly guilty feelings about the Palais-Royal kept Hommer from commenting in more detail on a place that he visited so often. His reticence did not extend to the second most important place of Hommer’s visit to Paris, Fontainebleau. The palace had been built as a royal hunting lodge in the twelfth century and had been rebuilt by multiple kings over the centuries. Toward the end of his visit in late October, Hommer decided that his journey would not be complete without attempting to see Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. His companion, Johann Hontheim, had no desire to go so Hommer set off by himself for Fontainebleau, about fourteen miles outside the city. He had been told that the king tended to stop at Fontainebleau at that time of year for a hunting expedition. Due to an early snowstorm the hunt was postponed, and Hommer decided to dress habillé en abbé and go to see the palace. He freely wandered the halls and even met the king and queen. Because he was not part of a German tour group, Hommer was forced to speak French but was able to learn more and get closer to the friendly French eager to share their experiences as courtiers. Hommer did not stay at Fontainebleau long and returned to Paris after just one night.\footnote{Hommer,\textit{ Meditationes}, 131-3.}

Hommer’s accounts of the Palais-Royal and Fontainebleau can be seen in sharp contrast to one another and tell us a great deal about Hommer’s priorities and the transformative power of France’s competing cultural identities. Despite the brief visit, Hommer gave much more space in his narrative to Fontainebleau than to the Palais-Royal. The palaces were in competition with one another over who would have cultural and political control of visitors, residents, and ultimately France itself. This battle for cultural hegemony was similar to the one between Rome and Paris. On the one side,
there was Fontainebleau and Versailles, focal points of royal authority. Until 1750 Versailles was where the excitement was, the place from which French power emanated and the magnet for those desiring a glimpse of greatness. But by the time of Hommer's visit, it was the Palais-Royal and Paris that had usurped the king's position at the top of the hierarchy of cultural importance. Mercier's guidebook commented,

> The word ‘court’ no longer impresses us as it did in the time of Louis XIV. The Court no longer decides which opinions will prevail or which reputations will be highest in any genre....The Court itself, not unaware of the change, no longer dares to pronounce upon a book, a play, a new masterpiece, or a singular or extraordinary event. It awaits the declaration of the capital....The Court holds its tongue. Paris talks.\(^{42}\)

Those all-important declarations emanated from the salons and cafés of the Palais-Royal as a Habermasian public sphere developed. Habermas argued that in the eighteenth century a new realm of public activity emerged that challenged older ways of thinking.

Now continuous state activity corresponded to the continuity of contact among those trafficking in commodities and news (stock market, press). Public authority was consolidated into a palpable object confronting those who were merely subject to it and who at first were only negatively defined by it....'Public'...was synonymous with 'state-related'; the attribute no longer referred to the representative 'court' of a person endowed with authority but instead to the functioning of an apparatus with regulated spheres of jurisdiction and endowed with a monopoly over the legitimate use of coercion. The manorial lord's feudal authority was transformed into the authority to 'police'; the private people under it, as the addressees of public authority, formed the public.\(^{43}\)

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The power of the written and spoken word and its ability to transform France itself became increasingly evident as the French Revolution drew closer. However, it would not be until October 5, 1789 when Parisian women brought the royal family back to the capital in triumph that the two loci of cultural authority would come together as one whole. The wave from Paris subsumed the court.\(^{44}\) Yet Hommer's autobiography strongly suggests that even a few years earlier this change was far from finished. Seeing Paris was nice, but his visit was incomplete until he could say that he had seen the king. Royal authority, though threatened, remained for many a strong draw. The monarchy was understandable and focused on a single individual rather than spread out among many uncontrollable forces at the Palais-Royal. Thus the king was safer, an icon with which one could connect without embarrassment.

Yet one cannot forget that Hommer spent more time at the Palais-Royal. The Revolution was coming and even a cultural conservative like Hommer could not ignore its eventual impact. The most interesting item in Hommer's Paris narrative by far is the lie that he told to himself and his audience. He opened his recollections of Paris by saying, "If I am not in error, it was in the year 1789, that I came with my nephew Friedrich to Trier in order to take him to Metz."\(^{45}\) Yet this date is not possible – by November 1789 the king and queen were already under virtual house arrest in Paris, not roaming happily on the annual royal hunt. Later in the narrative Hommer gave a clue to the actual date of his trip. He said that he and Hontheim returned to Coblenz in late November in time for Archbishop Clemens Wenzeslaus' entry into his newly

\(^{44}\) Higgonet, 18-36.

\(^{45}\) Hommer, Meditationes, 129.
finished Coblenz residence. This celebration occurred on the 23rd of November 1786. So why does Hommer place the date of his adventure three years later? It is not likely, even with 60 years distance, that Hommer simply misremembered the timing of his trip. He would have known that the Revolution was well underway by the fall of 1789 and that he was not actually part of it. Yet he wanted to be. The hidden revolutionary within him spoke here. The excitement of being in Paris for so critical a moment in its history was too great for Hommer to resist – he had to at least imagine himself being there, if only for a moment.

Josef von Hommer’s visit to Paris can be labeled ambiguous at best. He did not visit the city with an expressed purpose, political or otherwise, and indeed expressed some guilt in taking the trip at all.

I became familiar with the way of life of the French, satisfied my curiosity, saw a great deal which came in handy in my later life. However, generally speaking, this journey was less than necessary. If I had had the word of David, ‘Turn my eyes from looking at vanities’ in front of my eyes, I would have stayed at home. Yet hidden beneath this embarrassment in having taken what was in essence a pleasurable vacation was a clear agenda – a curious desire to see a place about which everyone was talking. In many ways this masked yearning was indeed fulfilled, much to Hommer’s chagrin. He had faced a Paris struggling between the polar opposites of good and evil, of open-minded discussion and sinful pleasures. Hommer commented at the end of his journey, “I discovered that the world is the same everywhere, that men are similar in both their falsehoods and their integrity. It requires the simplicity of the

46 Ibid., n. 238.
47 Ibid., 131.
dove and the intelligence of the snake in order to operate with all humans of every
collection in peace. God be praised!” Josef von Hommer had changed in spite of
himself. The trip was not worthless because it opened him to vistas previously
unimaginable in his sheltered existence. What he did with this new perspective would
work itself out over time, but he was innocent no more. Paris marked an awakening jolt
to Hommer’s sense of his place in the world.

Though time period and motive were considerably different for Joseph von Görres,
Paris also had a comparable impact on his consciousness. Görres’s upbringing was
similar to Hommer’s only in its location. Coblenz was a mid-sized German city of about
9,000 residents at the time of Joseph’s birth on January 25, 1776. The city’s relative
importance increased when Archbishop Wenzeslaus moved his primary residence from
Trier to Coblenz in 1777. Located at a critical juncture of the Rhine and Moselle rivers,
the city had a larger number of Italian and French immigrants and an economy heavily
based in wine and lumber. Görres was the eldest son of Moritz Görres, a wood
merchant, and Helene Therese Mazza, the daughter of a respected Italian merchant
family and sister of a future city mayor. He had two younger brothers and four sisters,
but none of them had much impact on Görres’s later life or upon the historical record. 49
The house that he grew up in was at the lower end of the Rheinstraße, one of the more
prominent streets in the city. Nearby lay Josef von Hommer’s childhood home and the
residence of Adam von Lassaulx, an advisor to the archbishop and father of Katharina

48 Ibid., 133.

49 Jon Vanden Heuvel, A German Life in the Age of Revolution: Joseph Görres, 1776-1848 (Washington,
DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 1-4. See also Joseph Galland, Joseph Görres. Aus
Anlass seiner hundertjährigen Geburtstfeier in seinem Leben und Werken dem deutschen Volk geschildert
(Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder'sche Verlagshandlung, 1876).
and Franz von Lassaulx, intimate playmates and future spouse and brother-in-law to Görres. Thus Joseph von Görres grew up in a household similar to many others who would feel the pull of the French Revolution most strongly – a member of a successful bourgeois family eager to shatter the weakened glass separating themselves from social and political elites.

Most formative in Görres’s early career were the years that he spent at Coblenz’s gymnasium. He entered the school in 1786 at age 10 and was soon recognized as an extremely gifted student, if somewhat passionate and a bit of a troublemaker. Yet Görres’s son Guido would later blame Joseph’s schooling, rather than his own personality, for the radical path that he selected. “Like it would soon be in the rest of the world, it was uneasy and stormy in the school and one of the most zealous and restless was my father; he with his thirst for knowledge and his fiery, fantastical mind…that they let him rush into a heartbreaking trek after the desires of his heart.”

Görres’s gymnasium was quite different from the one that Hommer had attended sixteen years earlier. Hommer had been given a traditional Jesuit education but with the dispersal of the order and Josephinist Enlightenment reforms, the Coblenz gymnasium now lay at the intersection of efforts to improve education. Though he would soon regret supporting such a sweeping reorganization of the schools, Archbishop Wenzeslaus himself argued in the early 1780s for a new system. Education was to be more rational


and moral, less based in Church dogma, more interested in promoting native German philosophers like Kant “to develop Rhenish youth for more active citizenship.” In arguing for a new, national German Church, professors at the gymnasium pushed well beyond where many clerical leaders in Trier were comfortable. These men and their students soon became even more radicalized by the French Revolution.

The Archbishop of Trier’s opinion of reform completely reversed itself in 1789. He soon welcomed French aristocratic refugees openly and Coblenz became one of the largest émigré communities in Europe, a “Klein-Versailles”. The émigrés’ poor behavior and refusal to follow local laws, coupled with a legitimate fear that the French might attack, created an increasingly tense atmosphere in the city. However, the incident that most clearly helped radicalize Görres was the brief French takeover of nearby Mainz in 1792-3. After Wenzeslaus fled, Coblenzers, certain that they would be captured next, sent a delegation to the French begging that they be spared. Led by Peter Ernst von Lassaulx, Coblenz secular Syndikus and Franz and Katharina’s uncle,

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52 Vanden Heuvel, 13-14. For further information on education in Trier, see Michael Rowe, From Reich to State: The Rhineland in the Revolutionary Age, 1780-1830 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 26-28. With its four universities, the Rhineland had a higher literacy rate than most of Europe. The Trier archbishopric had mandatory education through age 11 and attendance rates of 70%, among the highest in Europe. A 1788 survey found 91% of schoolchildren could read.


54 Rowe, 44-5.

55 The Syndikus were secretaries for the Stände, the advisory body to the archbishop. There were two, one secular and one religious for each half of the archbishopric. Coblenz religious Syndikus was none other than Josef von Hommer who was heavily involved in discussions over whether to send a group to Mainz and who would argue later on Peter’s behalf. J.J. Mazza, possibly one of Görres’ uncles, also was a member of the Mainz group. See Joseph Hansen, ed., Quellen zur Geschichte des Rheinlandes im Zeitalter des Französischen Revolution, 1780-1801, vol. 2, 1792-1793 (Bonn: Verlag P. Hanstein, 1933), 508.
the group visited Mainz for several weeks. Although there was no official mention of sixteen-year-old Joseph being part of this group, it was quite possible. Upon returning from Paris eight years later, Görres stopped in Mainz and recalled an earlier visit there. “Where I am right now the first seeds for my enthusiasm were planted eight years ago that have since blossomed and gave my entire future life a decided direction.” The deputation did not just speak to French authorities – they also visited the Mainz Club, gathering spot for enthusiastic German supporters of the French Revolution. Archbishop Wenzeslaus was furious. When he returned to Coblenz after the French retreat a few months later, he imprisoned Peter Ernst von Lassaulx for treason. Lassaulx was later released but remained under suspicion until the French came again and took Coblenz in 1794. Whether part of Lassaulx’s renegade group or not, ardent, teenage Görres no doubt saw the events of 1792 as a turning point. The time had come to choose sides in the debates over his own future, and that of Coblenz and the rest of the world.

Joseph and many of his fellow revolutionaries, mostly gymnasium students and professors, established the Coblenz Patriotic Club in 1796. Joseph was particularly enamored with Immanuel Kant and sought to make his philosophical principles more concrete. Kant was the philosophical soul of how Germans made sense of the French Revolution. As was true of many German thinkers, Kant was much more theoretical

56 As qtd. in Hansen, ed., Quellen, vol. 2, 508. For another description of this episode see Roger Dufraisse, L’Allemagne à l’Époque napoléonienne: Questions d’histoire politique, économique et sociale: Études de Roger Dufraisse réunies à l’occasion de son 70e anniversaire par l’Institut Historique Allemand de Paris (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1992), 38-68.

57 Ibid., 486, 508-10, + 787. See also Braubach, Görres: Gesammelte Schriften, XX; Vanden Heuvel, 23-5; and Rowe, 77-8.
than practical. Kant urged reform but, “He believed in the possibility of a harmonious and evolutionary, scientific development and understood the establishment of civil order as an ethical task, as the realization of customary law.”58 In Kant’s view destroying the existing political framework, even if the people were oppressed, was not progress. He urged, “All recalcitrance against the highest legislative power, all inciting in order to let discontent of subjects become daily, all rebellion...[is] the highest and most punishable crime in common nature, because it destroys its foundation.”59 Yet as the French Revolution progressed Kant found himself in the awkward position of explaining the Revolution’s success. Though he never went so far as to fully support the radicals, Kant’s encouragement of reform made him enemies in the government and followers among fellow Germans, particularly in the Rhineland, who felt that the time for change had begun. Görres, for one, came to see political involvement as “a Manichean struggle” to help the French to create the moral government that Kant had first outlined.60

In 1797 Adam von Lassaulx turned over control of his publishing house to his son, and Franz and Joseph soon began printing Das Rothe Blatt, a German Jacobin newspaper. The name of the paper changed to Das Rübezahl in 1798 in order to avoid French censorship. In these publications young Görres found a home for his fervent


59 Kant as qtd. in Grab, 30.

60 Vanden Heuvel, 25-35. See also Christopher Buchholz, *Französischer Staatskult 1792-1813 im linkrheinischen Deutschland* (New York: Lang, 1997).
voice. “Without fear and without secret I have followed the voice of my heart, only to search out and give a true account of my innermost convictions.” For the rest of his life, newspaper articles were Görres’s lifeblood, a place to bare his soul and hope his audiences would respond with similar passion.

Yet convincing others to follow the path to Kantian morality proved quite difficult. The Coblenz Patriotic Society faced two main challenges: lack of support from Rhinelanders and lack of interest from French authorities. One might presume that the absence of Rhenish enthusiasm for revolutionary ideals was due to its provincialism, but actually the opposite was true. Rhinelanders found little appealing in the Revolution because their region already had reformed itself and was quite advanced economically. They saw themselves as already enlightened and did not need the rude and burdensome French to tell them otherwise.

The question of what the French should do with the Rhineland simmered between 1796-99. The French Directory debated whether the Rhineland should be an independent buffer state modeled on the states already founded by Napoleon or be made part of the French Republic. Such talk inspired Rhenish radicals to embrace an independent Cisrhenian republic. They went so far as to create their own flag and plant liberty trees as they worked hard to convince their fellow Rhinelanders. Yet they found scant public enthusiasm – there were only about 2,000 supporters in the entire

61 Görres, Politische Schriften, 193.

Rhineland, 300 (3.5% of the population) in Coblenz. Though the Directory eventually decided in late 1797 in favor of making the Rhineland part of France, Rhenish Cisrhenians like Görres continued to hope for something different. Social reforms undertaken by the French allowed the Cisrhenians to keep imagining that they might someday get at least partial control over their own affairs.63

French occupation certainly did not aid the German Jacobin cause. As T.C.W. Blanning succinctly labeled it, “The sharp end of the French Revolution abroad was certainly a powerful weapon, but it was also clumsy and indiscriminate in its effects, lacerating potential supporters at the same time as it sliced through actual enemies.”64 Not only did the French brutalize Coblenz and anger residents, they also purposely ignored those most willing to defend them. Each successive French administration was worse. Corruption increased and German radicals found that all the important government positions were being given to the very Old Regime bureaucrats that they were trying to overthrow. Görres cried out in frustration,

Do you think that Germany’s soil produces no republicans? Do you think that only slave hoards live on the fertile banks of the Rhine, men who couldn’t live without their masters? Didn’t the men who once sacrificed peace and wealth for freedom teach you better? Ha! Give us our integrity again, give us your constitution or a similar one, suppress the cabals that

63 Rowe, 66 and Grab, 212-67. Other historians have argued that the roots of Görres’s own German nationalism can be found in his support of the Cisrhenian republic. While it is true that Görres always felt that Germans were as important as the French in establishing a just state, it was not until his visit to Paris that he began to imagine the Germans and French as completely separate peoples. See Max Braubach, “Zur Beurteilung des jungen Görres,” in Karl Hoeber, ed., Görres-Festschrift. Aufsätze und Abhandlungen zum 150. Geburtstag von Joseph Görres (Cologne: J.P. Bachem, 1926), 18-24.

64 Blanning, 999. For the physical and financial damage caused by the French see Rowe, 54-60; and Hansgeorg Molitor, Vom Untertan zum Administré. Studien zur französischen Herrschaft und zum Verhalten der Bevölkerung im Rhein-Mosel-Raum von den Revolutionskreigen bis zum Ende der napoleonischen Zeit (Weisbaden: F. Steiner, 1980).
Yet as the end of the century drew nearer, Coblenz’s German Jacobins found themselves no closer to their goals. Radicals, including Franz von Lassaulx, briefly gained control of the Coblenz town council in the summer of 1799 but were soon removed by the French army for attacking moderates and conservatives. Görres’s subsequent protests landed him in jail for about twenty days. The Coblenz Jacobins realized that a change in tactics was in order – a direct appeal to Paris would be their best hope.

When Josef von Hommer went to Paris, he leisurely observed the roiling arguments of the coming Revolution from the sidelines. The atmosphere that Joseph von Görres breathed, however, was radically different. He visited Paris not as some distant spectator but as one demanding full inclusion at the Revolution’s banquet of debate. What had begun in Paris over ten years previously now involved all of Europe, and the city could no longer completely control the discussion. Görres also did not visit Paris as a completely innocent or merely curious pilgrim. Rather, his starting impression was much like Hommer’s concluding observation of Paris teaching visitors, “the simplicity of the dove and intelligence of the snake.” On November 16th, only days before Görres entered the city he wrote home to his fiancée Katharina.

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65 As qtd. in Vanden Heuvel, 42.

Tomorrow I enter the land of heroes and cowards, the proudest republicans and the most debased slaves, the great republic and the pitiful people. Here at the threshold I have often cast an eye into the interior, which fills me with wonder and apprehension at what awaits me once I have put myself in the middle of that great swarm of humanity, where the people have grabbed and torn at each other with claws, nails, and teeth...

As it had been for Josef von Hommer, Paris embodied the full spectrum of human action and emotion in Görres’s eyes. What he was to find there was as yet unclear, but he approached the city more cautiously, dimly aware of its ability to threaten and change individuals.

Yet the young revolutionary also came with considerable hope and enthusiasm, or he would not have made the long journey at all. In his childhood, Görres had dreamed of being a seafaring adventurer in search of distant lands. Paris was not physically remote, but Görres’s quest nevertheless had all the markings of a fantastic escapade with a clear leading role for a dashing hero. He firmly believed that he had the right and the duty to tell Paris his ideas and have it listen. Whereas Hommer went to learn from the city, Görres went to teach it. However, Görres little realized just how transformative entering the melee of Parisian politics could be.

From the very beginning, Görres was aware that his task might not be an easy one. Napoleon’s coup of 18. Brumaire took place two days before the Coblenz delegation left for Paris, but they did not find out the news until a stopover in Trier. Originally, representatives from the four Rhineland provinces were supposed to gather in Trier before traveling together on to the capital to present their petition. The group desired two things: the dismissal of the most recent French commissioner, Joseph

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67 As qtd. in Vanden Heuvel, 82.
68 Guido Görres, 125.
Lakanal, and the immediate, complete union of their Rhenish territory with the rest of France. The meeting in Trier in many ways marked the height of their success. Only Görres and General Rudolf Eickemeyer of Mainz decided to continue the journey, the rest declaring that the trip was now unnecessary. Eickemeyer and Görres arrived in Paris on 30. Brumaire (November 21) and found a city completely unwilling to hear their complaints. Lakanal had already been dismissed, so they attempted to meet with Lakanal’s successor to argue their case. They had little success and soon turned their attention to meeting with Napoleon himself.

Parisians, however, regarded the Rhenish delegation with extreme suspicion. A Parisian newspaper, *Ami des lois*, accused them of being “emissaries of terror” who had already caused considerable damage in Coblenz. Napoleon’s closest advisors told the new leader that the group “belonged to that class of Rhinelanders who were very discontented with the legal government and who had distinguished themselves through their revolutionary principles.”69 By the 16th of December Görres had already written home urging his immediate recall since he no longer believed union with the French republic was worthwhile. The Coblenz Jacobins ignored him and Görres finally decided to leave Paris in early February 1800 without their permission. Because of his military background, Eickemeyer was somewhat more successful. He eventually met with Napoleon twice and was able to secure a more amenable successor to Lakanal, in addition to having the First Consul at least hear the Rhineland’s concerns.70 For

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69 Hansen, vol. 4, 1222. See also 1216-7 + 1221.

70 Ibid., 1243-7.
Görres, however, the trip was an unqualified disaster that would radically change his view of the world.

Joseph von Görres could not have arrived in Paris at a worst moment. The previous decade may have freed Paris from the bonds of feudalism, but it did little for its infrastructure. The rapid turnover in governments and the Reign of Terror had left the city in shambles. “A worn, wrecked and exhausted city, Paris now smelt more of filthy mud and sewage than she had at the worst moments of the Middle Ages.” The statistics lay out a tale of increasing misery: in 1801 the number of Parisian poor seeking assistance was over 111,000 – a huge increase over the 73,000 who had asked for it in 1794. Poor harvests, higher taxes and abandoning the Maximum decimated the population in Paris. It had steadily fallen from approximately 700,000 before the Revolution to an estimated 660,000 in 1795 to only 547,756 in 1801. Napoleon’s arrival was a welcome relief for the exhausted city. As the new century began, they might not have known what changes Napoleon might bring, but Paris was certain that it would be an improvement. This confidence set up an odd juxtaposition for the city’s visitors. On the one hand deep, shocking poverty was omnipresent, on the other, a dance craze had overtaken the city with many of its taverns turned into dance halls where people celebrated long into the night.


For a young, inexperienced provincial like Joseph von Görres what he saw would have been difficult to comprehend. He would have agreed with Nikolai Karamzin’s view of “spinning in a vortex” or Gouverneur Morris, who commented on arriving, “[Paris is] a sort of Whirlwind, which turns [a man] round so fast that he can see Nothing.” Görres wrote home to his dear Katharina with his senses completely overwhelmed.

The horrible noise from morning to evening, the most unfavorable screeching of the Savognards, the newspaper carriers, the fish wives, the fruit sellers, the roles of the thousands of hackney carriages and cabriolets that cross from all sides of the street, the dull swamps of the crowded houses of the people that no one takes down and still always move, their form changes and they are put up again. Everything gives a chaotic tone that makes me deaf and dumb. It is also winter – the death of nature, and a thick fog has blown constantly over us the entire time that we have been here. All of the splendid buildings, all of the luxury and fashion heaped together here, all plays, balls…and what other refined joys it offers out of its horn of plenty: all this is not able to fill the large, large whole in my heart that comes from being so far away from all that I love.

Unlike Josef von Hommer, Görres did not have the luxury of relaxation or time to carefully make sense of what he was experiencing. He was on a vital mission and needed to find his feet quickly. Paris, however, did not provide him the opportunity, so Görres became increasingly frustrated with himself and how easily he could be taken in by the city’s charms. “But I have gotten into the dressing room and have seen the people painting and cleaning themselves and have become angry that I now paint and clean alongside and then laugh afterwards like a harlequin.” The drama that Paris embodied fascinated and alarmed both Hommer and Görres because they could feel themselves being taken in by the city’s temptations. But whereas, Hommer writing

74 Randolph Miller, 17.

75 Görres, Gesammelte Briefe, 6-7.

76 Ibid., 12.
years after the experience could hide his indiscretions or attribute them to his youth, Görres was stuck with an unsavory portrait of himself with which he rapidly had to come to terms.

The young revolutionary made sense of his new reality in part by turning to evaluate the actor at the center of the Parisian drama, Napoleon Bonaparte. During Görres’s visit Bonaparte’s control of Paris and the rest of France remained quite insecure. The new French leader had found only 60,000 francs in the treasury in the wake of his coup. Visitors granted an audience in late December 1799 were shocked to meet with the First Consul in a small, unheated room. It was not until February 19, 1800 that Napoleon’s real intentions became clear as he took up residence in the Tuileries Palace and began many critical reforms. But by then Görres was most likely on his way back to the Rhineland, so Joseph was left to speculate about what was to come. It was clear to Görres that Paris did indeed need some peace and stability, but he was quite concerned about the grandiose thespian offering it. If the ingredients going into the new government were any indication, France was moving away from the moral Kantian state that German radicals desired. A few months later Görres described the nature of Napoleon’s control as, “…all opposition subdued through the predominance of unity, all opposition crushed to death under the glimmer of greatness.” Yet even in all the uncertainty of Paris shortly after 18. Brumaire, the young visitor from the Rhineland could glimpse that despotism had arrived and the

77 Castelot, 83-9. Reactions by American visitors to Paris at the time were mixed with some seeing Napoleon as a savior and others as the opposite. See Ziesche, 138-40.

78 Körber, 36-7.

79 Görres, Gesammelte Schritten, 584.
French Revolution was dead. Confused and disheartened, he returned home to make sense of what had happened to Paris and his own dreams and convictions.

The outcome of his musings was one of Joseph von Görres’s rhetorical gems, “Results of My Mission to Paris.” Throughout the revolutionary era there were other young German and Austrian radicals like Georg Forster, Georg Friedrich Rebmann, Andreas Reidel and Franz Hebenstreit who visited Paris full of expectation and left embittered. Only Görres, however, was able to transform his frustration into such convincing prose. He wrote quickly to answer his many critics, especially among his fellow radicals, to explain why he was giving up the cause. His piece was careful and analytical in order to “weaken suspicion” that he had given up on the mission “out of pure political passion.” Yet, as Leo Just has pointed out, Görres’s emotions were a controlling influence. “Only too often he betrays, however, that his head is only a servant of his heart. Despite all its logic, his theory is routed in enthusiasm, and he only wants to prove what he already believes.” His pamphlet was printed by May 1800, only three months after he had returned. Afterwards, he retreated into his books and took a position teaching physics at the Coblenz gymnasium.

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81 Körber, 34.

Görres covered considerable territory in his pamphlet, but there was one predominant theme that would drive his later politics – Germany and France were too different from one another for any joint enterprise to remake Europe’s political and ethical climate. The flames of the French Revolution had burned too brightly and quickly, and France had lost its engine of universalism. Any talk of German and French chemical bonding completely evaporated to be replaced by a clear, nascent German nationalism. During his visit to Paris, Görres began to recognize just how foreign France really was. His letters home to Katharina contained regular comparisons, none favorable, between France and his beloved Rhineland. The only time that he appeared comfortable and enjoying himself was when visiting fellow Germans. “It was as though I sprang suddenly to the banks of the Rhine and I diligently held the illusion that did me such good as long as possible.”

To be in Paris for Görres was to be lost, to have abandoned his inner beliefs and culture. To find himself meant rejecting all that Paris and France embodied, to locate his German core.

After spending considerable time discussing the Revolution’s failure event by event (because “The examination affects the holy interests of my fatherland, its future existence…”), Joseph moved to his central, national argument by carefully defining the strengths and weaknesses of the French and German character. The French were:

- Easily bloody and warm with sensitive organs susceptible to pleasure, light and flimsy gliding over things, never setting themselves firmly on the same primary temperament…they unite in morals with all easy plans of a cheerful nature that only gently blow the flowers on the upper layer of earth, and do not concern themselves with the treasures to be discovered in a deeper

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83 Görres, Gesammelte Briefe, 8.

84 Görres, Gesammelte Schriften, 557.
penetration of their sprouts….Their genius is wit through a lightning strike, but only for the moment of the strike…

The French, in Görres’s view, had an emboldened enchantment about them, but they reacted too much on the surface to make a deep, lasting impact that could fundamentally transform Europe. In contrast was the German:

In his cold sense the magic of the beautiful disappears….Less penetrated by that expanding fire, his nature is more compact and not capable of quicker impressions….Passion will not enchant him to commit large offenses but will also not enthuse him to do great deeds. He will not be able to raise himself up to personal greatness….His path toward the goal that he puts forward for himself is constant, never stormy, never stationary, but also never jumping like his neighbors.

What is most interesting here was that Görres did not merely praise the German outlook and attack the French. Instead he carefully established each nationality’s necessary contribution to society. However, Joseph no longer recognized the possibility of any amalgamation of the two. “Thus both the French and Germans roam in completely different regions, both forcibly fed against each other. They will always remain incomprehensibly puzzling to the other; each will speak a language that only they can understand and feel oppressed by the supremacy of the other one when within their own circles.”

What had begun in Paris in an inability to make sense of his experiences and find inspiration for his goals had transformed into discovery of himself as a German.

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86 Ibid., 592.

Paris was a clear disappointment, but it also rewrote who Görres was, just as it had for Josef von Hommer. It opened up new windows by causing Görres to question what he really believed. It would take time for the young revolutionary to find himself once more, but rejection of Paris lay at the core of his new self-awareness. Yet Görres demanded much more of Paris than Josef von Hommer had – he had asked for inclusion in its political life. Thus the city’s refusal to grant Görres’s request ultimately had a much deeper impact than Hommer’s seeing the world with new eyes. Görres’s reaction reverberated with his fellow Germans, further deepening the national cultural divide and seriously weakening Paris’s claim to universalism. The tension between being a city welcoming all pilgrims and having an exclusive right to control the debates within it continued to steer Paris throughout the Napoleonic era.

A clear example of this conflict over inclusion is the story of a third Rhenish visitor to Paris, Samuel Marx, who visited in February 1807. In many ways, his tale is quite different from the two others because of his Judaism. Whereas both Hommer and Görres have left behind extensive commentaries that are easily accessible, little documentation remains of Marx’s life. Indeed, without the existence of his famous nephew Karl, it is doubtful that there would be any real evidence preserved. Yet in putting together the small pieces still available, a fascinating portrait of Paris and its impact emerges, one that both starkly contrasts that of Hommer and Görres but also provides strong links to them.

Samuel Marx’s hometown was Trier, another mid-sized community in the Rhineland about 60 miles down the Moselle River from Coblenz. Germany’s oldest city, Trier had been one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire and had been resident
seat of the archbishopric for hundreds of years before Clemens Wenzeslaus moved to Coblenz in 1777. Like Coblenz, Trier’s major industries were wine and lumber traded up and down the river. It also had a similar population of around 10,000 residents at the time of the French Revolution. The Jewish community in Trier was quite tiny. In 1785, twelve Jewish families resided in Trier, most in the vicinity of the synagogue on Weberbachstraße, though they were not legally restricted to any one area of the city. Most of these families rented their properties from Christians. These numbers increased in the Napoleonic era, during which “18 merchants (Händler), 17 businesspeople (Kaufleute), 9 second-hand dealers (Hausierer, Trödler), 6 Jews without trade, 1 rabbi, 1 doctor, 2 teachers, 1 cantor (Chazzan) and 1 gold lender” were recorded in Trier. Adding in families, these numbers probably represent a community of no more than 150-200 Jews. Yet Trier’s community was still large enough to be named the site of one of the Napoleonic Jewish consistories in 1809, controlling the religious lives of the Sarre department’s 3,472 Jews.

Samuel Marx was born in October 1775, only a few months before Joseph von Görres. He was the oldest son of Samuel Marx Levi (1746-1804) and Eva Moses Lwów

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90 Ibid, 34. Hubert Schiel also suggests that by the time of Karl Marx’s birth in 1817 that the Trier Jewish community had about 200 members. The number of Jews in Trier may have grown during the Napoleonic era because of its consistory. Hubert Schiel, Die Umwelt des jungen Karl Marx. Ein unbekanntes Auswanderungsgesuch von Karl Marx. (Trier: Verlag Jacob Lintz, 1954), 6.
(1753-1823). He had two sisters and five brothers who survived to adulthood. Traditionally commentators have emphasized the rabbinical tradition within the Marx family tree, but some scholars have recently suggested that this focus has been misguided. The earliest documents mentioning the family date from about 1670 and find them as merchants in Postoloprty, Bohemia. Samuel’s grandfather Samuel Hirsch Skall is listed as a rabbi, but his father Samuel Marx Levi is mentioned in documents as both a rabbi and a merchant. Samuel’s mother Eva was daughter of the town rabbi and his father took over for his father-in-law, Moses Lwów, after his death in 1788.

However, Samuel’s early life was somewhat insecure since Trier had no way of supporting multiple rabbis. Samuel’s father spent a period as rabbi in nearby Saarlouis and most likely did some trading in order to survive. Even later, Samuel’s family was never well off. His father only owed one Reichsthaler, 20 Albus and 2 Pfennige or around 4 livres in taxes in 1794. By comparison the entire Jewish community in the Sarre department supplied 2,110 livres in forced contributions that same year. A moderately successful bureaucrat in Coblenz could expect to bring in over 3,000 livres per year during the same period, and Josef von Hommer and Joseph von Görres probably more than this amount. Yet despite the family’s poverty, Samuel Marx Levi was held in high esteem among Trier’s Jews. His gravestone read, “Here lies the learned and universal man, our teacher and master; a venerated, holy scholar, a priest


92 Nolden and Mulloy, 23.

of high birth…”94 Like the Hommer family, Samuel’s parents probably saw themselves
as community role models, even if Trier’s Jewish community was much smaller and less
influential. Wealth could not be a critical marker among a group as near the edge of
survival as Trier’s Jews. Yet as Jews they could also not hope that hard work would
bring about any change in status as was true for the Görres family. It would take a
political turnover for there to be any real possibility for improvement.

The arrival of the French in 1794 meant something different to Samuel Marx family
than it had to Josef von Hommer or Joseph von Görres. Samuel was only nineteen
years old and probably still undergoing heavy rabbinical training, as most rabbis of this
era studied for 10 years followed by a practical internship.95 News of the civil
emancipation of French Jews in 1791 gave the Jews of Trier solid grounds for
anticipating similar freedoms. However, it was not until 1797 when France officially
annexed the Rhineland that such a change in status became a reality.96 Still, being
converted into French citizens did not necessarily make Trier’s Jews less suspicious of
governmental intentions. Years of mistreatment and mistrust at the hands of Christians
had taught Rhenish Jewish leaders to be wary of any promises of reform. In some
Jewish communities in Alsace, rabbis struggled to maintain control over their

94 Manfred Schöncke, ed. Karl und Heinrich Marx und ihre Geschwister: Lebenszeugnisse, Briefe,

95 Rauch, 29.

96 Christopher Clark, “German Jews,” in Ranier Liedtke and Stephan Wendehorts, eds., The
Emancipation of Catholics, Jews and Protestants: Minorities and the Nation State in Nineteenth-Century
Europe (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 125.
communities as the new freedoms granted by the French Revolution gave their congregations an excuse to stop contributing or even coming to services altogether.\(^{97}\)

It is not evident that this battle occurred in Trier, but the Levy Marx family no doubt found positives and negatives in being governed from Paris. When the French did a census in 1801, Samuel Levy Marx lied about the ages of his oldest two sons, Samuel and Heschel, making them nineteen and seventeen respectively, shaving six years off of their actual ages. Other Jews were known to have done the same to avoid the French military draft.\(^{98}\) Unlike Joseph von Görres who greeted the French enthusiastically, Samuel Marx’s reaction, like so many other Rhinelanders, was probably more cautious and justifiably so. Whereas young Görres could argue blissfully in his newspaper for radical reforms, Samuel, as a future rabbi, had the concerns of an entire Jewish community to put pressure upon his decisions. He needed time to evaluate the intentions of France and their new leader, Napoleon.

In the summer and fall of 1804 Napoleon visited the Rhineland as part of a grand tour as France’s new emperor. In Coblenz he met with Emanuel Deutz, the city’s chief rabbi and future head rabbi for France. Napoleon stayed in Trier from October 6-9, 1804 and may have even spent time with Samuel Marx Levy. This scenario is somewhat doubtful, however, as Marx Levy died on October 24\(^{th}\).\(^{99}\) His twenty-nine year old son was named rabbi in his place, but the younger Samuel was not made chief

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\(^{98}\) Schöncke, 10.

\(^{99}\) Rauch, 18-9.
rabbi in Trier until 1808. By that time, Trier’s Jews had been shoved into modernity, their rabbi along with them. The route into the future drove directly through Paris.

If Paris was a stage that Josef von Hommer watched as a fascinated spectator and onto which Joseph von Görres attempted to force himself, for Samuel Marx it was the site of a command performance. Napoleon cajoled and demanded until he got his Jewish actors to do almost everything he wanted. Yet French Jews also received a great deal in the bargaining and would come away from Paris with a new sense of future possibilities. Samuel Marx was no pawn but one who grasped the role that he was to play and attempted to take a radically different path for himself, his family, and the Jews of Trier. Paris changed Görres by disappointing him and altered Hommer’s view of humankind by opening his vision to all sides of mankind. Samuel Marx was different yet again because his eyes were set on the opportunity Paris set before him.

However, Napoleon’s view of his Jewish subjects was rampantly anti-Semitic, especially against his German-speaking Jewish subjects, making whatever he offered them less than ideal. Returning from battle in January 1806, Napoleon spent time in Alsace where farmers outraged him with complaints about Jewish usury and the destruction of their livelihoods. As was true of Napoleon’s reform efforts in other areas, he attacked the issue of Jewish citizenship with such overwhelming vigor that his advisors regularly urged a calmer approach. The Emperor called Jews “the vilest of all nations” and issued a decree in May 1806 demanding the immediate suspension of all Jewish loans in German-speaking areas of France. He then called for a meeting of Jews in Paris, an Assembly of Notables, as he said “recalling their brethren to the

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exercise of useful arts and professions in order to replace, through honest industry, the shameful practices to which many of them have resorted from father to son over many centuries." Throughout the months of meetings and debates that followed, Napoleon’s position remained firm. Untrustworthy Jews would have to earn the right to be citizens of the French empire by transforming themselves occupationally and religiously. France would forcibly assimilate them through law, education and bureaucracy into the body politic. Yet Jews found themselves again and again trying to prove their worthiness to the Emperor and never coming close to convincing him.

The Assembly of Notables drew together 111 Jewish community leaders from throughout France and its Italian territories and began meeting in July 1806. They were asked to answer twelve questions about their commitment to French citizenship. Polygamy, divorce, intermarriage, military service, usury and the police power of rabbis – the list demanded that Jews formally prove that their community ideals were not evil. It only took three weeks for the Assembly of Notables to draft their responses praising the Emperor and assuring him of their loyalty in all areas. However, Napoleon remained unconvinced and demanded further assurances of Jewish fidelity. He decided to call a second group to Paris, a Grand Sanhedrin based upon the ancient rabbinical court in Jerusalem, to make the answers to his questions into points of formal Jewish doctrine. It would have 71 members, 2/3 of whom would be rabbis. Thus

Napoleon could assure himself that the most powerful and potentially obstructive Jews had signed off on reform.102

Yet here Napoleon made an error in judgment by presuming that Jewish communities were set up in a similar fashion to Christian ones. Napoleon’s model was a top-down one in which popes, bishops and archbishops held supreme authority over vast, interlocked congregations. As Samuel Marx’s finances can attest, Jewish rabbis, while important as teachers in their local communities, did not have the political and financial clout outside their tiny localities that Catholic leaders did. By calling the Grand Sanhedrin and later establishing a consistory system based in rabbinical authority, Napoleon would help establish a new power struggle within and between Jewish communities in the decades that followed. But first Napoleon had to figure out how to get rabbis to attend the Sanhedrin at all. Originally the meeting was planned for October 20, 1806, but did not actually open until February 9, 1807, because qualified candidates willing to attend were difficult to locate. Much of the problem was financial. In calling the Assembly of Notables, the government ignored the financial burden it was placing on participants. It was not until the Sanhedrin was called that they began to realize that the costs of traveling for months at a time was something delegates simply

could not bear alone. However, instead of paying out of his own coffers, Napoleon
demanded that the Jewish communities themselves pay for their delegates.\(^{103}\) In Trier
this burden was particularly evident. The local prefect, Maximilian Xavier Kepler, who
was already suspicious of the morality of the deputies that he was sending, discovered
that it was extremely difficult to collect the funds quickly enough, or even afterwards. In
the end he was only able to pay the delegates about 200 francs per month, though in
theory they were allowed to spend 500 francs per month. Though delegates from other
departments spend more, the Saar department ended up with the biggest deficit.\(^{104}\)

Whether Samuel Marx attended the Sanhedrin in Paris reluctantly or happily is
impossible to ascertain. In his early 30s, Samuel was older than either Josef von
Hommer or Joseph von Görres when they visited the French capital. Yet for a poor Jew
from a small, isolated community going to Paris was probably even a bigger step than it
had been for Hommer or Görres. As a young rabbi new to actual responsibility, he no
doubt depended heavily on support from his local community to make the trip. There is
some evidence that Samuel was at least minimally happy to be going. Reports from the
departmental prefect indicated that Samuel actually left for Paris for the first scheduled
meeting in October. It is difficult to say whether he waited until the actual Sanhedrin
meeting in February or returned home in between. His later expense statement was

\(^{103}\) Schwartzfuchs, 89-90 + 183-6.

\(^{104}\) Cilli Kasper-Holtkotte, Jüdischer Kultus in napoleonischer Zeit: Aufbau und Organisation der
Konsistorialbezirke Krefeld, Koblenz/Bonn, Mainz und Trier (Vienna: Bohlau Verlag, 1997), 281-90; and
only for five months, while one of his fellow representatives from the area requested funds for nine months.  

Paris, too, had changed considerably since a disappointed Görres had left seven years previously. In 1807 Napoleon was near the height of his power and had begun some much-needed improvements to the city's infrastructure. The largest issue facing the city was a lack of water and proper sanitation, but a new 100-kilometer canal being dug from the River Ourcq would soon improve the situation. The Emperor also widened avenues, added numerous new bridges, arches, statues, fountains, and covered markets. However, as was true of many of Napoleon's projects, there was not time or money to carry through on his ideas completely. War and its attendant costs soon rose again to the top of his agenda, and much work was left for later generations to complete. The emperor's rue de Rivoli project provides an excellent example. Napoleon began with a series of grand arcades, inspired by the ancients, to open the boulevard and improve traffic circulation. He did not get far, however – medieval streets started again near the Hôtel de Ville, and it would be decades before the boulevard was opened completely. Yet though the city still did not have proper lighting or roads, it was recovering and would no doubt have presented a more confident face to Samuel Marx than the exhausted city Görres visited at the turn of the century. 

Both the Assembly of Notables and the Grand Sanhedrin met in the Hôtel de Ville in a small, secularized chapel dedicated to St. John located near the back of the

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105 Kasper-Holtkotte, 265 + 283.

106 Horne, 166-9 + 183-6; Hussey, 214-6; Bouwers, 91-3 + 100, Papayanis, 46-9, 60, + 149-50.
complex. Though the location was originally selected rather hastily,\textsuperscript{107} it highlighted much of what Napoleon hoped to accomplish: to simultaneously impress and demean. Samuel Marx and his fellow deputies would have been awed to be so close to the city’s political center, the city hall where so much important history had taken place over the last several decades. Since 1357, the Hôtel de Ville served as the meeting place for the \textit{bureau de ville}, the elected officials of the bourgeois of Paris, for receiving members of the royal family and visiting dignitaries, as well as for keeping city election registers, city seals and militia weapons. During the events of August 10, 1792, the Hôtel de Ville was under siege and was where Robespierre and his followers were arrested at the end of the Terror. It would be the future location of much turmoil in 1830, 1848 and 1870-1. Yet Jews were not to be completely welcomed at its doors. The Sanhedrin remained at the outskirts, meeting in a cold room that did not even use the building’s main entrance.\textsuperscript{108}

Seating arrangements recalled the ancient Sanhedrin, organized in a semi-circular fashion with the chairman at the center, the oldest rabbit member next to him, followed by the next oldest, with the lay representatives following in a similar order. As the youngest rabbit, Samuel Marx sat between Italian rabbit Jacob Carmi and Parisian layman Saul Crémieux. Dress was also carefully regulated to make the occasion more auspicious: entirely black dress, black silk overcoat, white rabat for rabbis (similar to that worn by Catholic clergy), and tri-cornered hat. At the opening of each meeting, leaders also wore ceremonial swords and were given special military honors. Napoleon

\textsuperscript{107} Schwartzfuchs, 54.

\textsuperscript{108} Ranum, 29; Sédillot, 204; Jones, 297, 325; and McCullough, 185, 259-60, 284-6, + 322.
placed a guard of honor outside the meeting hall and ordered that guards salute Sanhedrin participants when they saw them on the street. The Emperor recognized that auspicious display could awe deputies into doing as he wished. Yet he meticulously arranged things to make sure that station was firmly maintained. Jewish attendees were important but never overly so – this presentation was all about the grandeur of its director. Whether or not Samuel Marx recognized exactly what Napoleon was doing is impossible to discern, but he probably welcomed the opportunity to feel important. Jewish deputies and Napoleon engaged in some intriguing back scratching with both getting something that they needed – praise and power.

Though the youngest rabbinical member, Samuel Marx had some connections with some of the leaders of the Sanhedrin that would have given him a sense of influence. The chairman of the Sanhedrin was David Sinzheim, chief rabbi in Strasbourg, and recent successor to Cerf Berr, Sinzheim’s father-in-law and recognized leader of the Alsatian Ashkenazi Jews of eastern France. There is some dispute as to whether Sinzheim was born in Trier, but he would no doubt have been someone with whom Samuel Marx would have been quite familiar. Even closer to Marx was Emanuel Deutz, rabbi in Coblenz and Sinzheim’s eventual successor. Though far from home

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and no doubt overwhelmed by a distinctly different Parisian scene, Samuel Marx could be comforted by being among his fellow Jews, just as Joseph von Görres had welcomed the company of fellow Germans while traveling. In some ways the Sanhedrin acted as a glue drawing Jews together as a group across large distances and into a “Jewish nation” – the exact opposite of what Napoleon desired. Napoleon would probably have seen such camaraderie as a plus since he would act as a father to his Jewish “children”, guiding them toward French citizenship. However, he ignored two important facts: Sanhedrin Jews had a vastly different perspective of their meeting and the anti-Semitism that the Emperor engendered forcefully blockaded any real integration.

Napoleon did not set up the Sanhedrin with any possibility for real debate. They met only twice a week over the course of five weeks. Each question that they were to answer was formally presented and then members had eight days in which to submit written responses. There was then a roll call vote with no open discussion. “It was clear that there was no room for surprises, and there were none.” Yet Napoleon’s overbearing control did not mean that the Jewish representatives did not find room to make their opinions clear. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, the issue of mixed marriages was a particularly challenging one in which compromise was not easy to achieve. Also, Ronald Schechter has argued that the Jewish representatives of the Assembly and the Sanhedrin angrily refuted long-standing prejudices against them by


111 Schwartzfuchs, 91.
claiming that they lived by a perfect law code, the Mosaic code given by God himself. They did not deny Napoleon the role of regenerator of the Jewish people, but they were not willing to grant him the position of consummate creator of law.  

Sintzheim’s speech at the end of the Sanhedrin was typical. “The law, recalled to its primitive purity, recapturing its antique splendor, and the miraculous bush of our divine legislator burns with a new flame that does not consume it.” Here two of Napoleon’s main claims of authority were rewritten. First, Napoleon the lawgiver was only the granter of ultimately imperfect human law, not heavenly statute. Second, if the Emperor wished to recall the ancient glory of Rome or Israel, he had to also remember that the ancient world was also made up of complex societies in which there were multiple claimants to authority, political and religious.

Whether or not Samuel came away from the Sanhedrin meeting with any sense of empowerment founded in Jewish antiquity is frustratingly difficult to determine without any personal narrative. His actions, however, speak volumes about a slowly burgeoning confidence in or at least acceptance of the infiltration of modernity into the Jewish community. A few months after Samuel returned, on the 16th of August 1807, Trier’s Jews celebrated Napoleon’s birthday in its synagogue. The local newspaper reported:

On the 16th of August at 9 in the morning the Israelites of the town of Trier gathered at Trier’s main synagogue to celebrate this day honorable freedom, and as it was the birthday of the glorious Emperor Napoleon the whole synagogue was lit up and decorated. After that a fitting, newly composed canto was sung with music; in between the rabbi led the assembled Israelites in praying certain psalms. Many times, as soon as the

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112 Schechter, 152-62.

113 Gutman, 91.
director suggested it, all of the assembled cried out: Long live, Emperor Napoleon! Long live, Empress Josephine! The rabbi also preached a fitting sermon in honor of the Emperor; and at the same time cheerfully urged Jewish youth to learn trades, farming, and the sciences.¹¹⁴

Though the majority of French synagogues held similar celebrations at the same time out of political correctness and necessity, Samuel had obviously come to terms with new realities.

Samuel’s involvement with Napoleonic Jewish reform increased over the next several years. In late 1808 the Emperor officially established a new religious bureaucracy to govern Jewish congregations. It was based upon a consistory system that had already been established for Protestants. Originally thirteen consistories were established throughout the French empire, each theoretically controlling around 2,000 Jewish residents. Trier was home to a consistory overseeing about 3,500 Jews from the Saare, Forêts and Sambre-Meuse departments and was headed by Samuel Marx and three other trustworthy lay members selected by the government. The consistories had a large number of responsibilities: make sure that all rabbis preached based upon the rulings of the Sanhedrin, take care of all community finances and education efforts, encourage Jews to take up useful professions and serve patriotically in the army, and report any suspicious activity directly to proper authorities. The increased bureaucracy of the consistorial system was no doubt difficult for the Trier community and its rabbi to manage. On several occasions, Samuel Marx requested that some of his duties be

¹¹⁴ Schöncke, 29. See also Kasper-Holtkotte, 280.
spread out among other rabbis so the costs and time commitment would not fall just on him and his congregation.\textsuperscript{115}

The Trier consistory quickly and vigorously began working towards these new goals. As head of the group, Samuel Marx was no doubt heavily involved in its publications and these documents are perhaps as close as we can get to Marx’s own views. In 1808 the Trier consistory sent an open, passionate letter to its members that recognized both the tragic Jewish past and the possibilities of the future.

One lets us sink into the deepest low level in order to be entitled to degrade us. The reproach of laziness, usury and absence of society spirit that one made against us was only a stinging mockery of our pitiful state. Then one gives us rightly another path than to choose a long and painful death or a miserable and dishonorable life?

Finally the heavens awake, a magnanimous and human nation stirred with sympathy for the destroyed ruins of Israel. They picked us up into their laps and gave us the sweet name, ‘brother’.\textsuperscript{116}

Yet this opportunity for new life was not something merely handed to Jews – they had to reach, grab it and use it to its fullest potential. They were the ultimate arbiters of their own fate.

Israelites, residents of the city! See how the sciences, arts, and trades bloom. May this example fire you up to noble emulation! Let the future vindicate your past performances and serve eternal accusations against those who believed that the name Israelite incompatible with a useful human being. Let your children in their abilities attend schools and craftsmen’s places…

Israelites, residents of this nation! The earth offers her motherly lap she offers you an inexhaustible and abundant source of help…You will perhaps


\textsuperscript{116} Consistoire de la synagogue de Trèves, \textit{Le Consistoire de Trèves, aux habitants de las circonscription, professant la Religion mosaïque. Das Consistorium zu Trier an die Einwohner seines Bezirks, welche sich zur Mosaischen Religion bekennen} ([S.l.], 1808), 1-2.
say that this way is boring; it requires much time until this regulation bears fruit; the moment finally is pressing.

But do not lose courage over this. It is true that the outer sacrifices are necessary. It is true that years will pass before the fruits ripen. Still these fruits will finally ripen, so you will find them tastier and larger because they will have cost you effort and self-abnegation.  

Samuel Marx’s own Paris transformation is evident throughout this exhortation. Attending the Sanhedrin had at least in part awakened him to a world beyond Trier, and he firmly committed himself to guiding his congregation on a similar path. The city was now intertwined with the nation, Jews with Christian brothers, and new careers with old religion. Marx never forgot the challenges that Jews would face in changing outsiders’ attitudes and altering the way in which they had lived for centuries. Yet his optimism here is omnipresent. If a Jewish rabbi could go to Paris to help guide the great Napoleon in his efforts to reform Jews, then surely Samuel’s own community could take the opportunity they were being granted and use it to remake themselves and their society. Napoleon could remain a star for Jews to follow, but without their own brave acceptance of a new world emanating from Paris nothing would happen.

What is most remarkable about Samuel Marx’s story however is his level of commitment to change. Rabbis throughout the French empire no doubt exhorted their congregations to try new career paths and show their worthiness as French citizens. Indeed, Napoleon expected nothing less in calling the Sanhedrin in the first place. Samuel Marx, however, willingly put his own family forward as pioneers in new professions. His own sons, Marcus and Moses were born in 1812 and 1815, well after the height of Napoleonic reform. Still, Marcus worked the earth as a gardener while

117 Ibid., 4-5. Local French leaders also pushed Jews toward taking up trades. For more on these efforts see Anchel, 334.
Moses became a teacher. Even more interesting were Samuel’s brothers. His youngest brother Jakobus took a more traditional path and became a Jewish businessman. Jakobus, however, was much less under Samuel’s direct influence as he was only four when his father died and accompanied his mother Eva when she got remarried to Samuel Löwenstamm, Amsterdam’s chief rabbi. However, Samuel’s other two brothers, Heschel and Cerf, acted much more boldly in their career decisions. Heschel first served as a translator in the French courts and then took his law degree from the newly opened law school in Coblenz. Samuel’s role in Cerf’s career path is even more obvious. Samuel was the only one of the Parisian visitors discussed here to return to the city. In 1813 he accompanied Cerf back to Paris to apprentice his twenty-three year old brother to a watchmaker there. Heschel’s and Cerf’s stories will be examined in more depth later, but what is interesting here is Samuel’s obvious inspiration in their career choices. Samuel did not merely suggest to his congregations that it was time to begin reforming themselves. He led through the example of his brothers.

However, from the very beginning these changes were quite difficult and involved rewriting who the Marx family was. The most obvious example of this was the changing of the family name. When Samuel attended the meeting of the Sanhedrin in Paris, his name was recorded as Samuël Marx Lévi. Napoleon, however, as part of integration efforts, decreed on July 20, 1808 that Jews would no longer be able to carry confusing

\[118\] Schöncke, 20-33, 430-4, + 475-6.

\[119\] Gutman, 84.
double last names or last names that specifically referenced the Old Testament.\textsuperscript{120}

Thus, in early October of that same year Samuel officially changed the names of himself and his siblings to Marx. Whether this move was painful or merely practical for the Marxes is impossible to discern, but its symbolic impact was far-reaching. Family members were now French citizens on paper, not Jewish foreigners wandering far from home.

Yet citizenship for Jews in the French Empire remained remarkably illusory and fragmented. However much Samuel Marx accepted and worked toward community regeneration, he could never ignore the roadblocks prejudice placed in his path.

Napoleon himself erected the most important of these challenges because he did not trust Jews to reform themselves. Only a year after the Sanhedrin ended, on March 17, 1808, the Emperor issued the \textit{Décret Infame}. It demanded that for the following decade Jews wishing to engage in business obtain commercial licenses from local authorities, restricted their ability to relocate and kept them from buying army replacements for themselves like other Frenchmen could. Though Jews in other regions of France soon found ways around these restrictions, the German Jews of Alsace and the Rhineland could not. Conditions clearly worsened for Jews like Samuel Marx as they discovered that in order to obtain their rights they would have to prove themselves through a decade of good behavior. In 1810, some Trier Jews attempted to get exempted from the new decree, but they were told firmly by the prefect that he would not rule on individual cases.\textsuperscript{121} As Frances Malino has aptly described,

\textsuperscript{120} Cople Jaher, 129.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 127-8; and Anchel, 390.
Napoleon had inextricably linked their emancipation to a regeneration demanded only of them. In so doing he had interwoven ancien régime ambivalence and suspicion of Jews with revolutionary universalism, religious freedom and the application of the constitution to all residents of France. Put somewhat differently, Napoleon ensured the preservation in the new public sphere of discourse of the particular and ‘alien’ quality of the Jew.122

The Emperor’s conflicted attitude must have confused Jews trying to do what he wanted. Yet the Marx family must have been confident enough in their eventual emancipation – both Heschel and Cerf Marx began their professional training well after this decree was issued in 1808. Dampened enthusiasm was still enthusiasm and that hope for the future continued to emanate from Samuel’s visit to Paris.

Arnold Ruge, nineteenth-century German philosopher and acquaintance of Karl Marx, described the impact of France on German thinking thus, “One can judge the intelligence and independence of a man in Germany by his appreciation for France….Any German who understands France becomes an enlightened man, a free man.”123 As “the threshold of a new world…the great laboratory where world history is formed and has its ever fresh source,”124 Paris was even more important on this path to self-discovery, according to Ruge. These views certainly hold true, at least in part, for Josef von Hommer, Joseph von Görres, and Samuel Marx. All of them had their eyes opened by pilgrimages to Paris and uncovered new ways of thinking about themselves and their communities. Paris may indeed have made them more independent in their


123 As qtd. in Kramer, 18.

124 Ibid., 122-3.
views, especially their political ones, because it was the scene of so much action and experimentation.

One can also see considerable change over time in comparing these visits. Whereas Paris was open to a wide variety of political debates when Hommer visited, by the time of Görres’s and Marx’s journeys the city had obtained much more cultural authority. It could easily dismiss Görres’s claims of the right to speak in its political deliberations and even control how Marx responded at all. Paris may have become a great laboratory but the city, especially under Napoleon, successfully made sure that most experiments performed there did not blow up.

Yet for all its real and imagined power, Paris was not the ultimate cultural arbiter for any of the visitors discussed here. For one, as much as Hommer, Görres, and Marx appreciated the city, they were also disappointed by it. Neither Hommer nor Görres came away from Paris with a particularly positive impression. Though Marx may have heavily urged reform in his own community based upon his Paris experience, he was not blind to the prejudice being offered alongside the new opportunity. The city was a mixture of positive and negative, of the dove and the snake.

Paris could not live up to the fantasy established around it because it was not always willing to listen to the voices of its spectators. These individuals, not corporate culture, would be the decisive decision makers as to how Paris would reshape them. In other words, what happened in Paris was not as important as what happened next. Visiting Paris could inspire or shock, reshape mentalities, but only in ways that fit within a framework established by the past, to be recast again in the future. Thus Paris as the
center had to remain in partnership with its peripheries, with those who frequented it and helped rewrite what it was from a distance.
CHAPTER 3
“DO NOT LOOK AT HOW OTHER HOUSES WERE BUILT”: GERMAN NATIONALISM IN THE RHINELAND, 1795-1818

A curious document appeared in the Rhin-et-Moselle department in the summer of 1805 that soon had the eyes of French imperial censors. The *Fatherland Paperback of Friends of the Good and Beautiful for Discussion and Instruction* was a joint project of two regional printers, Franz von Lassaulx of Coblenz and of Ludwig Christian Kehr of Kreuznach. Franz von Lassaulx was the brother-in-law of Joseph von Görres. The censors confiscated some pages of the work on July 24, 1805 and though they did not ban it, they were obviously concerned about its content.¹ On the surface, the work was cultural in nature. The authors intended to create a possible forum for future intellectual exchange between French and German elements of the empire. The Rhin-et-Moselle department was an excellent location for such an endeavor because it lay directly on France’s new border on the Rhine River, with Coblenz itself now divided by water between two opposed nations. Yet the political undertones of the *Fatherland Paperback* were also quite clear. German philosophical traditions had much to teach the French about the nature of humankind, civic virtue, and freedom. Implementation of German ideals would greatly enhance French society. Also readily evident was the fact that France was not the “fatherland” to which Lassaulx and Kehr referred.

Even more suspicious was a short, thinly veiled, anonymous political satire within the work. Probably composed by Franz von Lassaulx himself, “The Small Hut of the Poor Swiss, Friedlieb Biedermann” told the story of a humble Swiss farmer living between two wealthy neighbors, Frank (France) and Hermann (Germany/Prussia).

When war erupts between his two neighbors (after Frank has attacked his own landowner and sent many fleeing in terror), Friedlieb, who just wants to “pass his old age in peace and quiet”\(^2\) gets caught in the middle. Even more alarming, Friedlieb’s children begin arguing over whether they should rebuild their house in the style that Frank has introduced in his own territory. Eventually some of Friedlieb’s sons convince him to hire Frank’s workmen to refurbish their home, but when the workmen finish they refuse to leave. Fighting again erupts between Frank and Hermann with Friedlieb’s own kin taking sides and destroying his home. The abode, like Frank’s own house, was not well constructed, and “everyone made for himself or herself a separate tear that had to be repaired later.”\(^3\) Desperate for a solution, Friedlieb turns to a “reasonable man” who suggests starting from scratch because of the poison that Frank and Hermann have introduced. He argues,

> [do it] alone before everything is ripped apart, those who wanted and could build again united well over the plan….Do not look how other houses were built…and above all try to complete as much of the building yourself as possible so that foreigners never will know your situation, your needs and your financial situation well enough to do enough to your expectations.\(^4\)

The characters and story that Lassaulx created highlight beautifully the complicated relationship of the Rhineland with its two bigger, often bullying neighbors. It also gave a clear solution to the problems presented by the French Revolution: answers would not come from Paris but from how Rhinelanders responded in crafting their own destinies.

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\(^2\) Lassaulx as qtd. in Just, 150.

\(^3\) Just, 150-1.

\(^4\) Lassaulx as qtd. in Just, 151.
Whether or not the Rhineland would be allowed to play a role in its future, however, remained very much in doubt. Lassaulx’s optimism did not match the reality of having “Frank’s workmen” continuing to live on Rhenish soil. The last years of the eighteenth century were filled with anxiety throughout the Rhineland as to the area’s fate. Lassaulx’s newspaper, Der Rübezahl, described their tenuous situation:

the amphibian’s position between subject and citizen, between free and controlled, in which we now float. Torn off by force from Germany, not adopted by France, our condition is helpless and orphaned. In the center between two nations, from both distant and nevertheless not independent, uncertainty is our state….this cannot remain so any longer.\(^5\)

By 1805 the Rhineland was a recognized part of France itself.\(^6\) Eventually, Lassaulx and his fellow Rhinelanders would come to accept France’s involvement and to embrace many of the radical reforms introduced by Napoleon. Yet the process was slow with no clearly defined moment of transformation. The Rhineland was a dangerous place in the eyes of its French administrators, one that could not fully be trusted without careful reeducation. However, Napoleon and his bureaucrats soon recognized that without the help of those they came to rule they could achieve nothing.

In the end, Lassaulx was correct: the Rhineland’s house had to be rebuilt with Rhenish hands, even if its design would remain French for now.

How the incorporation of the Rhineland into France occurred on the individual level is at the heart of this chapter. It will examine the integration of two key arenas, the geographic and the national, to make sense of a shifting dialogue between the emperor

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\(^6\) There were four main Rhenish departments during the Napoleonic era: Roer, Mont-Tonnerre, Sarre, and Rhin-et-Moselle. Trier was capital of the Sarre department and Coblenz was capital of Rhin-et-Moselle. As stated in the introduction, references to the Rhineland focus on the Trier-Coblenz region. This chapter focuses upon Rhin-et-Moselle.
and his distant subjects. The impact of living on a border altered the perceptions of Josef von Hommer, Joseph von Görres, and Franz von Lassaulx. Which changes they agreed to accept and which they did not were quite individual decisions, yet ones that they had no choice but to make because of where they resided. What is most obvious is that as time passed they all became increasingly aware of their own national identities. Such a realization meant that they were now more than mere subjects but active participants in shaping what they envisioned their national culture to be – whether French, German, or something completely different.

A brief discussion of vocabulary is necessary before beginning. There are few terms in social science research today as ubiquitous as borders and its multiple synonyms. Anthropologists refer to frontiers, linguists to liminality, political scientists to peripheries, and historians to all of the above. Scholars use the notion of borders to describe individuals battling restrictive social structures, governments redefining their sovereignty vis à vis other nation-states, and scientists expanding knowledge with new discoveries. What is perhaps puzzling, however, is our incomplete understanding of people actually living along the boundary lines between nation-states. While certain infamous borders like that which divided Germany or that which still separates Korea highlight the many tensions borders can create, we have until now only rarely studied those most affected by them. We implicitly recognize that such individuals inhabit an ambiguous state at best, one that simultaneously excludes and embraces those who live across the arbitrary lines established by nations. We have not, however, taken the time to try to unravel the many opposing forces that underlie such an existence.
Studies based in sociology have pointed out the necessity of borders in how societies function. Henri Lefebvre suggests, “every society produces a space, its own space” and asserts that boundaries are a necessary element of a space that exists in conjunction with other places that a society must label. “Every social space, then, once duly demarcated and oriented, implies a superimposition of certain relations upon networks of named places.” It is easy to agree with such a claim, as it is obvious that borders of some form have existed since the beginning of civilization. For instance, in the centuries leading up to the French Revolution, physical and mental borders were omnipresent throughout society as travellers crossed them to discover new worlds and simply move from town to town. Yet, Maria Boes has pointed out, the role of borders shifted as society’s outlook expanded. In the sixteenth century, global travel and a simultaneous interest in map making led to an increased demarcation of we versus they, of what was foreign and what was not. The French Revolution altered the meaning of borders yet again. Lefebvre paints revolutionary moments as ones in which “abstraction” became real and space was reorganized. “[Violence] manifests itself from the moment any action introduces the rational into the real, from the outside, by means of tools which strike, slice and cut – and keep doing so until the purpose of their

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10 Lefebvre, 289.
aggression is achieved. Demarcation of firmer boundary lines was a critical part of this process. The ferocity of revolution played itself out in the placement of firmer borders between nations and those residing in such areas naturally felt such aggression more intensely.

Many political scientists and historians have also creatively examined how borders are used politically. However, many of them have focused not on the violence of borders but on how to arbitrarily established borders help visualize the "imagined community" that is the nation-state. Cartography, along with censuses and museums, made formally loose associations more tangible, according to Benedict Anderson.

This thinking was a totalizing classificatory grid, which could be applied with endless flexibility to anything under the state’s real or contemplated control: peoples, regions, religions, languages, products, monuments, and so forth. The effect of the grid was always to be able to say of anything that it was this, not that; it belonged here, not there. Thus borders offered to nation-states the opportunity to make “indisputable” claims of ownership and provided them with evidence in asserting national sovereignty. Yet upon closer examination, such claims of immutability rapidly disintegrate. In the wake of the breakdown of Cold War borders, more recent political science scholarship has begun exploring “transboundary cooperation” and the possibilities of “region states” and “local foreign diplomacy.”

11 Ibid.
13 See Paul Ganster, Alan Sweedler, James Scott, Wolf Dieter-Eberwein, eds., Borders and Border Regions in Europe and North America (San Diego, Calif.: San Diego State University Press and Institute for Regional Studies of the Californias, 1997).
Napoleonic era that was just inventing firmer bureaucratic controls. By examining how this grid was placed upon communities at the moment of its conception, one can readily grasp its strengths and weaknesses.

Anthropology has also provided rich insights into how border populations function. Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson have been particularly helpful in expanding their research on the Irish border to conclusions about the rest of the world. They recognize that border communities act as vessels that both take in and pour out nationalism. Although often ignored as important players in developing national identities, “These border communities are not simply the passive beneficiaries or victims of world statecraft. They are often major agents of change in socio-political processes of significance to many people beyond their locality and even beyond their state.”

They adopt the approach of another anthropologist, Oscar Martínez, who has examined the US-Mexico border. He suggests several phenomena that delineate border communities from others: a “transnationalism” in which a border society shares cultural similarities with those across the dividing line, an “otherness” that separates those on the border from their parent nation due to cultural differences, and an overriding sense of ethnic and international competition between the forces of “conflict and accommodation.”

These characteristics were quite clear in Trier and Coblenz as France and Germany began making themselves into modern nations through their borders.

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Until fairly recently few historians have attempted to apply such interesting concepts to places in the past to test their validity. As Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel have pointed out, the history of borderlands needs to be studied comparatively across time and space from the perspective of the periphery in order to make sense of the critical “social dynamics” of these regions. Politics, economics, language and culture are all understood differently along borders than elsewhere. Peter Sahlins’s work on the development of French and Spanish national identities along the border in the Pyrenees has been among the most helpful studies. He examines a stable border that slowly developed from a jurisdictional boundary to a national one between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. He highlights how social groups from both sides used the language of nation to promote regional concerns on a national stage. “By voicing their local economic interests in national terms, both peasants and nobles brought the nation into the village, just as they placed themselves within the nation.” Sahlins follows a rather broad line of reasoning here: local and national interests coexist in a symbiotic relationship that makes it difficult to firmly define either. One wonders, however, whether Sahlins really is able to explore the depths of the relationship between local and national after claiming that they are really one and the same. Can one easily point to a moment at which the localized becomes national? He also glosses over some of the real tensions inherent with such jockeying for position and the possibility that some borders are much more disputed than others. The

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16 Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel, ‘Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands’, *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (1997): 212. This article also does a nice job summarizing much of the recent social science descriptions and definitions of borderlands.

French/German border was not only more contested during the nineteenth century, it was also home to much greater social and religious diversity than the one that Sahlins examines. As members of a cultural “nation” composed of hundreds of political parts, Germans also had a different conceptualization of what nationalism might mean.

However, historians working on German nationalism and the French/German border have come to many of the same conclusions as Sahlins. Michael Rowe takes a political approach, arguing that one cannot merely look at the end result of German unification but need to understand the role of the local in that process.

The eventual outcome never appears in doubt, despite resistance and continuities that persist several generations before succumbing. Yet, such an account is incomplete. It represents the centre’s perspective….It ignores that politics in Germany at least remained primarily local until the late nineteenth century. It ascribes to the locality the status of victim. It fails to recognise that historically peripheries have often ended up dominating the centre and they produce the small sparks that start great fires, to paraphrase Braudel.18

But how are these “small sparks” produced? Merely to argue that Germans saw the local and national in similar terms or that everything was not decided from the political center misses some of the complicated nuances of the story. “Germany” was much too divided an idea in the early nineteenth century to mean the same thing to different people.

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Only by a more careful investigation that compares the experiences of individuals can we arrive at a clearer understanding as to how border regions helped create German nationalism. Celia Applegate, in her important work on the Palatinate (slightly below Trier and Coblenz), suggests just such possibilities. She studies how Germans, beginning with the French Revolution, have labeled and celebrated the interconnected nature of nation and province, state and local, as a love of heimat. Although she recognizes the importance of the political battle between bureaucracy being imposed from above and local struggles for autonomy, she argues that we need to move beyond these issues to how nationalism might be understood emotionally. In her view, there is a “difference between an individual’s material existence and the individual’s interpretation of that existence” and that in only thinking structurally “one becomes dulled to the tremendous flexibility and ambiguity of the national idea itself.”

However, Applegate’s own work, while rich in cultural insights, does not really examine the complexity of individual stories. Not only is each interpretation different, but personal views also shift focus when faced with new challenges. Thus it is within these varied stories that borders and the nation are birthed and begin to take shape.

A recent volume of essays on individuals experiencing borders, *Nexus of Empire: Negotiating Loyalty and Identity in the Revolutionary Borderlands, 1760s-1820s*, highlights how borderland loyalties were navigated in the southern United States. Though the tales are quite varied, several important themes emerge. The first is that individuals living on borders had more freedom than others at different times and places.

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in formulating the direction that they wanted their lives to go because usual governing
structures and value systems were weaker. Thus,

In effect, individuals—by choice or by necessity—often showed themselves
both willing and able to modify their identities and loyalties. Nationality was
only one of the components of a personal sense of identity, and individuals
might consider changing it voluntarily for many different reasons, usually
connected with expectations of personal gain or self-interest of some sort.
However, for governments and communities, national identity and
membership remained matters of fundamental collective interest….Loyalty,
then, became the practical side of national identity, or the rational
expression of patriotic solidarity.20

So individuals and communities negotiated a delicate balance of shifting alliances in
which both sides played important roles in how new identities developed. Also, national
loyalty could easily be compromised by familial bonds, friendships, or just basic survival
concerns.21 How new governments might inspire patriotism or “a natural affection
toward the land and social relations that, together, provided the physical and human
contexts within which individuals perceived their own identity and interests”22 in areas of
greater cultural diversity was a difficult dilemma. Certainly the Rhineland did not have
anywhere near the diversity of New Orleans or the Florida Gulf Coast in 1800. Nor was
the region as disconnected from political authority as the American frontier. However,
the instability that was a dominant factor in residents’ lives, coupled with living on a
border, allowed both groups to view national identity in a somewhat similar fashion.

Empire: Negotiating Loyalty and Identity in the Revolutionary Borderlands, 1760s-1820s (Gainesville,
Fla.: University Press of Florida, 2010), 5-6.

21 Ibid.

22 Sylvia Hilton, “Loyalty and Patriotism on North American Frontiers: Being and Becoming Spanish in the
Mississippi Valley, 1776-1803,” in Gene Allen Smith and Sylvia Hilton, eds., Nexus of Empire: Negotiating
Loyalty and Identity in the Revolutionary Borderlands, 1760s-1820s (Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of
Florida, 2010), 19.
Though Josef von Hommer dismissed the idea that the French Revolution had a large effect upon his viewpoints, his commentary highlighted that sense of unpredictability and contained clear political overtones.

The succeeding events had no real immediate impact on me. But the beginning of the French Revolution signified that all the political rights and all principles that had up until then governed the people were destroyed and changed, that a new order would be introduced in all Europe. So too everything that included me and my way of life changed. Whoever adheres himself totally to one party and sets oneself up in opposition in the flood that exists at the time either has to stop being who he is or expose himself to persecution. I stayed true to my inner direction and could luckily walk the middle path between two extremes. So God preserved me so that I must attribute His gifts to the almighty God.\(^{23}\)

Von Hommer saw himself as a moderate, one who found his way through the arguments swirling about him by never becoming overly passionate or committed to one side or the other. This reaction, of course, is one easily understood in terms of borders. Indeed, Hommer was much like an incarnation of Lassaulx’s Friedlieb Biedermann. He trod “the middle path”, seeking to anger no one but remain true to his own ideals. Friedlieb, discovered, however, that such a balanced existence was far from easy because the two opposing sides would not leave him alone. Von Hommer would have similar problems, despite his protestations to the contrary. The tensions of border living regularly forced him from the sidelines even as he attempted to fade into the background. Nationalism and religion both laid claim to Hommer’s soul and he regularly made decisions in favor of one or the other, even if he did not fully recognize that he was doing so.

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If visiting Paris shook up the sensibilities of Josef von Hommer, the coming of the French to Coblenz catapulted him into a new world and forced him to reimagine his future. In the early years of the Revolution, Hommer attained his first position of real power in the Church when he was named Syndikus, or secretary, for the religious Stand in the lower Trier archbishopric. The archbishopric had four Syndikus, religious and secular ones for the upper and lower divisions of the diocese. The position paid von Hommer 300-400 Reichsthalern per year, a much-needed supplement to his canon’s salary at St. Kastor’s. The Stände representatives convened once a year in a general assembly, with smaller committees meeting on a more regular basis to complete the archbishopric’s business. Thus as Syndikus Josef von Hommer was heavily involved in government affairs, including negotiating with the French when they first appeared in the Rhineland in 1792.24

The second, much more permanent, arrival of the French in 1794, had a much greater impact upon Hommer’s life. As the French approached, attacks on the Church by German supporters of the revolution (led by Görres, Lassaulx, and their instructors at the gymnasium) increased, causing tension and confusion. Archbishop Wenzeslaus again fled Coblenz along with many nobles, clerics, and much of the archbishopric’s treasury. Among those making the exodus was Hommer’s brother, Peter Melchior, a key administrator in charge of Wenzeslaus’s security. Josef, however, stayed behind and watched as French troops entered the city in October. His first impressions were a mixture of fear and pity.

24 Ibid., 138 + 393. As discussed in the previous chapter, Franz von Lassaulx’s uncle, Peter Ernst von Lassaulx, was Hommer’s secular counterpart.
[French soldiers] were very poor, without shoes or stockings. They had ripped clothes and nothing to eat. On the first evening, as the French occupied the city gates and guard stations, one of the soldiers on watch came to our house which was not far from a city gate to beg us for bread out of hunger. He was happy with half a loaf.25

Over the next few months, friction over what the French might try to take dominated daily life. Concerned that the French would seize his property, Peter soon returned home for a short interval. Josef von Hommer and his fellow canons at St. Kastor’s were briefly imprisoned after the French demanded a rare ninth-century parchment with a cover encrusted with gold and gems. The French angrily discovered that the precious document had already been sent across the Rhine for safekeeping. Though the French eventually accepted that they could not have what they wanted, the eight days Hommer spent under house arrest were anxious ones.26

It took some time for Josef von Hommer’s life to settle into something not driven by concern over the immediate future, but the border helped define the path that he would take. In the early days of the French occupation, the border was quite porous, almost to the point of not really being there. Even three years after the French had entered Coblenz, von Hommer could still travel twice weekly across to Ehrenbreitstein, the archbishop’s residence on the eastern bank of the Rhine for meetings. He continued to reside at St. Kastor’s and serve a parish in Wallersheim, just outside of Coblenz on the western side of the river. Yet gradually, perhaps almost imperceptibly, the French grip tightened as peace became more permanent, forcing Josef von Hommer and other members of his family to make increasingly tough choices. In von Hommer’s

25 Ibid., 145.
26 Ibid., 147.
autobiography, the reader does not sense the physicality of the border as much as a sharpening awareness that life would have to change in order for him to survive. The west bank of the Rhine was now part of France and that meant a new set of governing priorities not easy to ignore. Josef’s brother Peter was the first to make a move. Unable to find work to support his large family, Peter moved to Wetzlar on the eastern side of the river in 1796 where, with Wenzeslaus’s help, he became a local assessor. Even without having to worry about anyone beyond himself, Josef von Hommer soon had similar challenges. Though lucky enough to have not become part of France until after the Terror and the dismantling of the Catholic Church, clerics in the new Rhenish states still faced considerable difficulties. Hommer argued that many religious took secular positions, but others claimed that it was mainly Catholic teachers in the Rhineland who took on lay roles, not priests. Instead clerics sought positions across the border. By 1798 increasing financial desperation and loneliness led von Hommer to also seek a parish on the other side of the river. “What should I do? I did not want to take a lay position. The parish was the only area in which I was sufficiently experienced.” He finally found one in Schönberg, a tiny church near Limburg, on the opposite side of the Rhine.27

As will be argued in Chapter 5, Josef’s short time at Schönberg was the most transformative of his life, a moment in which he truly found his calling in the tranquility of the countryside. What is interesting here, however, is Hommer’s gradual, simultaneous turn toward German nationalism. Though he may never have fully accepted or understood how living on the border shaped him, it clearly sent him on different paths

27 Ibid., 147-55, n. 268 (396-7).
than he expected. Only three years after going to Schönberg, Josef von Hommer found himself back at Ehrenbreitstein. The 1801 Peace of Lunéville finally confirmed the Archbishop of Trier’s control over a small piece of territory surrounding Ehrenbreitstein on the eastern side of the Rhine. Josef was asked to become pastor at Ehrenbreitstein and resume duties similar to those he had previously held as Syndikus. He reluctantly took the job, even briefly attempting to maintain his parish in the countryside while serving the archbishop. However, soon afterwards the political situation changed once more when the archbishopric was formally disbanded in 1803, and the territory was given to the Duke of Nassau-Weilberg.28

Von Hommer spent the rest of the Napoleonic period at Ehrenbreitstein. It was here that his national feelings became most readily apparent. In 1807 he composed Historical Notes from Thal Ehrenbreitstein, a brief history of the community. His introduction laid out the purpose of the project:

One’s love of the country from which one has come is quite natural, but stronger is the love of one’s birthplace and hometown. One is indifferent to the history of foreign peoples. How excellently pleasant must it not be for those born in the town and its residents if they receive the opportunity to make acquaintance with the original history of their residence. To this purpose I have undertaken, by the opportunity of the present anniversary, to inform the public of the following historical notes of Thal Ehrenbreitstein.29

Though much of the introduction followed a standardized format, several items are noteworthy here. First, von Hommer clearly recognized that national interests divided groups from one another. However, he also continued to further subdivide local

28 Ibid., 185-93.
concerns from national ones, in much the same way that Lassaulx had done in his *Fatherland Paperback*. The Rhineland was different. It was clearly not French, but it was also not entirely German. Unlike in Sahlins’s assessment of the amalgamation of the local and national, here the regional continued to take precedence because it was not yet clear what the national was.

Much of Hommer’s history itself was straightforward, describing the parish, its priests, birth and death rates, etc. However, the end of the work returned to the present-day, leaving more tantalizing clues about the place of Ehrenbreitstein and its residents in the wider world. Von Hommer lamented the widespread poverty brought by “the hard fate of war” but commented that the situation had improved more recently as they now had “the respect of local residents” and were being “stimulated by the curiosity of strangers.”³⁰ Travelers and the French on the other side of the river inspired trade and kept Rhinelanders connected to one another and the world no matter what borders had been constructed. Josef von Hommer’s decision to write his Ehrenbreitstein history highlights the complicated nature of border life. He took pride in being a Rhinelander, in being neither French nor German, but at the same time connected his region directly into a wider community. The Rhineland was unique because it was cosmopolitan and saw borders as something to be crossed rather than erected.

This underlying ability to examine the world more broadly than those living elsewhere may also have inspired Josef von Hommer to take a slightly different approach to reforming the Catholic Mass than some of his contemporaries. As with many other issues, Hommer sought out a middle ground between those who wanted

³⁰ Ibid., 35-48.
Mass said in German and those desiring it to continue in Latin. Though his views could not be labeled nationalist, it is clear that he recognized the power of language to define a people. He saw the matter as centered around two issues: Church discipline and how the Church connected to people. If priests were allowed to freely select what language they used to say Mass, the Church would lose an important element of control over their congregations. He compared Church discipline to that of the military arguing that, “The soldier may not even move at will the right or the left foot, he must make the same movements that the others are obliged to.” Latin was what brought believers from different cultural backgrounds together. Yet he appreciated the appeal of being able to understand the words being said in the Mass. “Everyone recognizes that instructions, admonishments, and prayers agitate the hearts of humans more and must inspire them to piety, if they are spoken in an understandable language instead of that of a stranger.” However, for others, especially older congregation members, Latin was the critical element necessary to make the mysteries of the Mass real. One had to be able to appeal to both groups. He urged that Latin be used for at least part of the service, and that priests, “are to speak heart to heart and always have before their eyes the growth of the people present.” Though none of Hommer’s discussion specifically refers to nation, his understanding of the principles of communication was much the same as that of any politician of his day. God inspired people from within, but only through “language,” “ceremonies,” “attitudes,” and “customs” would “the heart speak to

31 Hommer, Meditationes, 261.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 267. See also Wilfried Evertz, Seelsorge im Erzbistum Köln zwischen Aufklärung und Restauration 1825-1835 (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1993), 232-3.
the heart." Hommer had learned, in part through living on a border between different languages in an era of dramatic change, that the means that one used to express oneself were essential.

He used this knowledge of the power of language to alter how congregations in the Rhineland understood the Catholic Mass. During his time at Ehrenbreitstein, Josef von Hommer flirted briefly with saying all his Masses in German. Eventually, however, he rejected all German Masses for yet another compromise – Latin for high, celebratory Masses and German for regular weekly ones. Even more interesting, in 1818 he began compiling a German songbook for services. There were over 18 editions of the work, and by 1829 it had taken on a semi-official character. In 1846, ten years after his death, over half the parishes in the bishopric were still using his songbook. He did not write many of the songs himself but instead compiled them from a large number of songbooks already in his collection. Von Hommer recognized that for Catholicism to continue to resonate with believers, the faith had to be expressed in terms all could understand. In introducing one edition of his songbook, he commented, "It is recommended that one examines this much more as a Volksbuch, for use by people from all positions and classes so they can all find within nourishment for the soul."

Whether or not von Hommer's interest in using German in the mass or creating a

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34 Hommer, Meditationes, 267.

35 A few of the songs were in Latin but the majority of them were German so it is being labeled German here.


musical *Volksbuch* stemmed directly from living on a border is, of course, impossible to prove. However, one can make the claim that where von Hommer resided helped make a new direction in his way of thinking possible. Latin was no longer the sole community language of faith and needed replacement by national tongues. Among the people most likely to realize this simple fact were those who lived on national borderlines – arenas where cultural and linguistic competition was more intense than elsewhere.

Josef von Hommer's national leanings, however, were clearly milder than many of his fellow Rhinelanders because he lived within an international, religious institution. Others were much more likely to attack the question of national identity head on. As seen in Chapter 2, Joseph von Görres wrestled heavily with how to position himself in nationalism debates after his visit to Paris in 1799-1800. As his cosmopolitanism was threatened, Görres found himself awkwardly trying to balance his recognition of German and French cultural differences with a continuing hope for the advancement of humankind. As Gunther Wöhlers has suggested,

> The tragedy of the French Revolution made the Coblenzer realize that the principle of power and the force of the Revolution robbed it of all universal, world community interests and the movement from a political perspective had become an affair of the French people and the French state….The world citizen bond was cut through. There was no longer any room for non-French within the realm of the French republic.\(^38\)

However, Wöhlers' interpretation is perhaps a little too forceful. Recent work by Philipp Ziesche comparing American and French understandings of cosmopolitanism and nationalism proposes that the two principles were seen as complementary in both

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cultures. Universalism was necessary to unite diverse populations into nations, and nations had to see each other as equals. “Even among cosmopolitans committed to the idea of human uniformity and moral equality, universalism could take a variety of forms, depending on how each negotiated the tension between the belief in human unity and the recognition of cultural, social, and political difference.”

Görres’s visit to Paris exposed this tension in its crudest state. He had to find a new balance between these two forces, something that would allow him to continue to see the world as united but, more importantly, diverse. Görres would spend the Napoleonic era as a wanderer searching the boundaries of science, myth, Romanticism, and even religion for a new direction for himself and Germany. He would find it in the waters of the Rhine.

Throughout his life, Görres spoke in glowing terms of his beloved river Rhine and his psychological need for it. Each time he was away he wrote of his longing to be back home. In a letter from Paris to Katharina, he used the river to speak of his fear of never being able to really return to the pleasures of his youth. “Oh, they were wonderful days that I spent on your hill on the banks of the Rhine, these days of the highest sensitivity, the lively sensations, the guiltless pleasure. Oh, they never return!”

Yet the river was

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39 Philipp Ziesche, *Cosmopolitan Patriots: Americans in Paris in the Age of Revolution* (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 6. Ziesche concludes (154-66) that Americans visiting Paris ultimately concluded, much as Görres would about Germany, that their revolutions offered universal models to the world, but ones that had to adapted to different cultures. Others have argued that Görres took quite a different path from his fellow Rhenish revolutionaries in abandoning his cosmopolitanism for German nationalism because he refused to become part of Napoleon’s bureaucracy. See Roger Dufraisse, *L’Allemagne à l’Époque napoléonienne: Questions d’histoire politique, économique et sociale: Études de Roger Dufraisse réunies à l’occasion de son 70e anniversaire par l’Institut Historique Allemand de Paris* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1992), 68-9. This assessment is rather harsh not only because of its limited definition of cosmopolitanism but also because Görres did willingly take on smaller government jobs at the gymnasium and law school in Coblenz, though he did not take an active role in Napoleonic government that some of his friends did.

much more to Joseph than a past that could not be relived; it was his treasured German nation’s heart and soul. Interestingly, in his 1803 *Aphorismen über die Organonomie*, Görres described the river as, “The Rhine, Germany’s river, but not Germany’s border.” Such sentiments probably caused alarm among French bureaucrats. Yet by this point, it is obvious that Joseph von Görres was hoping desperately for the Rhineland’s return to German hands. Living on a border had different consequences for Görres than it had for Josef von Hommer, who spent the bulk of the French era in German-controlled territory. The cleric living in Ehrenbreitstein could more casually talk of German culture and language. For the young Romantic living in France, however, German nationalism was a mission, one made even more serious by the need to bring it about covertly. Thus, for Joseph von Görres, the border was not an edge but a center, the core from which a new Germany, and later a morally reformed Europe, could spread.

For the next fourteen years after returning home from Paris, Joseph von Görres disappeared from the formal political arena, but his absence was not due to any lack of interest in remaking his world according to Kantian ethics. Instead, Görres weighed the economic and political risks of challenging Napoleonic censorship and kept silent, for the most part. Yet his mind continued to operate in full reform mode and he soon found other, more hidden outlets for his revolutionary ideals. Only four months after returning from Paris in April 1800, Görres accepted a position teaching physics at the Coblenz gymnasium. In a letter to Katharina he said, “I thank God that I at least saved my love

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41 Görres as qtd. in Wohlers, 8.
of art and of science out of the storm.” In September 1801, he married Katharina and had three children: Sophie (1802), Guido (1804), and Marie (1808). At one point he became involved in a failed attempt to build a leaden ware factory.

He also continued to write on art, medicine and philosophy and gradually was pulled into the burgeoning Romantic circle around Clemens Brentano, a fellow Coblenzer, renowned for his poetry and short stories. By 1804 Brentano and colleague Achim von Arnim had gathered an important group of philosophers at the University of Heidelberg. Görres became increasingly frustrated by his lack of intellectual freedom in Coblenz and soon tried to join his friends.

I can’t stand it anymore in this country. …It’s terrible to be trampled from above and from below…so that one can’t even breathe. …The roots with which I held fast to my homeland have been pushed out of the earth by frost and will dry up if they are not planted into new ground. …There’s no other means except flight to prevent being infected. I don’t want to go to Russia, that’s too Nordic for me, but I would like to go to Bavaria, preferably to Franconia, which at least is near to my Rhine.

He arrived in Heidelberg in the fall of 1806, but without a university degree Görres had trouble finding a position. He was forced to become a private lecturer, given a classroom but only receiving pay from those who decided to come and listen. The first sentence of his course prospectus was three pages long, and, though he attracted a crowd of 60 to 70 curious students for his first lecture, the numbers in attendance soon plummeted. His style was too bizarre and long-winded to establish himself with the Heidelberg faculty. By 1808 financial pressures had forced Joseph to return to the stability of the Coblenz gymnasium. He remained in Coblenz for the remainder of the


43 Ibid., 124.
Napoleonic era, teaching at the gymnasium and occasionally offering outside lectures at Coblenz’s new law school run by his brother-in-law, Franz von Lassaulx. Like von Hommer, economic and political forces ultimately decided where Görres resided.44

Intellectually, however, Joseph von Görres flourished in Heidelberg. The Romantics in Heidelberg sought a new nationalism in German history and culture and Görres enthusiastically joined them on their quest. He began compiling German folktales and literature with the express purpose of teaching Germans about their collective past. In the introduction to his *Deutschen Volksbuch* published in 1807, Görres preached to the need to unite all German classes in the natural sacredness of German history. His definition of the nation is particularly striking:

> The nation does not resemble a dead rock upon which a chisel can engrave an image at will; there must be something appealing in it that we desire to absorb. …But what passes this test, what appeals to everyone, individuals and generations, what gives strong, sturdy nourishment to everyone, like bread, must necessarily possess bread’s strength and strengthen life…a great, continuous need must exist in people, to which everyone responds, and that therefore constantly preserves them.45

For Joseph von Görres, the nation was an organic form, a base from which all of a culture’s past, present and future were composed. Josef von Hommer’s Ehrenbreitstein history had a similar purpose – to unite people through their common heritage. Yet Görres went deeper and was much more politically explicit. Germany’s past, when remembered correctly, was the only means of saving it as a nation.

> Precisely the humiliation that has been imposed upon its [German] character through the ineptitude of its leaders must complete the inner division in the essence of the nation. Renouncing what the confusion of

44 Ibid., 125-48.

recent times has forced upon it, it must return into itself, to what is most characteristic and worthy within it, casting aside and surrendering whatever is perverse, so that it will not wholly shatter in the hostile onrush of time.46

Above all, one imagines in Görres’s plea that Germany was fighting for its very cultural and political existence. There was no sense of Hommer’s “it is nice to know where one came from” attitude. Instead, the critical lifeblood of Germany’s future rested in fully embracing its past.

However, that history lay buried beneath layers of the muck of domination by other nations. Görres went digging deeper than most in search of the inspiration that he wanted. One of his oddest works was his Mythengeschichte der asiatischen Welt, written in 1810. Inspired by Johann Gottfried von Herder’s philosophy and in some ways an ancestor to Richard Wagner and Arthur de Gobineau, Mythengeschichte sought Germany’s past in ancient myths, particularly those of India. The massive, multi-volume work showed above all Görres as polymath, a collector of ancient mythical knowledge from around the globe, hampered only by his inability to read any Asian languages. Linguist or not, he used the ancients to explain how history functioned – it was not rational but organic. At its essence history invoked a higher natural truth sprouting from an eternal Godhead.47 The religious implications of these ideas and their transformative effect on Görres’s faith will be discussed in Chapter 5. What is important here is what this new emphasis on myth meant to Joseph’s understanding of the nation.

The nation for Görres had a deep, unchanging essence, much like the Rhine River

46 Ibid., 165.

itself. Rhinelanders could never be Frenchmen because they were composed of different material.

By 1814, the time of which Görres had dreamed finally appeared on the horizon when the French left. In January of that year he began publishing the Rheinischer Merkur, a newspaper that took quite a different, fiercely nationalistic path. Living in the Rhineland had enhanced his pugnacious attitude. Borders, in his view, were the location of a nation’s greatest battles and triumphs, where the nation could be made or broken. The creation of a new Großdeutschland required a “great ethnic wall”, where “the river itself is an internal moat.”48 Here the border was again a combat zone, a protective line guarding Germany’s eternal spirit. Görres took quite a different approach to the challenges of being a Rhinelander than Franz von Lassaulx did with Friedlieb Biedermann. For Lassaulx, border life was problematic because one was always weak, being bullied into choosing sides, none of which fit properly. His brother-in-law picked one national camp much more enthusiastically and strove to ingrain German culture in the hearts of his countrymen. For Görres, the Rhinelander was not just a German but the consummate German.

Yet Görres also used the Rhineland in an even more ambitious battle plan. In an interesting quote of an unknown date, he put the Rhineland into the center of the melee over the future of not only Germany but also all Europe:

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48 Vanden Heuvel, 190. The French, of course, had been arguing in a similar fashion about the importance of the Rhine River as border since the Middle Ages. In an interesting, quite polemical, dissertation written in the wake of World War I, Luise Rhenius argued that such an assumption during the French Revolution was inherently false because France had never controlled the Rhineland except in its own imagination of the future and “natural borders” were only really valid if they were difficult to cross. See Luise Rhenius, Die Idee der natürlichen Grenzen und die französischen Revolution 1789-1815 (Weide i. Th.: Thomas & Hubert, 1918), 1-7.
With wife and child, God’s fire column at the front, the free Rhinelanders move to their brothers. Eastward is a course to the beloved land, westward to a crusade, a holy war. The Rhine has also fenced alongside the Nile and the Jordan, now it should also battle with them to destroy the idol house where they honor Satan in the shape of a poisonous rattlesnake.\textsuperscript{49}

Despite his disappointment in the French Revolution, Görres could not escape the universalism that living in a cosmopolitan city like Coblenz provided. His world was never a small, closed one but one that recognized the connective moral tissue that bound together Europe. An early article in the \textit{Rheinischer Merkur} exemplified his optimism.

\begin{quote}
    Germany, which lays at the center of Europe, in friendly union with all states, united in one mind and not aiming at conquest, would be the middle point upon which rests Europe’s constitution and the prosperity of all. And it would be in a position to lash out against fickle, miserable neighbors with the disciplinary rod of strong courage so that the words ‘\textit{grande nation, notre preponderance, frontière naturelle}’ would be driven out.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

If one could just get rid of those pesky, attacking neighbors, those who thought only of their own grandeur rather than spreading morality to all humankind, then all Europe could create a worthwhile society. Rhinelanders would lead this reform because they, better than anyone else, knew that false pride or insulation from the rest of world were fleeting notions that could no longer survive in a modern world.

Görres’s attacks against the French, Napoleon in particular, were especially bellicose because he could finally go on a full-scale assault. These were years of triumph for Görres. The \textit{Rheinischer Merkur} was a successful paper during its short run of January 1814 – January 1816 when the Prussians suppressed it. It published every

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{49} Görres as qtd. in Wohlers, 9-10.
\end{flushright}
other day with a readership of around 3,000. Most other papers of the day had print
runs of 2,000-5,000. Görres felt as though he had found his true life’s mission.

When I look back upon my path up to now, then I must certainly believe,
that I am not for nothing, and not without a higher calling, in the position I
am in. It is a place that I have not striven for….No, I have a holy office to
administer. I must do it according to my conscience, or give it up completely….If I can no longer follow my convictions and I have to consult another judge other than my feelings and my standards, then the spirit
abandons me...

Though there is a considerable amount of self-inflation (and some striking parallels with
Martin Luther’s “Here I stand, I can do no other”), Görres was indeed taking a path few
others were brave enough to tread. Jon Vanden Heuvel argues that, “It was arguably
the most influential and ambitious paper ever published in Germany up to that time. Not
until 1848 would a German newspaper push the limits of freedom of expression,
freedom to criticize the government, as far as Görres had in the Merkur.” In April
1814, Görres was also named the director of education in the Prussian Rhineland. He
held this position until the Prussians issued a warrant for his arrest four years later.

However, Görres’s national dream remained just that – a fantasy with which reality
increasingly clashed. He was soon just as disillusioned with Prussia as he had been
with France, and for very similar reasons. His soaring view of a deeply moral world
founded in justice crashed into the reality of yet another growing bureaucracy that
limited the ability of people to speak their minds. The reactionary Congress of Vienna

51 Vanden Heuvel, 184.

52 As qtd. in Vanden Heuvel, 211.

confirmed tired dynasties stripped of any interest in reform and did not reform nations based upon linguistic and cultural boundaries as Görres had advocated. Instead of praising his insights, foreign governments were soon urging Prussia to suppress the Rheinischer Merkur, which they did only two years after the paper had begun. He tried to find other means of expressing his opinions. A visit by the Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm III provided just such an opportunity. Whereas most of his fellow Rhinelanders wrote letters urging the continued use of French laws in the province, Görres took a very unique position. He wanted a thoroughly German constitution and recommended bringing back the old German Stände as a means of restoring the older Burger freedoms of the Middle Ages. This idea was not well received by anyone. \textsuperscript{54} His views were seen as antiquated, a wish to return to a past that had never really existed. On one level, living on a border made Görres more broad-based and willing to connect his experiences to the rest of the world. Yet his interest in the deep past had begun to outweigh any positives that a cosmopolitan openness might bring.

Prussia continued to keep Görres on the payroll until 1819, not wanting to see his potent pen put to use by any of their surrounding political rivals. However, he was too dangerous to consider for a university position, so Görres continued to languish near poverty. He then wrote one of his most inflammatory essays, one that would ultimately lead to his exile from his beloved Rhineland for the rest of his life. He published Deutschland und die Revolution in September 1819 and again came across as pompous and presumptuous from his opening lines.

During the last war, the author of this pamphlet often addressed the nation, and obtained its confidence. Fearing no man, and rejecting the timid

\textsuperscript{54} Müller, 54-7 and Rowe, 234-5.
prudence which never dares to do more than shew (sic) truth by halves, he has always openly disclosed the sentiments of his heart. His search has been solely for truth, and whenever he flattered himself he had found the object of his inquiry, he laid his discovery before the public, because truth, without liberty, is, as the Psalmist says, a barred treasure, a hidden spring, a fountain built up; and liberty, without truth, is a worthless thing in the house of the impious....The author hopes that the spirit which dictates these words may, like St. Elmo's fire on the mast, prepare the national ship for the approaching dangers, and warn her either to seek a secure harbor, or in due time to stand out into the open sea.\textsuperscript{55}

In his view, "truth" meant approaching the challenge of German nationalism as a moderate, taking a middle path like his brother-in-law's Friedlieb Biedermann, one who was neither stuck in the past nor a fervent revolutionary. Yet Görres's long-winded prose often meant that the beginning of a paragraph appeared to have quite a different meaning than the end. If the reader did not struggle to get there, one could easily miss the point entirely.

In Germany a new idea is added to those which effected the change in France; --- the idea of unity, which will render the ferment stronger than ever it has been elsewhere. A German revolution must terminate with the expulsion of all the reigning families, the overthrow of all ecclesiastical establishments, the extirpation of the nobles, and the introduction of a republican constitution....But she [Germany] must purchase this revolution with the blood of millions of her people, the destruction of one half of the rising generation; and in the end, she will gain nothing but what she might have obtained by a far cheaper sacrifice.\textsuperscript{56}

He saw Deutschland und die Revolution as merely a warning to the Prussians that if they did not reform, angry citizens with limited options might overthrow their government. The Prussians, quite naturally, viewed his provocative suggestions quite differently. Only a few weeks after publication the work was banned and the Prussian


\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 547.
government ordered Görres’s arrest. He spent the next several years wandering between Frankfurt, Strasbourg, and Switzerland before eventually settling in Bavaria.\(^{57}\)

However, Görres had already helped transform German nationalism. Though one of many important early German Romantics, the Coblenzer added considerably to redefining German culture. The nation was now in some ways not only organic, but also indestructible.

The nation is bent on unity; and its will is like the growth of the trees, and the blowing of the wind, to which no human effort can oppose a barrier.…

The lightning of heaven has struck the German oak; its crown has lost its verdure, but its trunk is still vigorous, and will send forth new branches.\(^{58}\)

Much of Görres's national vision came from his location. As Celia Applegate suggests, Joseph von Görres successfully transmogrified his experiences in the Rhineland because the nation as a concept was so flexible. Moments of being on a battlefront between opposing ideas, anger at France’s lack of trust of those living on a border, a wider world view based in local trade across language and culture, all combined to create in Görres a fierce emotional connection to Germany.

The crucible for Joseph von Görres’s nationalism was clearly the Napoleonic era. Yet, as seen from Josef von Hommer’s story, not all Rhinelanders necessarily responded to French control with such full-scale national vehemence. Others found ways to compromise with the French, to remake their ideals to fit new circumstances. Any path to new ways of thinking, however, was never easy or straightforward. Both Hommer and Görres often could not see what was coming next because they lived in

\(^{57}\) Vanden Heuvel, 226-8 + 254-65.

\(^{58}\) Görres, “Germany and the Revolution,” 545.
such ever-changing circumstances. Franz von Lassaulx faced quite similar challenges, but he dealt with them in another unique manner. Though his life was quite short and much less at the forefront of power, Franz von Lassaulx’s wider impact was ultimately as great as any discussed here. As will be described in Chapter 4, Lassaulx was dean of Coblenz’s new law school and led efforts to introduce the Napoleonic Code into the Rhineland from which new legal forms spread to the rest of Germany. He was born into one of the most influential families in Coblenz and, unlike Hommer or Görres, traveled rarely until near the end of his life. He was born on July 21, 1781, the second child of Adam Josef von Lassaulx, a justice of the peace, Hofrat, and advisor to Archbishop Clemens von Wenzeslaus and Maria Christine Volmar, daughter of a respected Coblenz family. The archbishop had recruited his grandfather Johann Claudius from the Lorraine in 1750 so, as was true of many in the area, the Lassaulx family had cross-cultural roots. Franz had two sisters, Katharina (future wife of Joseph von Görres) who was two years older and Maria, two years younger.59

Franz von Lassaulx’s upbringing was a fairly conservative one with occasional flashes of progressive thought. By 1789 his father was a full member of Wenzeslaus’ government, one of its youngest members, and his grandfather Johann Claudius was one of the oldest. The Lassaulx family was part of the Reading Society in Coblenz, which discussed Enlightenment ideas in a gentile setting. In addition, they began running a local newspaper in 1777, the Coblenz Intelligenzblatt, which occasionally wrote pieces that the archbishop disliked. At such moments, Johann Claudius blamed

59 Just, 8-10.
his inexperienced son Adam and all was forgiven. Adam also had a younger brother, Peter Ernst von Lassaulx, who shot up the bureaucratic ranks even faster. Wenzeslaus named the younger Lassaulx to the position of secular Syndikus for the lower archbishopric in 1782 when Peter Ernst was only 25. So the family was well established in the circles of power, dutiful yet also somewhat open to the radical ideas that soon began flooding in from France.

About 1793 Franz von Lassaulx and his younger cousin, Peter Ernst's son Johann Claudius, began receiving school prizes at the gymnasium. They, like Joseph von Görres five years earlier, fell under the influence of instructors like Johann Philip Nikola who introduced his students to Immanuel Kant and the need for moral reform. Though he probably did not join his uncle Peter Ernst von Lassaulx on his disastrous trip to Mainz in 1792 (Franz was only 11), his uncle's subsequent arrest and yearlong imprisonment no doubt helped further radicalize him. The next several years were quite chaotic as war swirled in and out of the Rhineland. It is impossible to tell when and if Franz even graduated from the gymnasium, and it remained difficult for him to plot a proper career path or consider going to university when travel was so dangerous. One of the few remaining intellectual outlets were literary discussions in the homes of important Coblenz citizens like Sophie de la Roche, close friend of the Lassaulx family and grandmother of Clemens Brentano.

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60 Ibid., 9-13.


62 Just, 15-25.
It was probably through these meetings and others that Franz felt inspired to attempt some literature of his own. Though he was never prolific or particularly adept at fiction, he did experiment with a wide variety of genres. In December 1797, he wrote two poems, “Auf den Krieg” and “Auf den Frieden”, which he mailed to Friedrich Schiller to get his opinion. They had quite a self-defacing introduction, “The judgment of men, upon whom Germany has so much cause to be proud, would be enough to make me throw all my poetry into the fire.” The slightly nationalistic tone of his opening, however, did not find any real voice in the poems themselves. Instead, both focused on the horrors of war that he himself had just experienced and hopes for the newly founded peace. “Auf den Krieg” highlighted the barren landscape of the battlefield:

Destruction covers the earth,
Only the fire-throated lightning
Breaks over the death of night
The dull stillness of distant thunder and the dying cattle

“Auf den Frieden” was much more optimistic, with almost a desperation for everlasting peace. It is the only point at which the Rhine itself is mentioned as a river upon which a great culture and people can find its rest.

It is calm there in the distant bed of Father Rhine:
Then no corpses cloud your river
Peaceful farmers, live again the peace of businessmen…
All people are one family
Virtue is their law:
So that future generations
Only know the time when discord divided humans as sayings
Forever eradicated is every war: forgotten
Would also the most insignificant trace:

63 Ibid., 40.

The wish of millions will be filled
They wish everlasting peace

In young Lassaulx’s view, the nation was founded in basic structures: agriculture, business and law. The Rhine is part of this physicality, not as a barrier between peoples, but a place in which a community used the fruits of the land to find peace. This view is already quite different than his future brother-in-law Görres. Franz von Lassaulx does not react with Joseph von Görres’s passion. What comes after the conflict is more important than the battle itself in Lassaulx’s mind.

However, for Lassaulx this basic interest in peace did not mean any lack of interest in Rhineland border politics. Young Franz spent the next 7 or 8 years searching out a place for himself in the contentious political world in two main arenas: journalism and law. Both areas were in some ways preordained because he followed in his father’s footsteps. Though ultimately his greatest contribution would come later as a professor of law, in these earlier years it appeared just as likely that he might end up as a printer of newspapers and other political literature. In 1797, in addition to composing poetry, Franz von Lassaulx found himself in charge of his father Adam’s publishing house. It was an opportune moment for a Coblenz publisher. The former archbishop’s press could not handle the volume of material that the new French bureaucracy produced. The Lassaulx house rapidly put itself in a place to fill that need because it could print in both German and French. Though another press sprang up in 1798 to

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challenge it, by 1800 the Lassaulx house was the official printer for the French
government, with the exception of the prefect’s office.66

However, Franz von Lassaulx did not limit himself to just being a governmental
spokesperson. In 1798, he and Görres began printing Das Rothe Blatt, a radical
newspaper based in Enlightenment reforms. Though the newspaper began as a
cheerleader for the new French leadership, the relationship soon soured and they had
to change the paper’s name in order to avoid censorship. Görres, as he would do
throughout his life, spoke out quickly and forcefully against any government action that
did not meet his standard of morality. The paper only had a distribution of around 500
copies sold in local bookshops and lasted just about a year before the young radicals
decided to end the endeavor. Still, it was an important part of early efforts to create a
paper that had a sharp point of view and was more than an irregular broadsheet.67 It is
impossible to tell how much influence Franz von Lassaulx had over the content of Das
Rothe Blatt or whether he actually composed pieces for it. Yet the fact that he printed it,
and that his father allowed it, speaks volumes as to the lengths Franz was willing to go
to effect change along France’s new border.

Franz’s next step would be his most heavy involvement in actual political affairs.
In March 1799 the reformers used the Lassaulx press to publish Vintage Songs for

66 Just, 41-3. For more information about the press during the French Revolution see Joan B. Landes,
(1991): 85-98; Robert Darnton and Daniel Roche, eds., Revolution in Print: The Press in France, 1775-
1800 (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1989); and Jeremy D. Popkin, Revolutionary News:
literature on the history of the book trade is immense. One good overview of the literature is Wallace

67 Vanden Heuvel, 56-8.
Republicans for the Celebration of the Decadi and Republican Holidays, a songbook of inspirational tunes designed to increase Coblenzer patriotism. Like Josef von Hommer’s much later efforts to create cultural bonds through music, the work had an expressed political purpose, however it was not national in focus. Instead French republican models were shoved into German jackets, without much success.

Lassaulx’s group also tried to influence politics more directly. Two months after the publication of Vintage Songs, Franz von Lassaulx was appointed to the Coblenz city council as municipal secretary. German radicals were delighted that the French government had finally begun appointing some liberals to important jobs in the administration. Their joy was short-lived. In their enthusiasm, the reformist council began enacting changes that angered the local populace: city records were now open for public scrutiny and increased celebration of republican festivals urged. On October 2nd, the republican city administration was falsely blamed for minor street fighting after a French military victory. Former aristocrats were soon back in power, and Görres was in prison for complaining. Though Franz von Lassaulx was later offered his position back, he declined and never again took an active role in municipal affairs. Soon his friend Joseph von Görres was on the road to Paris. At that moment the views of Franz von Lassaulx and Joseph von Görres were probably closer ideologically than they would be at any point during their lives. Joseph’s Paris trip was a turning point for them both, but one that led them in opposite directions with quite different understandings of what it meant to be national.

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Still, as the new century began neither Lassaulx nor Görres really had begun to grapple with the complexities of nationality. Franz von Lassaulx wrote multiple letters to his cousin Jean Claude, who was studying medicine in Würzburg, during this critical juncture. His comments showed an opening up of his national thinking, but they were tentative, born out of the bitter disappointment of the previous several months. At the beginning of December he pined, “If Germany had independence, how much right would we not have to be proud of it. Then the French national character leaves me the smallest hope that the rogue government in which every small fellow offers up the gold of its party will be brought to an end...” As was true of Görres when he left for Paris, Lassaulx’s hope for a good outcome was muted at best. Franz too had begun to see a much starker dividing line between German and French. A few weeks later he reported on his friend’s Paris visit thus far.

His [Görres’s] remarks over Paris and the latest revolution are as we would expect from every cold German observer. Frivolity and pleasure are the only things that the Parisian businessmen pursue. The good of the nation is such a secondary thought that they casually report for duty and keep half the city busy....Before the end of the month we will have another catastrophe. An amalgamation with such men is not for us Germans – they who need freedom only as bait for their shameful egoism and laugh at pure virtue as a figment of the imagination.

His tone was almost as bitter as Görres himself, despite the fact that Lassaulx did not even visit Paris. The French appeared to have lost all virtue, and the time had come to sever all dreams of joint nationality.

Yet, a few months later, it is obvious that Lassaulx was just as pessimistic about German prospects.

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69 Lassaulx to Jean Claude von Lassaulx, Coblenz, 1 December 1799 in Just, 222.

70 Lassaulx to Jean Claude von Lassaulx, Coblenz, 16 December 1799 in Just, 224.
The hopes for the future are more dreary than they have ever been. You know our people, you know how dumb, stubborn and bigoted the farmer is, how narrow-minded and small the lowbrow, and how corrupted, how immoral the city dweller. Happy families, good marriages daily become more seldom. In France the common man is indeed kind and also on average still honest. But all that gold has it ferments in the whirlpool of business at the highest level of immorality, the scum of mankind. Its influence on the lower classes cannot fail and the venereal poison gnaws the government and the whole state machine, to eat the people and to swallow. Is it better in Germany? The morality at least sinks lower by the day, and if the national character opposes itself to the rapid working of the poison, Germans still possess too much phlegm to work against it strongly. And if we see the moral culture dwindle in the same degree, as the forests wish back, where the old German knew to preserve his freedom, his wife and his people against attacks of the Roman legions and against the influence of Roman culture.  

Like Görres, Franz von Lassaulx placed German morality on a precipice, one whose slippery slope led to inevitable cultural decline. Here France was not the evil villain, but merely an example of where Germany was heading. Yet, what was most remarkable is that though Lassaulx highlighted the ancient past that Joseph von Görres would later embrace as Germany’s savior, there was no such optimism in Lassaulx’s thoughts. The past was merely the past, unattainable from the reverse side of the mountain of virtue. The future of the German nation was as yet unclear, but the answer for Franz von Lassaulx would be found in the medicine of hard work and family.

Josef von Hommer and Joseph von Görres spent the first several years of Napoleonic rule wandering ideologically, trying to find a home for themselves in a new political and cultural world quite different from that of their childhoods. Franz von Lassaulx would do the same. First and foremost, Franz continued to be a publisher and writer. His newspaper, the Koblenzer Zeitung, was mildly oppositional but rarely went beyond what the French government would allow. Most news was printed from reports

71 Lassaulx to Jean Claude von Lassaulx, Coblenz, 4 April 1800 in Just, 227-8.
out of Paris and Vienna without any real commentary. Every so often there was a hint of the tension of living on the border. In October 1801 Lassaulx wrote mysteriously, "As long as I do not tie my bundle and move to the other side of the Rhine, one can count with confidence on the return of the archbishop." Whether or not Franz was longing for a less complicated life at Ehrenbreitstein like Josef von Hommer or whether he was merely suggesting his own newspaper’s importance, is difficult to judge.

However, he was quite willing to use the language of the border to increase the impact of his argument. A border dispute with national implications erupted in late 1801 and Lassaulx found himself briefly at the center of it. In his paper Franz criticized the French for refusing Rhinelanders the right to trade wheat with the British, arguing that Rhenish ships faced financial ruin. French authorities threatened to imprison Franz in the Somme department and inspect his newspapers in Paris until his father Adam, still a justice of the peace, intervened on his behalf. As a border resident, Lassaulx was much less bothered with the notion of trading with possible enemies than the Napoleonic government in Paris.

Still, this moment was only a brief ripple in a sea of increasing tranquility for Lassaulx. By early 1802, he wrote to his cousin Jean Claude, "I don’t worry about politics anymore. Maybe Bonaparte was never as near his downfall as now, but will it

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72 As qtd. in Just, 107.
73 Just, 105-9 and Vanden Heuvel, 156. For a further discussion of the psychological impact of Napoleonic trading restrictions on the development of German national consciousness see Katherine B Aaslestad, "War without Battles: Civilian Experiences of Economic Warfare during the Napoleonic era in Hamburg," in Alan Forrest, Karen Hagemann and Jane Rendall, eds., Soldiers, Citizens, Civilians: Experiences, and Perceptions of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1790-1820 (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2009), 118-32. One of the most important historians examining the effects of Napoleon’s trade restrictions on the Rhineland has been Roger Dufrasise who argues that overall Napoleon’s policy had a positive impact on the left bank of the Rhine and a negative impact on the right bank. See especially Dufraisse, 193-295.
then be better? It is freely a catastrophe to hope with the examples against it."\(^7^4\) He soon reduced printing the paper from five times per *decadi* to three times because there was simply not enough news to print in such a peaceful world. A year later, in March 1803, the *Koblenzer Zeitung* ceased publication all together. In his final issue, Lassaulx was philosophical: "Newspapers are the desire and the birth of the moment. There are countries and times in which it is the vehicle of public opinion: in others it serves only to satisfy the curious. This is quenched and the purpose and also the means fall away."\(^7^5\) Lassaulx was rarely comfortable as a political spokesperson and in an era of increasing censorship, he began to move on to other endeavors.

Unlike his brother-in-law Görres, Franz von Lassaulx became an increasingly successful businessman in Coblenz. In addition to studying law, Lassaulx continued to run a publishing house and bookshop. From his presses rolled everything from a history of Egyptian monuments to chemical tables to translations of Virgil. His bookstore was increasingly associated with larger booksellers in Frankfurt and Paris and he was even able to open a second shop in nearby Andernach. He met a young woman, Benedikte Korbachs, whom he married after several years of trying to convince her parents of his worthiness.\(^7^6\)

Lassaulx joined both Josef von Hommer and Joseph von Görres in compiling and editing historical works during this period. Whereas Hommer told the history of a local community, Ehrenbreitstein, and Görres dug deep into ancient mythology in search of

\(^{74}\) Lassaulx to Jean Claude von Lassaulx, Coblenz, 17 January 1802 in Just, 229.

\(^{75}\) As qtd. in Just, 122. See also Michael Rowe, ed., *Collaboration and Resistance in Napoleonic Europe. State Formation in an Age of Upheaval*, c. 1800-1815 (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

\(^{76}\) Just, 100-4, 110 + 118.
Germany’s cultural roots, Lassaulx took another approach in 1802 when he brought together historical tales from throughout Europe in his Historisches Taschenbuch. The main purpose of the volume was to put the older Roman and newer revolutionary calendars side by side to help the reader find proper dates. Calendars had a much wider readership than many other kinds of media in the Rhineland. Whereas a normal print run for a work was around 10,000 copies, calendars were typically 50,000 or more.

The French Revolution had significantly altered the market for calendars. Whereas previously each calendar had limited regional appeal, now printers competed with one another and began putting in more types of information that would attract readers rather than focusing merely upon handing out officially approved advice.77

Typically calendars included a section of miscellanea near the end that contained proverbs, stories of criminal mischief, or descriptions of the latest agricultural innovations. French authorities, however, banned descriptions of current events.78 Lassaulx’s “ephemera” section contained historical stories organized by the day of the year upon which they occurred. His introduction began by recognizing the fervor of the age.

New forms have pushed aside the old. The new again becomes old.

The war has ended, stilled are passion’s stormy clouds, and shut the all-devouring crater of the revolutionary volcano. But still continuously rage the hidden embers. The combatants have made peace, but they do not extend


78 Brophy, 25-6.
the hand. They have promised to forget everything that was and in every glance they remember the past.\textsuperscript{79}

Lassaulx rejected many of the revolutionary principles that he had embraced just a few years earlier. Instead, he took a somewhat Braudelian approach to history – there was a cyclical wholeness in examining the past because within its repetition were the calming answers needed for modern dilemmas. He firmly rejected using the past to further inflame the tensions of the present.

The knowledge of previous generations was not as Paris projected – an ancient model of glory. Neither was it as Hommer hinted or Görres boldly insisted – a source of pride upon which to build German national identity. Instead history should be used as a stabilizing rudder to ride the storm of revolution.

But what is good and valuable never ages. The high bravery with which we fight for again achievable freedom in old and new times; the steady, lasting fight of truth….And always we tell with respect the examples of the father’s hereditary integrity, the youth’s generous achievements, the wife’s resolute loyalty and the maiden’s delicate resignation.\textsuperscript{80}

Thus, in stunning opposition to the principles of the French Revolution, when and where something happened was irrelevant for Lassaulx. History did not need to have some great national purpose but rather it, “should not relate, only remember. Modest and unassuming, they [these pages] offer themselves to the devotees of the past. Blind chance guides their steps.”\textsuperscript{81} Little in Lassaulx’s message hinted of nationalism. Instead, like the region in which he lived, Lassaulx felt the greater pull of

\textsuperscript{79} Franz von Lassaulx, \textit{Historisches Taschenbuch, Erster Jahrgang, Jahr 10 oder 1802} (Coblenz: Lassaulx, 1802), 87.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 88-9.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 92.
cosmopolitanism, of links across arbitrarily established boundaries of time and space. However, this broader approach did not mean that Lassaulx was not pro-German, merely that his nationalism was as yet ill defined. As a Rhinelander, he saw national difference while also observing the necessity of finding a way around it.

These tensions underlay Lassaulx’s continuing work in various genres. He never entirely rejected political messages but made them more muted and less partisan. In 1803 he published a novel, *Albano Giuletto*, a rather unsuccessful compilation of much of his earlier poetry and work from other places that lamented the confusion and horrors of war. He also wrote a four-act comedy, *Die Reise zur Hochzeit*, that remained unprinted. This piece also had some political overtones that were more overtly national. The German bride meets her betrothed French groom for the first time at a border inn, the “Römischen Kayser”. The gentleman is a laughable character whom his horrified fiancée eventually rejects to marry her true love, a fellow German. The message would be vaguely repeated in the 1805 *Fatherland Paperback*. Both highlighted the border as a neutral zone, a space between two competing national ideals that could never be brought together as one.

On first glance, the late date of the Friedlieb Biedermann piece is almost shocking – it was printed less than a year before Napoleon named Franz von Lassaulx a professor at his new law school in Coblenz. Yet, in comparing the Biedermann character with Lassaulx’s play, one can readily see the tensions that underlay all of Franz’s decisions. He wanted to be a German nationalist but was not sure what that meant because he lived on the French side of the border. Before him were two

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82 Just, 168-78 + 245-6.
opposing camps, views of the world, cultures that do not seem to understand one another. Yet he was asked to choose between them, a verdict that he could not bring himself to make because he was simultaneously drawn to and repelled by both sides. None of this internal discussion made for particularly scintillating literature, but it did give him a space to continually try to work out where and what he wanted to be.

Malleable and fluid, nationalism could rapidly change directions within nation-states and, more importantly, within individuals, and border residents were the ones most likely to recognize this potent fact. What should one do, however, with such important information? Görres saw a need to be an inspirer of such passions, to lead the Rhineland and Germany into a Romantic future in which all would embrace his vision of the past and work together to create a just society. Others, however, observing the horrors of war and the chaos of upturned lives, reached out to grasp a different vision of the future. Josef von Hommer’s and Franz von Lassaulx’s reactions to the emergence of nationalism in the Rhineland were quite different than Görres’s. Their nationalism, while still quite present, was wider and more embracing than that of their countryman.

Von Hommer recognized German culture but was anxious to use it to further a much more international Catholic faith. In crossing the border before the coming of Napoleon, he did not fully experience the height of French bureaucracy and could more readily imagine alternatives to it. Though his life was no doubt turned upside down by events at the turn of the century, his age and position meant that his beliefs were not as fully brought into question as those of the youthful Lassaulx and Görres. Yet that did not mean that nationalism did not play an active role in how the cleric understood
himself. Living on the border meant that Hommer could see the emerging national battle in front of him and that he felt drawn to choose sides. Because nationalism was just emerging, Hommer was given the opportunity to call on the ancient cosmopolitanism of Christianity to hide behind. However, just because he could partially conceal himself did not erase the issue of national identity within Hommer's (or anyone else's) increasingly complex, internal self-awareness.

For Franz von Lassaulx, nationalism was much more difficult to digest than for Hommer or Görres. In part, this obstacle occurred because Lassaulx could envision a third path, a Rhineland that was neither French nor German, one that built its own house. Yet as a border resident, Franz could also see more clearly the damage that nationalist passions engendered – conflict and war that could rip apart the very fabric of a community. His concerns were much more practical than Hommer's call to faith or Görres’s hunt for ancient Indian myth to inspire German nationalism. He eventually unearthed the answers to these important questions within his own work on the Napoleonic Code. Law was graspable, definable, something that could be placed on a map like a border, which one chose to follow or ignore. Just as Hommer chose spirituality as his preferred paradigm for making sense of the world, Lassaulx chose law.

On first glance all three of these responses to the challenges raised by emerging nationalism on the border appear too different to be able to equate them. Yet what I am arguing here is not that their answers to the questions that the world raised were naturally similar because they all lived in the same place. Rather, what is important is that they were being forced to react. Setting arbitrary boundary lines firmly across territory that had not previously been divided meant that residents had no choice but to
face the reality that nationalism had entered their lives permanently. Older frameworks of family, social structure, religion and politics had to be rewritten immediately to include a new way of thinking. However, this fact does not lessen the importance of their original, ever evolving replies to the world’s demands. Dialogue, rather than force, was the ultimate deciding factor in what nationalism on the border would become.
"DECKED OUT WITH BORROWED PLUMES": THE APPLICATION OF NAPOLEONIC LAW IN THE RHINELAND, 1803-1835

One has to wonder how Franz von Lassaulx felt as he sat translating yet another Napoleonic decree in the spring of 1808. The young professor of the Code Napoléon at Coblenz’s new law school had been translating Napoleonic principles into German since the Code civil had first begun appearing in 1803. Yet this piece was different from the civil and commercial codes that had emphasized equality before the law, careers based upon talent, and the sanctity of personal property. Some provisions were similar to Napoleon’s other efforts to assert state control over religion: Jewish consistories for every 2,000 Jews, the regulation of synagogue instruction, and demands that Israelites be both morally upright and strong supporters of the Napoleonic state. However, other sections of the Décret Infame were much more exclusionary and highlighted a complete lack of trust not faced by Catholics or Protestants. Unlike their countrymen, Jews could not purchase replacements for military conscription. Their ability to lend money would be heavily regulated. Even more damaging, Jews had to deal with commercial and legal restrictions that should have given anyone in favor of the freedoms proffered by the French Revolution, like Lassaulx, serious cause for alarm.

From the first day of the coming July and thenceforth, no Jew shall be permitted to devote himself to any business, negotiation, or any type of commerce without having received a specific license from the prefect of the department in which he resides. This license will only be granted on the receipt of precise information and of certification: a) from the municipal council stating that the said Jew does not devote himself to any illicit business; b) from the consistory of the district in which he lives attesting to his good conduct and integrity…

In other departments of the Empire, no Jew not actually now living in them shall be admitted to take up residence except in a case where he acquires
a rural property and devotes himself to agriculture, without entering into any commercial or business transactions.¹

We have no knowledge as to how Franz von Lassaulx felt about these words as he shifted them from one language to another. Perhaps he had no qualms about Jews not being able to move or change jobs without special approval, or he did not recognize, as Jews did, that such laws meant that local anti-Semites would keep them from achieving any real prosperity.² However, as a translator Lassaulx had his hands deep into the process of making Napoleon’s vision for Europe a reality. He could not easily ignore the broader implications of what he was doing.

The French Revolution and the Napoleonic era that followed caused a rupture in the exclusionary, hierarchy-bound tradition of the past. Many eager souls jumped into the rift that was created in search of new opportunities. In the Rhineland, the debates were also being written in a new language, French, and it was those who knew it best who had the greatest chance at being channels between cultures and arbiters of new destinies. Franz von Lassaulx and Heschel Marx, brother of Rabbi Samuel Marx and father of Karl Marx, were two of those who willingly took the new path. Both of them, however, were not mere linguists. They recognized the cultural and political power


behind the new Napoleonic laws and used that civilizing authority to remake themselves in a rapidly shifting world. New law codes and law schools gave peace and permanence to society and confirmed that the radical reforms of the previous decade were now the stable, consolidated foundation for the future. It was the dual threads of language and law that provided Lassaulx and Marx a world vision that had not existed a generation earlier. It appeared as though they could be whatever they wanted in this new France and neither overlooked the opportunity.

Yet this vision was also a fantasy. As Lassaulx may have realized in translating the *Décret Infame*, one’s ability to craft a new future for oneself was still heavily hampered by social and political conditions. Older hatreds never really disappeared, and those with authority tried anything that could be done covertly and overtly to block those people that society did not want to succeed. Napoleon’s fall brought back even more of those pre-existing social norms with a vengeance, and both Lassaulx and Marx would be forced into challenging situations that they had not anticipated.

Why did such drastic failures occur? Though the politics of the strong overtaking the weak obviously played a critical role, there were also other deeper, structural concerns at play. What Lassaulx and Marx were doing as translators and lawyers brought simultaneous stability and unrest. Inherent within the projects of translation and creating new legal institutions is rewriting, recreating something for a new mode of communication. Like the Rhenish border itself, neither language nor law was written in stone. Instead they were malleable like clay, able to be made to fit a given situation. It is doubtful that either Lassaulx or Marx saw what they were doing as destabilizing society – indeed they would clearly have argued for the exact opposite. Yet this hidden
current of tension within their burgeoning professional lives could not be made to simply disappear. The interplay between old and new, between security and unpredictability, was a driving force in their lives and all those around them.

Translation is among the most heavily examined issues in recent literary theory, but it has been a topic of debate for much longer. Walter Benjamin’s 1923 essay, “Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers” or “The Task of the Translator” created a platform from which many later discussions into the feasibility of translation have been launched. Benjamin's most important contribution was his insistence that real translation between two languages was impossible. One can even see this in his title in which Aufgabe not only can be translated as “task” but also as “to give up”. He used rich imagery like the folds in a king’s robe and reassembling broken pottery to emphasize the cultural distance between an original and any attempt to transfer its meaning across linguistic boundaries. Yet Benjamin also did not completely devalue all attempts at translation.

Fragments of a vessel that are to be glued together [um sich zusammenfügen zu lassen] must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another. In the same way a translation, instead of imitating the sense of the original [anstatt dem Sinn des Originals sich ähnlich zu machen] must lovingly and in detail incorporate [sich anbilden] the original's mode of meaning, thus making the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel. 

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Here the translation, though necessarily incomplete, continues to culturally link diverse peoples. Thus Benjamin escapes the tough problem of why we should translate items only to fail to grasp their meaning.

Other philosophers and literary scholars have approached translation from a similar perspective. In commenting on Benjamin’s work, literary theorist Paul de Man is even more negative about the translator and his role. De Man’s translator, “is per definition underpaid, he is per definition overworked, he is per definition the one history will not really retain as an equal, unless he also happens to be a poet…”4 Nevertheless, the translator has a critical role to play. It is this individual that canonizes the original by arguing that the work is so important that it requires translation. Yet in the process, “They kill the original, by discovering that the original was already dead. They read the original from the perspective of a pure language (reine Sprache), a language that would be entirely freed of the illusion of meaning—pure form if you want…”5 A translation, in de Man’s view, simultaneously raises up and strikes down the original by pointing out that language is not owned by any one culture. It is ultimately unstable even for its native speakers.

Another key commentator on translation and the mutability of language has been Jacques Derrida. One issue that he is particularly troubled by is Benjamin’s tentative notion of language as a universal code, that there is a network of ideas that unite us. Such universalism may lead to the conclusion that a “Pangloss-in-chief” is necessary, someone to catalogue knowledge like an encyclopedia, deciding what is acceptable and


5 Ibid., 24.
what is not. Comparing literature requires defining what “literature” is. To Derrida, language belongs to no one; even among its native speakers there is always a sense of otherness about it as it is imposed from above. “I have only one language, a mother tongue as they say, a mother language, and the language is something one cannot appropriate, it is never mine. A language is structurally the language of the Other.” Yet for all his pessimism, Derrida, like Benjamin, cannot escape the need for translation and communication across cultures. He hopes for an “Enlightenment-to-come,” a promise of the “reconciliation” of language, because “a promise is not nothing.” How this greatly desired linking of cultures and ideas would occur is not clear, but Derrida cannot imagine language as merely a global Babel.

On the surface this literary discussion appears quite esoteric and poetic, a philosophy with little connection to the gritty, practical translation of laws and court room proceedings in which Franz von Lassaulx and Heschel Marx were engaged. However, Jacques Derrida and others have also applied their theoretical paradigm directly to the issue of the transmutability of law itself. Derrida seamlessly jumps from literature directly to law. Law is an arena that regularly makes claims to universality. If a law is not applicable to all within a community then it can no longer complete its main task, namely the regulation of behavior so that a community can function properly. Yet

Derrida points to clear instances, especially in colonial situations, in which the

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application of law goes awry. Colonies face a foreign legal system based in the
memory or history of an alien society, thus placing residents at a considerable political
and legal disadvantage.9

Other commentators are even more passionate in their concerns over translating
law or moving it from one culture to another. Two hundred years ago, Jeremy Bentham
argued, “The wording of the same law will not be the same in reality if the sensitivity of
the two peoples differs too much.”10 Such concerns have continued into the modern era. Pierre Legrand calls legal translation, “a form of epistemic violence” in which
“difference is a curse.”11 He argues forcefully against those in the modern European
Community who desire a shared law code while ignoring deep differences between
legal cultures.

Clearly, such assumptions, which rapidly engender a frenetic and hasty
search for commonalities-that-clearly-must-be-there-since-we-wanted-them-there, propound normalized schemes based on rational and (so-called) scientific principles showing small regard for context and none for
contingency. They...show confusion between the legitimate desire to
overcome barriers of communication across legal traditions and legal
cultures, on the one hand, and the alleged need to elucidate presumed similarities on the other.12

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10 As qtd. in Barbara Dölemeyer, Heinz Mohnhaupt, and Alessandro Somma, Richterliche Anwendung des Code civil in seinen europäischen Geltungsbereichen ausserhalb Frankreichs (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006), x.


Such a plan, of course, is exactly what Napoleon had intended with the implementation of his own legal code in the first years of the nineteenth century. Equally interesting is Legrand’s discussion of how rules are put into practice. Most critical are not those who write laws but instead those who apply them using the cultural contexts in which they have been educated.

This ascription of meaning is predisposed by the way the interpreter understands the context within which the rule arises and by the manner in which he frames his questions, this process being determined by who and where the interpreter is and therefore, to an extent at least, by what the interpreter, in advance, wants and expects (unwittingly?) the answers to be….These pre-judices (in the etymological sense of the term) are actively forged, for example through the schooling process in which law students are immersed and through which they become impressed with the values, beliefs, justifications, and the practical consciousness that allow them to consolidate a cultural code, to fashion their identities, and to become professionally socialized. Inevitably, therefore, a significant part of the very real emotional and intellectual investment that presides over the formulation of the meaning of a rule lies beneath consciousness, because the act of interpretation is embedded, in ways that the interpreter is often unable to appreciate empirically, in a morality, in a culture, and in a tradition, in sum, in a whole ambience that guides the experience of a concept…

Thus law schools, like the one that Franz von Lassaulx led and Heschel Marx attended, were critical in laying out how laws were conceptualized and put into practice.

However, much of this process remained in the subconscious, not readily accessible within Lassaulx’s and Marx’s own commentary. Yet their stories do reveal striking similarities that point to an inherent way of thinking that they and their contemporaries shared. Still differences between the two men are also equally important because they highlight the ease with which one could manipulate the new system to fit older prejudices. Only four years and about 200 kilometers separated their birthplaces. Heschel Marx, second son of Trier rabbi Samuel Marx Levi, was born in

\[13\] Ibid., 35-6.
April 1777 in Saarlouis, a short distance from Trier. He was the younger brother of Samuel Marx, a rabbinical member of the Grand Sanhedrin, whose visit to Paris was discussed in Chapter 2. Franz von Lassaulx, was also born into a local elite family in service to both the Metternichs and Archbishop Clemens Wenzeslaus. Their backgrounds provided both of them with obvious advantages as they reached the age in which they chose their occupations. Discrimination against Jews, however, meant that Marx’s career path could never reach the heights that Lassaulx’s did, even in the more open social framework of Napoleonic Europe.¹⁴

After studying briefly in Berlin, Heschel Marx worked first as a secretary for the Jewish consistory in Trier under the authority of his brother Samuel, who naturally would have welcomed his brother’s assistance in reforming the Jewish community. However, by 1812 Heschel Marx had become a defense interpreter at the judicial courts in Osnabrück.¹⁵ Though there is no documentary proof, Samuel would most likely have approved of his brother’s efforts to find work in wider, secular society and may have even helped him locate the position. Two critical components to Samuel’s position at the head of Trier’s Jewish community were to convince his fellow Jews that they should try new career paths and to prove to French authorities that Jews were trustworthy as citizens. Who better than his own brother to provide the proper example?

Where Heschel Marx learned French or how he got the job are unclear, but it was obvious that he viewed the work as one step toward a future legal career. Eighteen


months after arriving in Osnabrück Marx began preparing for the examination to become a notary, but he soon ran into the bureaucratic roadblock Napoleon had erected with the Décret Infame. Marx needed a citizenship card in order to take the notary exam. Osnabrück’s mayor, upset that Heschel Marx had not advised Trier authorities of his decision to move, would not grant him the card without a certificate from Trier proving residency. Because he had been in Berlin at the time he would normally have been registered as a young adult, Marx had never appeared on Trier’s list. Having been born in Saarlouis rather than Trier further complicated the matter. Marx cited a statute that anyone who had lived in a community for a year earned the right to vote and should be registered as a citizen. He protested in vain to Prefect Keverberg in Osnabrück,

Thus a Frenchman is robbed of his holy rights, rights that one can only take away by virtue of an explicit law or a legal judgment that would state that he was unworthy. Because of this, the applicant [Heschel] takes for himself the freedom to turn to you, Mr. Prefect, to insistently ask that you cheerfully use your authority to intervene and arrange that he be entered into the citizenship registry for this community so he can get his citizenship card that he needs to apply to become a notary.16

Though Marx did not refer to himself as Jewish in his correspondence, hidden prejudice most likely played a role in local officials’ continuing refusals to see him as fully French. They could easily manipulate flexible, and sometimes contradictory, laws to meet their own needs. In disgust, Marx left his job and went to Coblenz in January 1813, where he began studying law at the school now run by Franz von Lassaulx. He also changed his name from the Jewish Heschel to the more French-sounding Henry. It was not until

16 Heinrich Marx in Schöncke, ed., 124.
July 1813 that Henry Marx finally obtained the proper documentation from Trier and Saarlouis and received his citizenship card while in Coblenz.¹⁷

Several items are worthy of note here. First, Marx’s linguistic ability to maneuver between cultures provided him a career opportunity that would have been impossible just a few years earlier in the old German archbishopric. Yet just as quickly that opening could be shut down by the manipulation of a new law by narrow-minded, local authorities. Still, Heschel Marx soon learned to rearrange the strings of the bureaucratic system himself. Though it took some time to wend his way through the administrative morass, Marx eventually was successful in his efforts to find a path to the legal career that he desired.

Why was Marx granted this opportunity in spite of continuing prejudice? The answer returns us once again to translation and the law. Napoleon was never as strong as he might appear at first glance because he had a need – he required as many loyal citizens as possible to accept the new way of doing things. This issue was more critical in a borderland like the Rhineland in which people had to overcome basic cultural and linguistic barriers. For all of their concern about the impossibility of translation, linguistic scholars like Benjamin, de Man, and Derrida have had to recognize that not to translate at all is not particularly feasible either. Legal translators were imperative in Napoleon’s empire, whether they were Jewish or not, and Henry Marx made a conscious decision to use this need to his advantage. Rhenish translations of French legal ideals had a German cultural sieve, a filter that translators had a modest ability to manipulate.

¹⁷ Ibid., 123-8.
The quantity and variety of historical works that examine the issue of cultural translation on the German/French border during this period has been impressive. Examinations of newspapers, the book trade, business, Napoleonic elites, and the formation of scientific linguistic societies all highlight the importance of physical and intellectual trade across cultural boundaries. Several items are worthy of note here. First, border communities were much richer arenas of cultural exchange and typically had more interest and need for bilingualism. Second, as could be seen in Chapter 2’s Paris visitors, up until 1800 France was clearly the dominant player in the German-French relationship. However, German intellectuals had begun to be seriously challenge that supremacy by the mid-nineteenth century as they developed a national culture that was not entirely dependent upon the French.\footnote{Among the most important of these works are Jörg Requate, “Kommunikationswege und –bedingungen zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich. Konjunkturen in der wechselseitigen Berichterstattung beider Länder,” in Etienne François, ed., Marianne-Germania. Deutsch-französischer Kulturtransfer im europäischen Kontext 1789-1914 (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1998); Frédéric Barbier, “Vergleichende Buchgeschichte und Transfer Problematik: Buch, Staat, Nation,” in Etienne François, ed., Marianne-Germania. Deutsch-französischer Kulturtransfer im europäischen Kontext 1789-1914 (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1998); and Karin Angelike, Matthias Beermann and René Nohr, “Frankphone Zeitungen an der deutschen Westgrenze als Medien des Kulturtransfers” in Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt, eds., Kulturtransfer im Epochenbruch: Frankreich-Deutschland, 1770 bis 1815 (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1997).} What happened in the Rhineland during the Napoleonic era was important in helping bring about this shift.

Despite border ties, linguistic differences were a considerable hurdle when the French took over the Rhineland. The law courts were probably the most critical linchpins in the Napoleonic administration because they were where the government directly interacted with people. Not only did criminals come in contact with the law, so too did citizens wanting to register births, deaths, and marriages or settle private and public disputes. However, accounts from early in French rule in the Rhineland
emphasize the huge challenges that they faced. Though the French began attempting to get the courts to use French from the time that they took over in 1794, it was not until 1803 that they had any real success. French officials began at a serious disadvantage because of the large number of German judges and lawyers who fled across the Rhine, leading to an edict forbidding those with legal positions to abandon their posts.\textsuperscript{19} There also previously had been over 95 overlapping jurisdictions in the Rhineland that had to be thoroughly reorganized. The German justices who remained, the only ones with enough knowledge of local affairs to be of use, often did not know French, much less the plaintiffs and defendants that appeared before them. By 1805 all legal proceedings were being recorded in French, but German translators were still offered to some participants.\textsuperscript{20}

However, Rhinelanders continued to complain bitterly, and rightfully so, that they were at a distinct disadvantage in the courtroom in a system that supposedly guaranteed freedom before the law. One justice of the peace argued that the issue of language injured the state because it ruined the openness of the court and took away from citizens the right to immediate self-expression of their arguments. Witnesses had no proof that their testimony was being translated properly. Whereas upper courts could operate more easily in French, lower courts suffered without proper translators. Even those Rhenish citizens who were not part of criminal or civil trials regularly came

\textsuperscript{19} As cited in Marcel Erkens, \\textit{Die französische Friedensgerichtsbarkeit 1789-1814 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der vier rheinischen Department} (Cologne: Böhlau, 1994), 137.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 160-1 + 204-5. See also Howard Blackenburg, \\textit{The Extension of the Code Napoleon into Germany} (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1931), 112; and Barbara Dölemeyer, “C’est toujours le français qui fait la loi – Originaltext und Übersetzung,” in Barbara Dölemeyer, Heinz Mohnhaupt, and Alessandro Somma, eds., \\textit{Richterliche Anwendung des Code civil in seinen europäischen Geltungsbereichen ausserhalb Frankreichs} (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006), 2-3.
in contact with notaries in order to register births, deaths, marriages, and testaments in French. Translation of last wills was among the most critical notary tasks, and judging by the large number of wills suddenly filed after the Prussians took over again in 1814, Rhinelanders did not trust French administrators to do it properly.\textsuperscript{21} Even Franz von Lassaulx, one of the staunchest defenders of French law in the Rhineland, recognized that Rhinelanders were at a distinct disadvantage in the assessment of testaments in French courts because German testaments were only valid in the presence of French translations. He advised testators to be especially careful to follow French form when they wrote their wills, making sure that all participants (the maker of the will, notary, and witnesses) were in complete agreement when the will was signed.\textsuperscript{22} Key desires and cultural meanings could be too easily lost in translation.

Yet for all these challenges, many Rhinelanders did accept the new French system and flourished under it. Why? Again, several issues were at work. One, of course, was the forced flexibility of French administration due to its linguistic problems. A citizen could easily blame lack of understanding for not following an edict, and the French often could do little because they were so dependent upon local cooperation. New standards had to be introduced slowly for fear of alienating the population. An official document written at the time of annexation cautioned,


The introduction of every French law in a land which not only differs from France, but which contains within itself areas with varying customs and laws, must no longer be attempted without consideration, nor enacted with violence and precipitation! Changes in the law must be preceded by education, by persuasion, and with the authority provided by positive examples.\textsuperscript{23}

Though these lofty ideals were not always put into practice, the French recognized how careful that they needed to be, which gave their Rhenish subjects some minor advantages.

Yet there were other reasons for some people accepting Napoleonic law. One of the most important was the Rhineland’s own history. The area had previous experience with the introduction of a foreign law code written by outsiders. Only a few hundred years previously, Roman law had been formally introduced into the Holy Roman Empire. It had been readily accepted because of the advantages that it offered. Roman law emphasized local sovereignty, promoted a legal hierarchy with lawyers at the top, and helped better systematize the courts. Rhinelanders had become used to using Latin in written court documents, so switching once more to French may not have been seen as a large change for some.\textsuperscript{24} However, Roman law as practiced by the Holy Roman Empire had also been tremendously confusing. Though the emperor created the \textit{Reichskammergericht} in 1495 as an appeals court to solidify his legal authority, at the time of the French Revolution,

\begin{quote}
Germany consisted of about eighteen hundred separate sovereign states, principalities, cities and signatories. It is true that less than four hundred
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{23} As qtd. in Michael Rowe, “Between Empire and Home Town: Napoleonic Rule on the Rhine, 1799-1814,” \textit{The Historical Journal} 42, no. 3 (1999): 647.

\textsuperscript{24} Stein, 264 + 284; and Maria Boes, “Unwanted Travellers: The Tightening of City Borders in Early Modern Germany,” in Thomas Betteridge, ed., \textit{Borders and Travellers in Early Modern Europe} (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2007), 104-5.
had an appreciable territory and that only about one hundred had even a history. Still, there were those independent, unfettered powers for the making and undoing of laws – customary, feudal, Roman, or Canonical.\textsuperscript{25}

In the Rhineland alone there were over 100 competing legal entities with overlapping jurisdictions. The coming of Napoleon straightened out these lines of power and brought stability.\textsuperscript{26}

As had been true when Roman law was introduced, there were critical economic and social rewards for collaborating with Napoleon’s new legal system. Businessmen and government officials worked in conjunction with one another to achieve mutual goals. As Jacques Godechot has so ably pointed out, institutions provide, “the framework in which men compete; they are the…translation into laws, decrees, orders, regulations, or just into habits or customs, of the equilibrium achieved among the opposing forces at a particular point in time.”\textsuperscript{27} Napoleon could not have succeeded in the Rhineland or elsewhere without providing an economic balance that people already wanted. Though they lacked any real political power and found their positions increasingly usurped by older elites as time went forward, a very important new bureaucratic class, including both Henry Marx and Franz von Lassaulx, emerged to drive Napoleon’s agenda.


\textsuperscript{26}Rowe, “Between Empire and Home Town,” 644-5.

On the Rhine, as on the Loire, the politics of social assimilation took the old with the new, the rough with the smooth, the good with the bad, and produced its own blend. Notability during the Empire was not an essence of honour, and less still a moral essence. It was above all a sign of public prominence, of material substance, of duty, if not always partisan, loyalty.\textsuperscript{28}

These new elites were above all pragmatic and willing to do what was necessary to climb to social prominence. The emperor also established commercial law courts and labor boards that Rhenish businessmen gravitated toward because they granted locals considerable authority in resolving their own disputes. Finally, he reformed archaic business practices that had limited merchant freedom to operate and make the greatest profit. These efforts, coupled with the connections to the international French empire, meant that older and newer elites had few reasons to reject Napoleonic law.\textsuperscript{29}

The judiciary was particularly attractive to Rhinelanders seeking influential positions. Napoleon filled the judicial ranks with a combination of former officials from the archbishopric, former republicans seeking a new start, and an emerging wealthy class. Rhinelanders dominated these legal posts, especially in the lower judiciary. Citizens trusted the efficient criminal and civil courts because fellow Rhinelanders dispensed justice equitably, kept severe crimes to a minimum, and were occasionally lenient in cases of popular illegal activity like smuggling. Such institutions protected

\textsuperscript{28} Geoffrey Ellis, “Rhine and Loire: Napoleonic Elites and Social Order” in Gwynne Lewis and Colin Lucas, eds., Beyond the Terror: Essays in French Regional and Social History, 1794-1815 (New York: Cambridge, 1983), 266.

\textsuperscript{29} Jeffry Diefendorf, Businessmen and Politics in the Rhineland, 1789-1834 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 165, 205-7. For a discussion of older versus newer elites in the Napoleonic Rhineland see Roger Dufraisse, L’Allemagne à l’époque napoléonienne: Questions d’histoire politique, économique et sociale: Études de Roger Dufraisse réunies à l’occasion de son 70e anniversaire par l’Institut Historique Allemand de Paris (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1992), 409-48. Dufraisse places Lassaulx among the new elite group because of his youthful, but Lassaulx could also be put in the older elite category due to his family’s long service for Trier’s archbishops prior to the Revolution.
local interests and made requests by the French Empire like higher taxes and conscription seem a little less burdensome, at least to elites.\textsuperscript{30}

Thus Henry Marx’s early decision to become a notary, as well as his later one to study law, were obviously led in part by an administrative void that desperately needed filling, in addition to his own willingness to try and prove himself on a new playing field. The heights that one could reach by taking such a career path, if one were talented and in the right place, are exemplified in the case of Franz von Lassaulx. As was the case with Marx, it is impossible to say where Lassaulx learned French, as it was not a language that he was taught in school. He may have picked it up from French troops residing in his household from the early 1790s. By 1797 young Franz was already working in the Coblenz criminal courts as a translator, probably due to his father’s connections as a lawyer. Simultaneously, he ran his father’s printing business in town, which soon became an official press for the French authorities and was also part of efforts by local Jacobins to found a Cisrhenian republic. As the French administration became increasingly bureaucratic in 1798, Lassaulx found himself in a similar position to Marx – arguing with authorities about his position. In Lassaulx’s case, however, it was his age that was a problem. He was only 17, not the required 25 years old, and the court refused to pay him. Lassaulx argued in French, “though the code of law speaks only of offences and sorrows and not whether witnesses speak the same language…I am satisfied that your court, whose exceptions are so great in number, has a law [that would allow me to serve].”\textsuperscript{31} Laws, Lassaulx realized even from this young age, could

\textsuperscript{30} Rowe, “Between Empire and Home Town”, 648-53 + 672.

be manipulated to serve individual needs. The desperation of French authorities to find qualified translators was quite evident when they agreed to keep paying him for his work while continuing to claim that his employment was illegal. For his part, the young Lassaulx clearly saw politics and the law as critical for expressing his own views and securing a future for himself. He was heavily involved in politics, including a brief stint as municipal secretary, but he became increasingly disillusioned with the coming of Napoleon.

Yet, even at this early stage, the spinning assortment of new values swirling around Franz von Lassaulx had begun to influence his thinking, swaying him back and forth between rejecting and accepting what the new French regime offered. By the time that Napoleon had come to power, Lassaulx was already willing to translate some Napoleonic propaganda. He befriended Charles François Philibert Masson, a French poet serving as secretary to the prefect. Lassaulx translated and printed some of Masson’s work, including an ode to the new French republic and Napoleon.

To give their law to the astonished people
He pushes himself into the arena of kings
His flaming glance, before which all monarchies tremble
Bleaches the diadem that makes his chest glow.

Their path he has flown over in one step,
And the barriers in front of him he has pulled down
That restricted natural rights.

Rights also belong to the weak
Who yield to the laws of the powerful
That looks after everyone

\[32\] Ibid., 33, 41, 48-50.
And the freedom tree gives the persecuted protection.\textsuperscript{33}

Parts of Masson’s poem appear almost shocking in the hands of Lassaulx. How could someone so suspicious of Napoleon and his motives even consider translating such a glowing review of someone bent on power? The answer lies in the second and third stanzas in which Masson emphasizes law and the ways in which Napoleon was using it to bring about some sense of social equality. This point would ultimately be the one that Franz von Lassaulx would fix himself to: practical law as the means of bringing about long imagined dreams.

Lassaulx balanced running a successful print shop with studying law over the next several years. Because of the political upheaval and new borders, there was nowhere for him to study. So Lassaulx taught himself, relying on his father’s legal expertise and probably a tutor. He had already opened a law office with a former municipal president in late 1801 at age 20, but he did not formally pass his law exam until over a year later. When the enactment of the \textit{Code Napoléon} began in 1803, Franz von Lassaulx saw another opportunity for himself. Even before printing of the Code began, he made plans to translate it into German. He, Heinrich Gottfried Daniels and Peter Franz Cremer first translated portions of the Code civil in their dual language publication \textit{Bulletin des lois}. By Easter 1805, Lassaulx was publishing his own translation. He was rapidly rewarded for his efforts. One year later he was named 2\textsuperscript{nd} chair of civil law at the law school Napoleon was opening in Coblenz. In 1810, at less than 30 years old, Lassaulx found

himself dean of the school. He continued to translate various additions to the Code and publish legal commentaries for the rest of his career in Coblenz.\textsuperscript{34}

That Franz von Lassaulx attached himself to something as transformative to society as the \textit{Code Napoléon} is telling. It put him at the center of vicious debates about the nature of legal reform and the language used to express it. The French had been planning to rewrite their legal code since 1789, but until Napoleon made legal reform a priority upon coming to power in 1800, nothing was really accomplished. The 1804 \textit{Code Napoléon} was the most important of his legal reforms, but commercial, penal and several other minor codes followed.\textsuperscript{35}

It is clear that Napoleon did not merely institute the freedoms championed in the French Revolution and remake all social distinctions, but also carefully culled those principles that he believed would bring about a stable society. As Howard Blankenburg has judiciously noted, “it was neither a revolutionary work, nor the product of an arbitrary will, nor a philosophical system; but rather the result of the progressive development of the law manifested under a new form in order to be in relation with new needs, and with a new state of society.”\textsuperscript{36} Thus the Code institutionalized and sheltered


\textsuperscript{35} Despite its obvious importance in the legal history of Europe, the Napoleonic Code has not always received a great deal of historical attention in German or English publications, in part due to a nationalistic rejection of Napoleon’s legacy. That has begun to change in more recent years. See Elisabeth Fehrenbach, \textit{Traditionale Gesellschaft und revolutionäres Recht: Die Einführung des Code Napoléon in den Rheinbundstaaten} (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1974), 9-10; and Werner Schubert, \textit{Französisches Recht in Deutschland zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts: Zivilrecht, Gerichtsverfassungsrecht und Zivilprozeßrecht} (Cologne: Böhlau, 1977), 9-10.

\textsuperscript{36} Blackenburg, 81.
the connection between the new business class and the government, solidifying the
hold of both groups on power. Isabell Hull describes this reform in terms of how the
new laws carefully divided society into state and civil compartments that acted in
conjunction with one another.

The paradox of the strong state creating and guaranteeing the non-state (society) was largely to be solved by law….Constitutions set down basic political principles; civil codes redrew the relations among individuals and inside families within civil society; criminal codes sharply delineated the circumstances under which the state might use its monopoly of violence against individuals. Laws drew the line between state and society and ordered their mutual relation.  

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The secularization of society and equality before the law were confirmed and feudalism was abolished. Yet, much of the Code focused on protection of the interests of male property holders. Many groups including women, children and laborers lost legal protections that they had had previously. In the case of workers, new classifications meant that their rights, which had never been formalized, now could easily be ignored.

The introduction of the Code Napoléon into Germany reverberated throughout society for decades and directly impacted the direction that the German nation would take. Yet at the beginning, it was not at all clear that anyone would be interested in making the Code their own legal system unless they were forced to do so. Napoleon’s power throughout Europe was shown through the coerced implementation of his Code. As one commentator has noted, “the Code in the time of the Empire was entirely meant as a weapon, namely as the means to internal immediate connection of conquered

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38 Jürgen Brand, “Der Code civil als Brücke zum französischen und deutschen Arbeitsrecht,” in Barbara Dölémeyer, Heinz Mohnhaupt, and Alessandro Somma, eds., Richterliche Anwendung des Code civil in seinen europäischen Geltungsbereichen ausserhalb Frankreichs (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006), 130-5; Godechot, 280-7; Blackenburg, 72-3, 77-87, 96-8; and Hull, 371-5.
states.” In trying to convince the rest of Germany to accept the Code, Franz von Lassaulx himself and his fellow law professor Georg Arnold more succinctly noted, “The Codex Napoleon is not only a book, it is, if one is allowed express it, a political reality.” Napoleon did not allow for much debate or compromise with anyone who did not see a need for legal reform.

Introduction of the *Code Napoléon* into Germanic lands was as much a cultural battle as it was a political one because of the large number of concepts that were alien to Germanic-Roman legal traditions. Two areas were of particular concern because they were seen as so vital to daily life: inheritance rights and family law. Debates over these issues were where it was most obvious that the state was more willing and able to interfere in civil affairs than ever before. Most controversial, and confusing, was the problem of inheritance. One can observe just how important inheritance was by looking at the large number of dissertations on the topic at Lassaulx’s Coblenz law school. Students were most likely to choose topics that everyone was discussing, and most dissertations were case studies of individual inheritance cases comparing how they would be handled in Roman versus French law.

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The French made drastic changes in a number of inheritance areas that needed translation and explanation in a German context. Germans were particularly unhappy about the disinherita

| nce of illegitimate children in the Code. Many also feared new laws that demanded dividing inheritance among multiple heirs rather than giving everything to the oldest son. The French, of course, were aiming at creating more equality, but Rhinelanders and others, especially farmers, worried that the continued division of property among their heirs would lead to poverty. Though better husbandry and lower birth rates actually prevented this from happening, at least in the short term, it was something many Germans had difficulty accepting.42 German nobility also had trouble dealing with new laws that sought to demolish their political and economic authority not only through divided inheritance but also by getting rid of their traditional rights that they supposedly held in perpetuity. The wealthy fought hard against these constraints. Those elites whose power was based in land had less success, but overall the group was able to retain some of their local authority until the Prussians arrived and reasserted social distinctions.43

The Code Napoléon also had multiple foreign ideas regarding family law and opened up German society to a different understanding of morality, especially in

| P. Lang, 1999).


43 Daniel von Mayenburg and Mathais Schmoeckel, “Der Einfluss des Code civil auf das Erbrecht des rheinischen Adels,” in Werner Schubert and Mathais Schmoeckel, eds., 200 Jahre Code Civil. Die napoleonische Kodifikation in Deutschland und Europa (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2005), 129-142. On some inheritance issues the Code was a clear improvement over Roman law and was recognized as such. For instance, the Code allowed the relatives of any soldier missing in action to divide his property among those whom he had left in charge of it rather than having to wait 100 years as Roman law required. See Schubert, “Die Rechtsprechung der Trierer Cour d’appel”, 133-4.
regards to divorce and marriage annulments. Germans saw marriage in strict, unchanging terms and the Code did not do enough to define the specific obligations that the marriage contract imposed. Divorce, in particular, was a new idea and just how it worked was unclear. Germans were especially confused about divorce cases concerning abuse. The new law ordered a cooling off period between husband and wife of one year in which the husband would pay the wife’s household expenses to live in a safer location. The law was vague on whether husbands would be allowed to appeal the court’s decision, and some argued that without an appeals process divorce was inevitable. Ultimately Germans were more interested in possible reconciliation than husbands’ capacity for violence. Certain parts of new annulment laws were also problematic. In particular, Germans, including Franz von Lassaulx, were uncomfortable with the requirements for cases of annulment for reason of sexual incapacity. The French believed that in such cases physicians should examine the women to prove they were deformed. Germans thought such testing was scandalous rather than necessary.  

Implementing the Code in the rest of Germany would prove a drawn-out battle that would continue long after Lassaulx’s death. The parts of the Rhineland that became part of France, like Coblenz and Trier, were the only ones that accepted the Code in its entirety during Napoleon’s reign. There were other new law codes, in Prussia (1794 Allgemeine Landrecht für die Preussischen Staaten) and Austria (1812 Allgemeines

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Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch) in particular, which were also models for modernizing antiquated legal structures in the rest of Germany. Multiple factors played into regional decisions in favor of accepting or rejecting Napoleonic ideals. Most areas chose a careful middle road that gave them the freedom to choose the parts of the Code that suited them best. Regions with previously liberal leadership, considerable recent diversity, less physical distance from the French empire’s borders, and a weaker administrative structure were the ones most likely to use more of the Code. In addition to being part of France, Coblenz and Trier also had many of these other characteristics, making the area a prime territory for easier Code acceptance.\textsuperscript{45}

Napoleon was able to push for implementation of the Code most heavily in the areas of which he had some authority, in particular, the Confederation of the Rhine. In 1808-9 Ludwig Harscher von Almendingen, a well-respected legal expert from Nassau, organized and hosted a conference in Gießen of all the territories of the Confederation of the Rhine to prepare them to accept the Code Napoléon. Franz von Lassaulx advised Almendigen, but it is not clear if he was in attendance at the conference. Though in agreement over the necessity of implementing some form of the Code, Almendingen and Lassaulx disagreed strongly over how to do so. Almendingen wanted each area to be able to adapt the Code as they saw fit, while Lassaulx argued for a single version that would better bring together different legal traditions.\textsuperscript{46}


\textsuperscript{46} Fehrenbach, Traditionale Gesellschaft, 31, 121-2; and Schubert, Französisches Recht, 59-60, 298 + 346-7.
Eventually, it was Almendingen’s more practical vision that triumphed. Westphalia and Berg, the two German states most directly under Napoleon’s control, were among the first to try to enact the Code. Jerome, Napoleon’s brother, carefully chose the elements of the Code that he wanted to use, leaving in place things like obligatory community service for former serfs and large noble estates that kept powerful groups happy. In Berg the Code was introduced slowly with lots of time between its publication and its enforcement to allow people to become familiar with it. Other states within the Confederation of the Rhine followed suit. Hesse-Darmstadt also introduced a version of the Code that kept certain institutions that the Code was supposed to eliminate. Baden’s version of the Code had the most differences from the original and permitted reigning princes to retain considerable authority. Baden’s leaders and citizens were especially upset by Code provisions that ignored older inheritance rights, were more lenient toward adultery, and refused to track down illegitimate fathers. Bavaria took yet another approach in agreeing to implement the French penal code rather than the Code Napoléon. Bavarian reformers like Anton Feuerbach used French ideas to create a separate sphere for civil society, though reformers of later generations seriously watered down his ideas.47

If one merely glances at the avalanche of pieces coming from Lassaulx’s desk, the immediate conclusion can only be that Lassaulx saw himself as Napoleon’s polemical warrior, or at least an important part of the emperor’s voice to the German people. Not

only did Lassaulx translate all the various parts of the Code and the criminal and commercial variations that followed, he also edited several legal journals that commented on the Code and how it was to be used. The most important of these, the *Journal für Gesetzkunde und Rechtsgelehrsamkeit*, had other contributors but Lassaulx was clearly a driving force. Each issue contained a "systematic overview"⁴⁸ of the most recent legislation, followed by contributions by various legal scholars and descriptions of some current civil and criminal cases, especially local ones of interest to readers. Other publications, like the *Handbuch für Vormünder oder Unterricht über die Verrichtungen*, dealt with much more specific issues. It explained certain legal principles regarding the guardianship of children that had been “totally unknown in this region before.”⁴⁹ The family court would now supervise guardians to make sure that they did not abuse their power. Whereas some might have hesitated to give the courts such great authority, Franz von Lassaulx was confident that judges could, “look after the minor in the same way as its parents would have done.”⁵⁰ For Lassaulx, translation went hand in hand with explanation, and ultimately defense, of Napoleonic principles. The stickiness of the issue of translation and new law codes is readily apparent here. Lassaulx recognized that without interpretation laws were nothing because edicts and law codes were not mere words on a page. Instead, laws were interwoven into the culture, and when they were changed they had to be carefully knitted into the existing fabric.

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⁵⁰ Ibid., 53.
This need to explain and defend the *Code Napoléon* was a driving force in Franz von Lassaulx’s work over the next decade. One of his most important works was a long pamphlet, *Über die unterscheidenen Charactere des Code Napoleon*, which appeared in both French and German editions in 1811. Interestingly, the French pamphlet version appeared first, but Lassaulx based it upon his previous German commentaries on the Code that gave him the confidence to “dare to write in a language that was not mine when I was young.”

He focused on comparing the Code directly with the Roman laws that came before it “to appreciate the benefits that must result from its introduction.”

The French pamphlet was popular enough for a German translation in Hamburg by law professor U.C. Wolters who saw a need for the rest of Germany to at least understand the basic principles of the Code and how it was supposed to work in the courtroom. “The present treatise from a very treasured French law instructor, who is perhaps in a much better position than some others, to judge correctly and without party this large work of new laws.”

Still, Wolters’ comments were less than completely enthusiastic and clearly placed Lassaulx in the French rather than in the German camp. For Wolters the Code remains “foreign” despite a large number of commentaries written to explain it. Lassaulx’s work was helpful because “we suddenly should be using French procedures” and the pamphlet tried to combine theory and practice of the Code.

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52 Ibid., 3.  
54 Ibid., vi-vii.
the role of the translator was reversed, with Wolters now being given room to interpret Lassaulx’s ideas within Wolters’ own context.

Such a switch, however, did not mean that Lassaulx’s main message was somehow lost. Indeed, though most of Franz von Lassaulx’s translation and commentary was fairly colorless with few emotive details, sections of the Über die unterscheidenen Charactere provide a richer portrait of his own thoughts and willingness to defend the Code Napoléon against all attacks. “And one can be convinced through such an examination of the advantages of the new laws and learn to treasure its good deeds that must be the result of its introduction.”

Thus the Code’s supposed lack of systematic organization, the difficulty of putting the Code into practice, and its apparent contradictions were all unimportant in the light of its most critical duty – to provide “foundational principles” and “simplicity” in the complicated world of law. To Lassaulx, Roman law, for all its historical advantages, had become corrupted at the hands of the multiple competing jurisdictions that made up the old German legal system.

I connect myself to candidness and say that the best idea that this [Roman] system earned…has been lost in the implementation at times in history, and in my opinion more than once became distanced without proper grounds from the order that instructs every material of the civil code.

Again, what impressed Franz von Lassaulx about Napoleon was the dictator’s promise to bring stability out of chaos and disorder. At another point, he labeled the Code as

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55 Lassaulx, Über die unterscheidenen Charactere, 9.
56 Ibid., 12.
57 Lassaulx, Des Caractères distinctifs, 93.
58 Lassaulx, Über die unterscheidenen Charactere, 33.
Germany’s “long awaited national band of uniformity in their legal relationships” and “the expression of an entire social organism.”\textsuperscript{59} Lassaulx’s own translation and commentary served the same purpose. Language and the law were straightforward tools in the young German lawyer’s mind – implements that he could use to help mold a new German society that was more settled and structured.

Yet to reach that comfortable zone of peaceful acceptance of the law, one had to use language and translation to eradicate any serious differences, just as Pierre Legrand has suggested. However, as seen in reviews of Lassaulx’s own translations, this process was not as smooth as the Coblenz law professor would have hoped because cultural and linguistic differences were so great.\textsuperscript{60} Franz von Lassaulx’s translation of the Code was never well received. When Napoleon tried to establish his law code in German regions that he controlled indirectly, like Westphalia, Lassaulx’s version of the Code was not considered good enough and local administrators asked for something more official. Other translations were much closer to the spirit of the original.\textsuperscript{61} Lassaulx had a number of downright vitriolic reviews. One particularly nasty critic groused, “We have not seen an author with similar arrogance and groundless egotism for a long time.” In his view, Lassaulx had “thrown everything together without logic.”\textsuperscript{62} Unluckily, it was not just one disgruntled reader. No author could easily endure such a torrent of bad press. Some asserted that his “work was prepared too

\textsuperscript{59} Lassaulx as qtd. in Fehrenbach, \textit{Traditionale Gesellschaft}, 76.

\textsuperscript{60} For an in depth discussion of the lack of German familiarity with French legal precepts see Schubert, \textit{Französisches Recht}, 66-8.

\textsuperscript{61} Blackenburg, 174; and Schubert, \textit{Französisches Recht}, 67-8.

\textsuperscript{62} Just, 196.
superficially and carelessly”, while others claimed that his translation was “very un-German in both idiom and judicial language.”

Many reviewers complained about Lassaulx’s seeming lack of knowledge of other important legal commentators and other German legal codes. Some felt that he had “mistaken particularly the sense of the original…[and] how the intent of the lawgiver will be expressed with clarity, dignity, and a certain human grace in the German language.”

One critic even went so far as to claim that Lassaulx had done nothing in his life worthy of joining “cultivated, well-educated Germans.” Much of this criticism was no doubt related to nascent German nationalism and a desire by those Germans not under Napoleon’s direct control to keep it that way as long as possible. These concerns transformed easily into attacks upon anyone attempting the politically imperative, but dangerous, act of translation.

Indeed, Lassaulx himself presumed that his reviewers made little attempt to understand his work and were prejudiced against him. “Reviewers have especially fixed ideas, the first, that someone on this side of the Rhine cannot write pure German…and then, that I set myself up as teacher of the whole German judicial corpus.” The sharp criticism stung the mild-mannered Lassaulx to the core and caused him to vigorously assert his own German patriotism.

No one could be more receptive to fair criticism as myself, but the insulting tone of your answer to my last commentary in the *Jenaer-Literatur Zeitung* has made me so irritated that I cannot refrain from making a few answering remarks….Anyone who knows me knows how little I go out decked out with

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63 Ibid., 181-2.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid., 196.

66 Ibid., 197.
borrowed plumes. Even more it hurts me that you threw this up at me in an open paper.\(^67\)

Lassaulx’s reference to “borrowed plumes” is especially telling here. His German colleagues’ comments hit home because they were true, at least in part. However much he did not want to admit it, the *Code Napoléon* that he made his life’s work to defend had not arisen on German soil. The feathers of one bird could simply not be placed onto another without it looking somewhat bizarre and unnatural. Lassaulx could not easily force his fellow Germans to see otherwise.

His professorial attitude did not help matters, and at times he sounded condescending. Though Lassaulx and his fellow law professor Georg Daniel Arnold claimed to “lay down without arrogance” their ideas on “the altar of the common good of the inhabitants of the other bank of the Rhine,”\(^68\) their tone often preached superiority. They viewed themselves, “As residents of an expanded French Empire, in a German region incorporated not long ago, where we ourselves were witnesses and at time participants in similar changes as public instructors of the new French civil law, now also transferred to Germany...”\(^69\) Lassaulx even went so far as to claim that his German audience were like the childish French before the Revolution and that he could help them pass through the stages of reform more easily. “Above all the Germans appear to us to be young Frenchmen. We still hold the German motherland in honor and want to get rid of that which the older French have suffered.”\(^70\) Though he often claimed that he

\(^{67}\) Ibid., 232.

\(^{68}\) Arnold and Lassaulx, 5.

\(^{69}\) Ibid., 3.

\(^{70}\) Just, 233.
wanted to be treated as the equal colleague of his fellow law professors in Germany, his translations put him in a position of power that did not go over well with those he attempted to influence.

Much of this debate centered around the critical nexus of universalism versus burgeoning national identity that was inherent in the early nineteenth century and the *Code Napoléon* itself. Germans outside of the new French states saw the forced implementation of the Code as further proof of their weakness and feared losing even more of their autonomy.\(^{71}\) Lassaulx viewed the Code quite differently since it provided a new system whereby, “decisions in individual cases are derived from eternally reasoned law.”\(^{72}\) Judges would no longer be able to rule arbitrarily and decisions made by one court would be much less likely to be overturned by another.\(^{73}\) Commentators, however, attacked him on this very point about the universality of law. They agreed that, “the scientific knowledge that one can freely expect in a lawyer is always the same”, and that it did not really make a difference if “one was talking about French, German, or Roman law.”\(^{74}\) However, they did not necessarily feel that Lassaulx had the same overall conception of law that they did. They complained that Lassaulx felt, “the best civil law is incontestable, and the practices, the uses and the habits of a nation sought to ascribe to the highest moral principles without compulsion and friction.”\(^{75}\)

\(^{71}\) For a good description of these fears and Lassaulx’s response to them see Schubert, *Französisches Recht*, 1-11 + 237-8.


\(^{73}\) Ibid., 169-71.

\(^{74}\) Just, 197. See also Fehrenbach, *Traditionale Gesellschaft*, 163.

\(^{75}\) Ibid., 183.
Thus Lassaulx ignored history and forgot that all law codes had to work “for every people or era.”\textsuperscript{76} What Lassaulx was missing was flexibility, a recognition that law was not written on an immortal stone tablet but instead had to be practical and sometimes even willing to negotiate.

This rigid attitude was most apparent in an article that Lassaulx wrote in 1808 for another of his journals, \textit{Annalen der Gesetzgebung Napoleons}. In the piece he argued for the complete, unaltered acceptance of the Code by the other German states.

It lays in the nature of mankind to love the old and to not want to separate oneself from the forms in which one has been raised. If, however, he has once decided to renounce his old traditional costume would it not be more advisable to fully adopt the new, whose individual components are all connected, instead of ripping a new skirt into many folds in order to hold onto some badly passing nearby parts of the previous clothing?\textsuperscript{77}

Interestingly, Lassaulx’s imagery is similar to Walter Benjamin’s folds in the king’s robes\textsuperscript{78}, but Lassaulx feared tearing the clothing to pieces rather than allowing it to have nuance or threads of a different color. If each individual German land printed their own version of the Code with their own modifications then, “we will have again as many law books as states.”\textsuperscript{79} Again, avoiding chaos was Lassaulx’s primary objective.

Lassaulx, however, went further than this less-than-open perspective. In his most shocking statement of all, he felt that the \textit{Code Napoléon} should remain in French rather than be translated into German.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{77} Lassaulx, “Einige Gedanken”, 171.

\textsuperscript{78} Benjamin as qtd in Bishop, 69.

\textsuperscript{79} Lassaulx, “Einige Gedanken”, 172.
Should one have the French text by itself or also settle on an official translation? I think that it is advisable to recognize only the French text as law because in the case of deviations the translation can never receive the advantage over the original. Also even with the most carefully prepared translation chicanery still has room to operate, liking these or those words, narrower or wider to support an appropriate sense of the French original.\textsuperscript{80} At first glance, this declaration seems a full-scale repudiation of his own work in translating the Code. It recognized that all translations could be manipulated within the hands of their translators to create the message that the translator, rather than the original author, sought to portray. Here Lassaulx is in full agreement with present-day literary scholarship. It is also interesting that he so willingly applied such a harsh judgment to law itself. Why was Lassaulx so willing to put down his own work? The answer came in the next few sentences.

The objection of the lack of familiarity with the French language among German businessmen reduces itself before the hand of temporary inconvenience, which is easily remedied by the quantity of translations that we already possess and of which one would have to recommend the best for excellent use. For the future, it is omitted completely since rulers can probably demand with so much right that a businessman just starting out prepares himself to understand the Codex Napoleon in the French language as earlier he had to understand judicial digests in Latin.\textsuperscript{81} In Lassaulx’s overly optimistic view, learning French should be expected not only for all citizens of France, but also for all those Germans residing within the wider French sphere of influence. Thus the Code, even in another language, could easily act as a bridge over and between any internal German divisions. It could, “finally give the Germans that precious unity of legislation, that so long desired national ligament of

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 174.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid. Other German legal scholars did feel that the Code did not necessarily have to be translated but none were as optimistic about the ease with which people could come to understand its contents. See Schubert, \textit{Französisches Recht}, 346-7.
uniform legislation in part, which could prevail as the most beneficial and lasting result for this great revolutionary era." Translation was merely a stopgap measure on the greater road to national integration and peace.

Lassaulx saw the question as one of education rather than translation. If all people understood French at least as a second language, then the Code Napoléon would be simple to comprehend and use. With its linguistic thread of Church Latin, the medieval and early modern Christian past could be an easy model. Roman law had been practiced in Latin, could not French law be used in a similar manner? Other German legal experts made similar arguments. Thus the inherent difficulty of translation – misunderstanding due to the slippery nature of language – would disappear when all citizens were educated within the same cultural framework. Indeed, Lassaulx would appear to have readily agreed with Pierre Legrand’s assertion that, “through the schooling process [students] become impressed with the values, beliefs, justifications, and the practical consciousness that allow them to consolidate a cultural code, to fashion their identities, and to become professionally socialized.” However, whereas Legrand sees this as problematic, Lassaulx did not. Another difficulty that Lassaulx did not comment upon was the social distinctions that would be solidified by law codes in two languages. In 1810 Johann Anton Ludwig Seidensticker argued in the Jenaischen Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung that,

The C.N. is however to be Germanized, so that the translation will be clothed with judicial reputation…the French text is for the judge and lawyers, but the translation is for the people. If the C.N. is not nationalized linguistically so must the nation itself be even nationalized linguistically –

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82 Lassaulx and Arnold as qtd. in Schubert, Französisches Recht, 347.

83 Legrand, 33. See also Dölemeyer, 9.
i.e. they must disabuse their native language and take the French language - or then it must have laws that it does not understand, in whose language it does not speak...\(^{84}\)

Lassaulx ignored this challenge and instead plunged himself completely into the task of creating just such an educated community separate from the people that would not need translation to understand one another. It was within this collegial setting that Lassaulx would come into direct contact with Henry Marx.

The French Revolution had upended the university system in the French Rhineland as well as the rest of France. When law schools at Bonn, Cologne, Mainz and Trier closed, there was no place to receive a formal legal education in the Rhineland from 1798 until 1806. Young lawyers like Franz von Lassaulx learned on the job, from their relatives already in the field, or a number of very small private schools that appeared. The task of rebuilding a new legal education system was particularly challenging because France did not have Germany’s rich legal tradition, and French law schools had previously been known for how easily one could buy a degree. Plans for a new higher education system began in 1802, but it was not until 1804 that the organization of twelve law schools throughout France commenced. In 1806, three schools were opened along France’s eastern border in Brussels, Strasbourg, and Coblenz. Considering that Rhenish law schools had previously been centered elsewhere, Coblenz made an interesting choice. French authorities wanted to make a fresh start by choosing a new Rhenish city to begin a law school, one that was at a proper distance from its other two schools. They also saw it as compensation for Coblenz in losing its status as seat of an archbishopric and not being selected as the

\(^{84}\) As qtd. in Dölemeyer, 9.
site for a regional appeals court. Soon, the Coblenz school was fully integrated into the French system with its director answerable to the academy in Mainz, which was answerable to the head of the university system in Paris.85

From the beginning the law school at Coblenz faced considerable problems. The school rented the former familial home of the Metternichs, the Metternicher Hof, and opened in November 1806. The city treasury did not have start up funds for the school, so Bonn was required to contribute monies that had formerly been set aside for its own university, which it did as slowly as it could. French law schools were supposed be financially self-sufficient, run strictly on course and examination fees, but the Coblenz school never had enough students, especially in its early years, to achieve this goal. In 1807/8, for example, the school had 29 students and brought in 5,055 francs, yet it owed its instructors 17,000 francs. In 1810 there was even talk of closing the school and transferring the faculty to other locations. The situation improved considerably when the first dean fell ill and Franz von Lassaulx took over, raising the number of students to an average of 40 per year. Lassaulx had advertisements printed in publications all the way up to Hamburg and increased the variety of outside courses that the school offered. Still, between 1806-1813 only 118 students completed their exams at Coblenz. In 1812, one of its better years, Coblenz had only 55 students, Paris had more than 1,600 and the average French law school had 150-200. The school was costly, about 730 francs for three years of study, with a particularly heavy price tag for the final year. Talented young Rhinelanders were often more likely to try to find better

85 Coing, 195-200; Landesarchivverwaltung Rheinland-Pfalz, 200 Jahre Code civil im Rheinland, 96; and Mallman, 8, 20-7, 62-70. For a thorough discussion of the firm bureaucratic control over the Napoleonic law schools see Leo von Savigny, Die französischen Rechtsfakultäten im Rahmen der neueren Entwicklung des französischen Hochschulwesens (Berlin: Puttkammer and Mühlbrecht, 1891).
paying jobs directly in the French administration rather than to try to get formal legal education. The school also had a poor library of legal materials and had to depend on legal journals and private collections. Coblenz did not have a large number of surrounding departments with parents willing to send their promising offspring to such a provincial setting. Indeed, cities like Trier and Cologne actively discouraged students from going to Coblenz because they were angered that the law school was not in their cities.\textsuperscript{86}

The structural issue of translation also heavily plagued the law school at Coblenz throughout its short existence. The heavy bureaucratic control of the law school from Paris meant that any accommodations for German language speakers would be few. Most of the faculty were not French and had a variety of legal experience, yet lectures and class discussions were expected to be in French. Students were tested in their knowledge of French and Latin before being allowed to enter, but that did not necessarily help them overcome the challenge of understanding a law code originating in a different legal culture than their own. To make matters even worse, a competing school opened in Wetzlar on the opposite bank of the Rhine that offered courses on the Code in German.\textsuperscript{87}

Lassaulx tried to overcome these difficulties in several ways. All law schools were required to have five professors: three in \textit{Code civil}, one in Roman law, and one in criminal law. Thus Roman law was considered merely as a base for the new code

\textsuperscript{86} Landesarchivverwaltung Rheinland-Pfalz, \textit{200 Jahre Code civil im Rheinland}, 92-100; Monz, “Advokatenanwalt”, 128; Coing, 204; and Mallman, 72, 100-2, 123, 138, 148-51.

\textsuperscript{87} Landesarchivverwaltung Rheinland-Pfalz, \textit{200 Jahre Code civil im Rheinland}, 92-6; Coing, 200-3; and Mallman, 105, 111-13.
rather than the center that it had been in former German legal training. In the early years of the school, parents’ complaints about the lack of focus on Roman law, and suggestions of adding more coursework in Roman and religious law filled Coblenz’s reports to Paris. Lassaulx eventually offered an especially large number of extra courses, lectures that were given on the side, to help his students understand the rigorously different curriculum and provide them a wider range of experiences. One especially vital course provided a bridge for first year students between Roman and civil law and was taught in German to help students grasp key concepts. Coblenz offered more of these outside courses than any of the other French law schools. So despite all his optimistic talk about the ease with which a French translation of the Code would eventually be understood, Lassaulx clearly recognized the challenges of creating a common space where new laws would be understood. Still, his efforts to mold just such an arena of legal discourse did ultimately bear good fruit.

This success may be the result of the fact that there were others who felt a similar pull toward order and the creation of an active judicial sphere in which one’s ability, rather than one’s familial social standing, would be a deciding factor. Henry Marx’s decision to study at Coblenz in 1813 tested this vision of openness and cooperation. Marx embarked on a career not often open to those of his faith. His professional choices would help prove to Napoleon that Jews could be trusted as French citizens if only given the opportunity to prove themselves. Before the nineteenth century, Jews interested in higher education were limited mainly to the medical field, and even here opportunities were severely curtailed. Considering how desperate the Coblenz law

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88 Mallman, 107, 111-13; Coing, 199; and Just, 192-5.
school always was for new students, Franz von Lassaulx may have admitted Henry Marx with little thought as to his religion. Still, there were several interesting points regarding Marx’s career at the school that suggest the unique nature of his position. Jews at law school were extremely rare. For example Göttingen, one of Germany’s most prestigious law schools, had only nine probable Jewish students between 1806-1814 and Heidelberg had just five. Marx was also 33 years old when he started at Coblenz, whereas the average age of students was just 21. Finally, he began in late January 1813, rather than in November when the school year commenced. Only one other student out of the 93 enrolled began at this point in the school year. He was only there until the end of the year on August 31st, at which time he began studying for his exams.\textsuperscript{89} As a Jew, Marx had to prove his worthiness and seriousness before entering something as auspicious as law school. The legal community had to be assured that a Jew could fashion an identity that could match their own if values were to be translated from one culture into another.

Henry Marx’s short tenure at Coblenz also raises extremely important questions. His law school program was certainly different than that of most candidates. In November 1813, only ten months after entering, Marx took the exam and received his \textit{Certificat de Capacité}, a new kind of legal diploma offered after one year of study of criminal and procedural law that allowed one to just serve as a trial lawyer in an advisory capacity. The degree was meant to solve the problem of those without an educational background serving in the courts by providing citizens “who did not have at

\textsuperscript{89} Adolf Kober, “Impact on the Education and Vocational Training of German Jewry,” \textit{Jewish Social Studies} 16 (1954): 151, 171-2; Mallman, 104, 122; Monz, “Advokatenanwalt”, 133; and Just, 101. For more on Jewish social mobility see Monika Richarz, "Jewish Social Mobility in Germany During the Time of Emancipation (1790-1871)," \textit{Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook} 20 (1975): 69-77.
their disposal the suitable academic background” the ability to have the occupation of avoué.90 These students were on average slightly older (age 25) than other students and most had probably already entered the work force. It was also not a particularly popular kind of degree – only four Coblenz students even graduated with it, Henry Marx being the final one.91

Making sense of this puzzling set of data is certainly not easy, and any answers must be based in conjecture. Because of his religion, Henry Marx faced challenges in receiving an education that Christians did not. Any lack of proper educational credentials had to begin with his faith. The haste with which he finished his degree and his lack of interest in studying further may have been due to some now hidden anti-Semitism at the school or from Franz von Lassaulx himself. Yet other scenarios are also possible. Perhaps Henry Marx completed his studies so quickly because he had already learned everything on the job and merely needed to pass the exam. Marx most likely went to Lassaulx’s school as a way of solidifying his future before getting married. Perhaps Marx planned to return to law school after a brief interval but was unable to when the Prussians retook Coblenz a mere two months after he received his law license. Whatever the case, Henry Marx was granted an opportunity that would have been nearly impossible for Jews a generation earlier. He used law as a bridge between not only French and German cultures but also as a means to fill the even larger gap between Jewish and Christian ones. Though Marx was not always successful in his

90 Mallman, 122. See also Mallman, 61; Monz, “Advokatenanwalt”, 130, 133; and Just, 101.
91 Mallman, 122.
efforts, his story highlights the inherent tension between the possibilities the new law
code offered and the holes within it that allowed prejudices to continue.\textsuperscript{92}

Unluckily, this chance of overcoming difference and reforming ways of thinking
was amorphous and heavily dependent upon political conditions. The coming of the
Prussians to Coblenz in January 1814 meant the immediate demise of many dreams for
Franz von Lassaulx, Henry Marx and many others. Franz von Lassaulx’s tale is
particularly disheartening. As the New Year was being rung in, Lassaulx penned a
letter to his fellow faculty members saying that circumstances forced him to leave
Coblenz temporarily for a sojourn in Paris. The rapid turning of his life must have come
as quite a shock. In the previous several years he had been given the title \textit{Inspecteur
Général de l’ Université}, had become a member of the Coblenz Casino and Napoleon’s
\textit{Ordens der Vereinigung}, and had been offered a chair in the \textit{Code civil} at Göttingen.
Though he always believed that he would return one day “to greet his father Rhine”\textsuperscript{93},
conditions never allowed it. He wrote to Clemens Brentano in October 1814,

\begin{quote}
It is almost a year since I quoted you on the Rhine without thinking myself
at the time that a year later I would be building my new nest 120 hours
away from the old wine gods. Also it appears to me as though I have
awoken after a large storm in which I lived through a ship sinking on open
seas and landed unconscious at a distant port. I see everyone around
myself that I encountered earlier on the jolly journey of life and I would like
each to know that the wild hurricane has not completely devoured me and
that, though I am far from all I love, I still carry them in my heart.\textsuperscript{94}
\end{quote}

That sense of being turned upside down, of being ripped from the moorings of his old,
ordered existence probably never left Lassaulx. He continued to write commentaries on

\textsuperscript{92} Monz, “Advokatenanwalt”, 139-40.

\textsuperscript{93} Just, 208. See also Just, 200-11, 235-6; and Mallman, 139.

\textsuperscript{94} Just, 236.
the Code and moved from Paris to Nancy to become rector of the academy in Metz. Yet the school was never particularly successful. Lassaulx spent his final several years lonely and in considerable pain. He died in April 1818 leaving behind a wife and three children, all of whom were dead by the time his brother-in-law Joseph von Görres died 30 years later. The conservative backlash that followed the Congress of Vienna kept Lassaulx not only from returning home but also from ever really enjoying again the comfort of knowing that the order he had long championed would triumph.

Yet one can also not argue that Lassaulx’s life mission as a translator and defender of the Code Napoléon was a complete failure. Law was simply too important in the culture of Germany, and the rest of Europe, for Napoleon’s reforms not to have a long and broad impact. Anyone who desired political or cultural power had to understand law and its function in society. Even dissertation characters not discussed in this chapter, Josef von Hommer and Joseph von Görres, had strong ties to the legal world. Von Hommer, his father and his brother all studied law at various points. The young priest went to law school at Heidelberg for a year and a half after completing seminary so that he would be able to serve the archbishop. His brother even urged Hommer to go on and get his doctorate in law, but he refused. Joseph von Görres’s connection to the law is even more interesting. Despite his hatred of Napoleon and his bureaucracy, Görres tentatively embraced Coblenz’s law school. Beginning in 1810, Görres actually taught several outside special courses in logic and natural law at his

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95 Ibid., 209-11; and Coing, 201.

brother-in-law’s school. In the spring of 1814 Prussia appointed Görres head of public education in the Rhineland, and he committed himself to keeping the school open. He signed off on the school’s list of course offerings for several years, though he did alter the schedule considerably to include more traditional training. However, students did not return due to the political unrest, and with the reopening of Bonn’s law school, the Coblenz school was forced to close in 1817.  

Despite only being in existence for about a decade, Coblenz’s law school had a lasting impact upon the legal history of Germany as a whole because the ideas that it engendered did not die out with it. The school and the Code Napoléon were part of a much wider effort in the early nineteenth century throughout Europe that professionalized law. Law became more scientific in orientation as the legal community slowly established a much firmer dividing line between highly educated, legal experts and those who had previously practiced law without formal training. Christof Dipper described this transformation as, “the mesh of this [legal] network became tighter and tighter and the competence of those who built upon it became wider and wider.” One example of this professionalization crusade in the Rhineland occurred with justices of the peace. Though the position was originally supposed to be staffed by lay people, the legal community pushed hard to control training and discipline and eventually established themselves over their “poor relatives.” Influenced by the Enlightenment

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97 Landesarchivverwaltung Rheinland-Pfalz, 200 Jahre Code civil im Rheinland, 92; Just, 191-4, 209; Coing, 205-6; and Mallman 113, 160-1.


99 Dipper, 26. See also Ute Schneider, “Vom Notabelnamt zur Amtsprofession. Herkunft, Karrieren und Rechtsalltag rheinischer Friedensrichter im 19. Jahrhundert,” in Christof Dipper, ed., Rechtskultur,
and Napoleon’s logical codification of law, the legal culture that developed at Coblenz and elsewhere attempted to distance itself from religious and political ties so that it could more fully develop its own authority. This increasing power then almost naturally reverberated back into Germany’s economic and political spheres as justices and lawyers then could better make the claim that they represented the rational nation.¹⁰⁰

Lutz Raphael describes this process as,

One specifically recognizable side of this Janus-faced approach was the growing autonomy of the legal system in the academic freedom of the law, the protection of judges against societal (and less: political) pressures and thus the growing independence of the courts, and finally in the retreat of the political power in the administration of justice. The other side shows the increasing state intervention in economy, culture and society by means of law.¹⁰¹

Thus, as will be seen in the chapter on mixed marriages, law became even more a tool for the state because of its supposed freedom from the influences of daily life, emotion, and power struggles.

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Franz von Lassaulx and others from his school were clearly part of these professionalization efforts. Both his publications and those of Georg Arnold, another Coblenz professor, continued to influence judicial discussions throughout the nineteenth century. In 1842, Lassaulx’s commentary was still being used in legal textbooks on the Code. One of their students, Jean-Jacques Gaspard Foelix, produced a variety of important French law reviews in later years. Other graduates of the Coblenz program went on to become major players in promoting the judicial reforms of the Code Napoléon in the Rhineland and beyond. Years of political unrest meant that the Rhineland’s judicial ranks had been seriously depleted. Thus Coblenz graduates, though few in number, had considerable influence on the direction that jurisprudence would take. In 1824, 24% of upper court attorneys at Trier and Coblenz were Coblenz school graduates (in Trier alone the number was as high as 37%). In 1834, seven of eleven people with the title Justizrat in the Rhineland were from Coblenz’s school. Lawyers trained under Lassaulx were particularly adept at practical application of the law and oral arguments, two skills highly admired in Prussia even if the Prussian leadership disliked other aspects of the Code itself. Other Coblenz students went on to positions outside of the Rhineland, and there is evidence that at least one of them had some trouble adjusting to being in a non-French legal system. Coblenz-trained lawyers, as well as other members of the Rhenish judiciary, had to balance their loyalty to the Prussian state with their legal training under Napoleon. Their success in bringing these two, somewhat conflicting directions together speaks not only to their individual skill but also to the continuing flexibility of law in the early nineteenth century.

102 Mallman, 144, 167-77, 197; Landesarchivverwaltung Rheinland-Pfalz, 200 Jahre Code civil im Rheinland, 104-8; and Coing, 206-7.
The case of Henry Marx proves this point. Despite only achieving a Certificat de Capacité at Coblenz, Marx went on to become quite an accomplished lawyer in Trier. His success was a combination of his own intelligence, work ethic, and some interesting linguistic circumstances. In January 1814, the same month that the Prussians entered Trier, Marx began listing his occupation as avoué. In English, German, and French, there is a formal distinction between judicial titles related to amount of experience. On the lower level is lawyer, avoué, or Anwalt. These are lawyers who are allowed to represent clients but not necessarily fully go to court on their behalf and offer final judicial arguments. Above them are attorneys, avocat, or Advokat who have more training and greater responsibilities.\textsuperscript{103} With only a Certificat de Capacité, Marx obviously fell into the lower category. Yet terminology could shift in translation and Marx most likely exploited some of the gaps. For a brief period during early summer of 1814 Trier was placed under the control of Austria and Bavaria. They got rid of the distinction between avoué and avocat. When the Prussians returned, local judicial officials in Trier continued to follow the policy of not distinguishing between Anwalt and Advokat. Thus by January 1816 Henry Marx was calling himself Advokat despite never having taken any additional coursework or exams. In 1820, Marx rectified this situation somewhat when he took the procedural law exam and became a full Advokatenanwalt, or lawyer-attorney.\textsuperscript{104} However there is no record of Marx ever completing any more legal training at a law school beyond his single year at Coblenz. Much like Franz von


Lassaulx, Henry Marx’s reputation for hard work and intelligence allowed him to step over the requirements of a still emerging legal bureaucracy. A job recommendation gushed, “...he possesses much knowledge, is industrious, and has a good, thoroughly legal delivery.”\(^{105}\) Marx was head of the Trier Bar for years and in 1831 received the title of *Justizrat*, but he never attempted to move up into higher positions like state attorney or judge.\(^{106}\)

One of the most important legal battles of the early nineteenth century in Prussia was the decision over whether to keep the *Code Napoléon* in the Rhineland. Henry Marx’s time at Coblenz probably influenced his decision to promote the Code a little like Franz von Lassaulx had. Some parts of the Rhineland rapidly accepted the Prussian law code or some form of it, but the Governor-General for Trier and Coblenz, Johann August Sack, protected the Code in the French Rhenish provinces. In June 1816 the Prussians established a committee, the *Rheinischen Immediat-Justiz-Kommission*, to decide which laws would be used in their new Rhenish lands. The committee met until 1819 in multiple, contentious sessions, as politics and jurisprudence clashed with one another. Prussia’s decision to keep the Code was not clear until the very end. In both the Rhineland and Berlin there were camps in favor and against continued use of the Code. Prussians wanted to rapidly integrate their new territory, but the Rhineland’s twenty years under French rule made the region automatically untrustworthy. Many important Prussians wanted to get rid of the Code in the Rhineland when they

\(^{105}\) As qtd. in Mallman, 173.

established control, but the discussions of the *Immediat-Justiz-Kommission* kept the Code from disappearing.\(^\text{107}\)

On November 4, 1816, the commission appealed to the public asking for their opinions on what laws should be used. The committee desired, “by the sum of [the] various knowledge and experience the best possible legislation for the country.”\(^\text{108}\) People from throughout the Rhineland quickly responded, including both Joseph von Görres and Henry Marx. Rhinelanders were proud of their unique legal institutions and fought hard to keep them, though under a new title, the *Rheinischen Bürgerlichen Gesetzbuch* rather than the *Code civil*. The judiciary had been a particularly popular French institution in the Rhineland, and lawyers and citizens alike urged retaining French legal procedures like open jury trials and equality before the law. Rhenish businessmen also wanted to keep the French commercial court system because they believed that the Prussian system would be much slower, untrustworthy, and more costly. In October 1817 Görres penned a petition to the king signed by 250 Coblenzers urging open courts and freedom of the judiciary.\(^\text{109}\)

Though Henry Marx’s individual petition had a necessarily smaller impact, it was nevertheless significant. In December 1816 he bravely wrote, “Über den Wert der Handelgerichte in den königlich preußischen Rheinprovinzen,” and sent it to the


\(^{108}\) As qtd. in Weller, 38-9.

Immediat-Justiz-Kommission. He began by thanking the government for giving citizens the opportunity to share their views.

A government that calls to its citizens for truth is a rare phenomenon. Ours, without suspicion, as well as without fear – this is highest and inestimable evidence of confidence in their governed people, and each well-minded person must aim therefore to best justify this confidence.\(^\text{110}\)

Marx went on to strongly urge maintaining the commercial court established by Napoleon. Even though they had not existed previously, commercial courts had become increasingly necessary because economic activities had become progressively more complex, Marx argued. Judges and business people did not always understand one another so a specialized forum, a site for translation, was necessary so both sides could work together. Napoleon, with the help of the business community and “cajoled by his natural pride”\(^\text{111}\) had also recognized that by putting such affairs under the auspices of the state, his own influence would increase. Thus Marx implies that Prussian kings also could share in this prestige by joining together with its own business community and watching over it. Finally he claimed that in a world in which faith in business enterprises was regularly undermined by deceit a commercial court would help restore morality and good will.\(^\text{112}\) His remarks connected him to the legal and political culture of the age – freedom of opinion, interconnected spheres of power, economic complexity, and waning ethical standards all equated with the necessity of maintaining the legal system that Napoleon had begun.

\(^{110}\) Henry Marx in Schöncke, 154.

\(^{111}\) Ibid., 157.

\(^{112}\) Ibid., 154-61.
Marx’s comments were extremely well received and the commission urged that they be published in Cologne. Few other pieces received such a high honor as publication. Now Marx faced a dilemma. Henry Marx had not yet converted by this point and writing as a Jew was particularly risky. The head of the commission, Paul von Sethe, knew Marx well enough to have recently written him a job recommendation, but Marx was still concerned about putting his ideas in front of the wider public. Marx asked that his name and city be redacted from the record out of fear of local intolerance. He said that though his comments were very heartfelt they might at times appear somewhat “hard and bitter.” He would not retract anything,

But unfortunately my circumstances are such that I must be somewhat wary as the father of a family. The sect to which nature has chained me, has, as is known, no special reputation and the local province is not the most tolerant. And if I endure much… bitterness and must almost lose all of my little property until one could decide to believe that a Jew could have some talent and be honorable; so I cannot be blamed if I have become somewhat shy.

The commissioners agreed to his request for anonymity and Marx’s essay was published in Cologne in 1817. Though no other records exist of other Coblenz graduates being quite so bold in their defense of French law, others did become more vocal in supporting judicial reforms based on the Code in later decades.

To their credit, the Prussians allowed the Napoleonic Code experiment to continue and were willing to grant those who knew it best jobs within their own bureaucracy. The Prussians recognized that the French had greatly advanced the science of proper
government and that French reforms could enhance administrative stability. Though there were few law school chairs in French law after 1815, there was a considerable amount of extra, outside lectures given on the subject at schools throughout Prussia, including a number in Berlin. At Bonn, the school that replaced Lassaulx’s school, the fight to get approval for a chair in French law was a long one. Although there were 86 courses related to Rhenish-French law at Bonn between 1819 and 1844, it took until 1844 for a chair to be established. Still with an average of 3.5 courses per semester more in French law than any other Prussian institution, Bonn successfully continued the training begun by Lassaulx at Coblenz. However, having some background in French law was considered necessary for lawyers and lawmakers throughout Prussia, so the Code’s influence continued long after the defeat of Napoleon.116

After the unification of Germany in 1871, there were at least five different law codes governing the state. 16 million residents lived under Roman law, 21 million under Prussian law, 7 million under French-Rhenish law, 2 million under Baden law, 400,000 under Frisian-Jute law, 3,000 under Austrian law, all with considerable differences in laws and rights. It would take another 30 years of debate to come up with a code that combined all of these influences.117 The five parts of the Napoleonic Code remained in force in the Rhineland until the Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch replaced them in 1900. Yet even with this German code, lawmakers made provisions for the Rhineland by introducing the new laws more slowly than elsewhere so Rhinelanders would feel less


117 Smithers, 711-6.
of a need to defend their special version of law. They also allowed Rhinelanders to keep certain smaller regulations from the Napoleonic era, a few even until 1947. Even into the present the memory of the Code Napoléon continues to play an important role in German law. The Prussians eventually incorporated many of the Napoleonic reforms into their own code, especially in areas like legal equality, juries, and court procedures that the Rhinelanders themselves had promoted.\footnote{Michael Broers, \textit{Europe after Napoleon: Revolution, Reaction and Romanticism} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 9-14, 23-4; Rowe, "Between Empire and Home Town", 658; Weller, 333-5; and Sieburg, 900 + 911. The anniversary of the Code civil in 2004 saw an eruption of German publications discussing its impact. See Johanna Höltl, \textit{Die Lückenfüllung der klassisch-europäischen Kodifikationen: zur Analogie im ALR, Code Civil und ABGB} (Vienna: Lit, 2005); and Diana-Catharina Kurtz, \textit{Das Institut der Adoption im preussischen Allgemeinen Landrecht und im französischen Code civil zwischen Rezeption römisch-rechtlicher Prinzipien und verändertem Familienverständnis} (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2006). For earlier works see K. T. Bormann and Alexander von Daniels, \textit{Handbuch der für die königlichen preussischen Rheinprovinzen verkündigten Gesetze: Verordnungen und Regierungsbeschlüsse aus der Zeit der Fremdherrschaft}, 6 vols., (Cologne: Bachem, 1833); Detlef Schumacher, \textit{Das Rheinische Recht in Gerichtspraxis des 19. Jahrhunderts: ein Beitrag zur Auslegung rezipierter Rechtsnormen} (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1969); Reiner Schulze, ed., \textit{Französisches Zivilrecht in Europa während des 19. Jahrhundert} (Berlin Duncker & Humblot, 1994).}

Henry Marx’s decision to promote French legal reforms was characteristic of his overall professional attitude – work hard, provide carefully balanced opinions, and show at least outward obedienc
e to the system already in place. One biography of his son Karl went so far as to suggest that Henry Marx was an excellent political and legal actor, calling him, “equivocal, if not double faced.”\footnote{Fritz Joachim Raddatz, \textit{Karl Marx: A Political Biography}, trans. Richard Barry (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978), 9.} His courtroom records indicate that he took a variety of cases relating mainly to property and taxes but that he was not overly successful in winning them. Several of his cases, including one involving the Jewish debt commission, involved Trier’s mayor, Wilhelm Haw, who Marx seems to have befriended. This particular case also involved two other Coblenz-trained lawyers, Johann Liebfried and Alexander Hasenclever, so it is clear that Marx had established a
network of contacts from his law school days that continued to be useful long after. Marx also appears to have had some trouble getting paid for his work, as he often had to ask for reimbursement multiple times before receiving it. However, his various legal titles, as well as his multiple land and home purchases, indicate that overall Marx did quite well as a respected, trustworthy lawyer in the community. He also willingly housed Prussian soldiers on several occasions and donated funds for poor relief, among other activities.\textsuperscript{120} He continued to act as a legal translator in the sense that he saw law as a simultaneous bulwark of stability and something that could be manipulated to get his own views across.

Yet Marx’s ability to navigate his way through shifting legal and political realms extended beyond career titles and the courtroom. One particular famous incident late in Henry Marx’s career highlights some of the tensions inherent in trying to be a simultaneous supporter of Napoleonic legal reform and the Prussian government. As was true of most Rhenish city elites, Henry Marx was a member of Trier’s Casino. Casinos were popular meeting places throughout the Rhineland in the opening decades of the nineteenth century in much the same way Masonic lodges had been just a few decades earlier. It was where social elites from all spheres – bureaucratic, judicial, military, and commercial – came together to forward their own careers, formalize their social status, and read the latest news from elsewhere in Europe. The club was quite exclusive and one had to own bond shares in order to join. Henry Marx’s were worth

\textsuperscript{120} Schöncke, ed., 105-9; and Mallman, 173.
50-60 Taler. Coblenz also had a casino that had been established in 1808 with Franz von Lassaulx among the founding members.\(^\text{121}\)

Any break of protocol among these elites was serious because of the hierarchy that they represented, and the Prussian state knew to react quickly to all spots of tension. After the 1830 July Revolution, for instance, Aachen’s Casino came under suspicion for its collection of French and Belgian periodicals.\(^\text{122}\) Troubles in Trier began on January 12, 1834 when the Casino hosted a banquet in honor of four oppositional deputies (one of whom was Wilhelm Haw) who had recently returned from a meeting of the provincial diet. As one of five organizers, Henry Marx gave a nebulous political speech at the event that could be interpreted in a variety of ways. Marx was the opening speaker in what appears to have been a carefully organized series of speeches on the role of the people and the monarchy in government. Marx was given the task of honoring the king and ended his speech with “Long live his Majesty, the King!” Each successive speech ended with somewhat similar phrases, “Long live our representatives!”, “Long live the residents of Trier!”, and “Long live Rhinelanders!”.\(^\text{123}\) Marx, however, began by praising his fellow citizens, making the monarch a bit of an afterthought:

Gentleman! A feeling unites us in this ceremony. In this moment a feeling inspires the honorable citizens of this city - the feeling of gratitude for their deputies whom they believe have fought with word and deed, with zeal and

\(^{121}\) James Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland, 1800-1850* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 100; Michael Rowe, *From Reich to State: The Rhineland in the Revolutionary Age, 1780-1830* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 237; Müller, 309; Raddatz, 9; and Diefendorf, 336.

\(^{122}\) Diefendorf, 337.

\(^{123}\) As qtd. in Schöncke, 227-9.
courage, for truth and right. But before the outpouring of this feeling overwhelms us, we must also meet just as pleasant a sacred duty by expressing our innermost gratitude, our hottest desires toward our benevolent monarch, to whose generosity we owe the first institution of a people.\textsuperscript{124}

Henry Marx’s message was clear – the king ruled in conjunction with the people because they provided him with the truth when he asked for it. “And where would truth penetrate, if not there [the monarchy]? ... But where justice is enthroned, the truth must find entrance.”\textsuperscript{125} Marx imagined the Prussian state as a family and, while he thoroughly praised Friedrich Wilhelm III, it was always when the monarch connected to his subjects. “His noble heart will remain just and always gracious and open to the reasonable desires of his people!”\textsuperscript{126} While at first glance, such comments are much in line with other official praise of the Prussian monarchy, it is obvious that, coupled with the more bellicose remarks that followed, they were interpreted as quite provocative.

Anti-Prussian songs erupted after the speeches had finished and Marx was accused of singing along. The speech was reprinted in the \textit{Rhein-Mosel Zeitung} and the \textit{Kölnischen Zeitung}. The Prussian government was upset by what had happened and used it to point out the dangers of casinos and other private clubs throughout the Rhineland. The justice minister in Berlin complained about “the principles and voting and the behavior of individual members [acting] in an ignorant and unauthorized way.”\textsuperscript{127} In his view, the problem with these casino meetings was that they would cause

\textsuperscript{124} Henry Marx in Schöncke, 226.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid, 226-7. See also Heinz Monz, \textit{Karl Marx und Trier: Verhältnisse-Beziehungen-Einflüsse} (Trier: Verlag Neu, 1964), 145; and Brophy, 100.

\textsuperscript{126} Henry Marx in Schöncke, 227.

\textsuperscript{127} Justice Minister von Kamptz in Schöncke, 230.
both legislative deputies and the public to begin thinking like they did in England where members of Parliament discussed important government business freely with people in taverns. The legislative deputies would be “encouraged in this delusion” that they were more than mere deputies but “representatives of the people.” It was clear that in the minds of both the Prussian administration and the Rhinelanders themselves that the time under French control had changed how Rhinelanders imagined government as a whole. For Rhinelanders the right to participate at least minimally in government, in the legislature and in the courts, had become sacred. Prussians and Rhinelanders continued to argue about just what this involvement might entail.

Though Henry Marx soon apologized for his remarks, only a few weeks later an even more serious event occurred. On January 25, 1834, a small, private party at the Casino that included Henry Marx gathered to celebrate the Casino’s anniversary. They soon began singing songs which were at first quite acceptable, but the mood shifted after a more patriotic Prussian song started. Someone began hissing, hitting the table and started singing the *Marseillaise*. Others soon joined in and “the revolutionary spirit was inflamed.” One participant displayed a tricolor handkerchief, while another supposedly proclaimed, “Without the July Revolution, we’d all be eating grass like the cows.” Some members of the military were also present and reported what had happened to their superiors. Though the incident may have merely been part of efforts to make unwanted military members feel unwelcome at the Casino, Prussian authorities

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128 Ibid., 230. See also Raddatz, 10; and Schöncke, ed., 109.

129 Schöncke, ed., 231.

130 As qtd. in Brophy, 100.
treated it seriously. They arrested some participants for high treason and tried them in criminal court, though all were eventually acquitted. In July 1834 the Casino was disbanded, but Henry Marx and Wilhelm Haw were among those who reinstituted it the following month.\footnote{131} Marx himself may have left before or during the singing and Mayor Haw later defended his actions. But though his involvement was not enough to warrant arrest, it cannot merely be dismissed as drunken misbehavior. The Prussians did not punish Marx criminally but may have done so socially. In August 1835 a ball was held for Prince Friedrich Karl in Trier that was attended by 490 people, but Henry Marx was not one of them. Perhaps this social slight was due to Marx’s Jewish roots, but the fact that he was invited to important events in 1830 and 1836 suggest that Prussian administrators may still have been angry about what had occurred at the Casino the year before.\footnote{132} The tension between social stability and the new freedoms suggested by the French Revolution erupted in this brief moment at Trier’s Casino. Though Henry Marx was a trusted bulwark of the community, what that role actually entailed continued to evolve.

Napoleon hoped to create a European legal system in which one code of law would be valid everywhere, as he labeled it, “a common European law code, a common European jurisdiction, one currency, one weight, one measure, one law.”\footnote{133} In much the same way there have been attempts by the modern European Community to create a better umbrella of universally accepted laws. The challenges of such an endeavor are

\footnote{131} Brophy, 101; Schöncke, ed., 110; and Raddatz, 10.

\footnote{132} Monz, \textit{Karl Marx und Trier}, 145; and Schöncke, ed., 109-10.

\footnote{133} As qtd. in Schubert, \textit{Französisches Recht}, 603.
much more apparent today than they were in the early nineteenth century because we better recognize the role different legal historical cultures play in the direction that future law might take. Yet, as Filippo Ranieri has suggested, it is also clear that the legal community and the public at large accepted and promoted Napoleon’s law code because people were closer in what they believed a law code should contain and do. Their joint Enlightenment and French Revolution history had taught them the necessity of combining stability with certain new freedoms to create a stronger, more just society. The *Code Napoléon* also provided the foundation for a new legal language of case law in the nineteenth century that gave judges, professors, and lawyers alike a new source of authority. Marx, Lassaulx, and others translated what had been French into a new context that greatly enhanced the political power of the legal community.

Yet even from the beginning there were large holes within this overall framework. Anton Feuerbach, the Bavarian reformer, may have been correct in stating, “Wherever Napoleon’s law code comes, there arises a new time, a new world, a new state.” But that new state then developed in quite different directions. Instituting one code into a large number of culturally diverse areas helped people to better see how different they were from one another. “Introduction and translation of foreign code could stimulate, and yes sometimes compel the creation of a modern national legal language and

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136 As qtd. in Hull, 339.
One can best observe this transformative process in how the reforms of the Code got interwoven into daily life and decisions made by individuals. A new world may have arrived, but it came muddied and soiled, never as clear even in the lives of its supporters as it appeared from the distance of political statutes and codes.

The world in which Franz von Lassaulx and Henry Marx lived had undergone drastic political and structural change as they had entered adulthood, and they both recognized the wider social vistas now open before them because of the French Revolution. Yet moving these visions into a firmer reality involved challenges with which neither of them could fully grapple. Two realities heavily impeded their progress. On the one hand, the laws that they were attempting to translate and put into practice were moving targets, ideas that were not readily transferable between cultures and easily manipulated to meet the needs of those using them. This malleability also meant that for all the newness of revolutionary principles, deep-rooted ways of thinking could continue to be the main stream through which everything ran. Hints of these underlying, older value systems abounded, but it would take the fall of Napoleon to show how false these promises could be. Disappointment with how these legal dreams translated into reality is at the heart of Chapter 5 on religious conversion.

Lassaulx’s and Marx’s dreams, at least in part, were lost in translation because translation exposed the fluidity of everything that was supposedly so solid and natural. Yet their lives were also found within translation and the new law school because the ideas upon which reform was based evolved over time. It is this give and take, a willingness to be flexible while searching for more solid ground, upon which new visions

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137 Dölemeyer, 19.
like the *Code Napoléon* would eventually take root. Neither Marx nor Lassaulx could fully see the outcome of their decision to support Napoleonic reforms, but they did act as conduits across time, space, and linguistic barriers in the creation of a new Europe.
CHAPTER 5
“A LIFE OF STEADY HYPOCRISY”?: RELIGIOUS CONVERSION IN THE RHINELAND, 1797-1830

On May 11, 1894, Friedrich Engels wrote a letter to the daughter of Karl Marx, Laura Lafargue, to tell her about a curious tale that had recently appeared in a German socialist newspaper, Die Neue Welt. “If you get Neue Welt with Vorwärts or any other German newspaper, read “From Dark Times” in number 18. You will find your grandparents…in romantic transfiguration, and I hope that you amuse yourself by it.”¹

The anonymous story, while complete fiction, is so rich in emotional detail that it deserves an extended retelling here. The religious conversion described in “From Dark Times” is not just a singular example of Lafargue’s grandparents, lawyer Heinrich Marx² and his wife Henriette, but also highlights many of the tensions inherent in the experience of conversion in the wake of the French Revolution.

“From Dark Times” opens in the imagination of the reader as one travels up one of the tributaries of the Rhine, where the sounds and beauty of the river “bury themselves deeper and deeper under the skin.”³ One dreams not only of the “poor languishing under pressure, in poverty and slavery”, but also of the “crystal kingdom”⁴ in which all sorrow will cease. Once ashore, the traveling reader happens upon a home where young Karl Marx sits by a window awaiting the return of his father, who is late. Heinrich

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² Heinrich Marx was a man of many names. Born Heschel Marx, he took the name Henry during the French occupation, but by the time of his conversion he had chosen to be called by the German form Heinrich. In a thin effort to hide his identity, “From Dark Times” refers to him as Hermann.

³ Schöncke, 343.

⁴ Ibid.
soon arrives looking despondent and overwhelmed. He says that he has been given the choice of either converting to Christianity from Judaism or giving up working as a lawyer.

I have long known, that it would come to this, and it hit me today like a lightning strike from the bright heavens. We belong now again to the loving, German fatherland – the last words were spoken with unending bitterness – and since some have had to pay for this reunification with their lives, it is cheap, that I become a victim for a larger purpose. I still even have a choice between, certainly in my eyes, two equivalent things.⁵

He cannot imagine leaving the Rhineland because, “I love my Fatherland despite everything, with every fiber of my soul, with every beat of my heart I root myself into this earth, that nevertheless so ungratefully and without acknowledgement of this love, pushes us away.”⁶ Yet abandoning his faith appears equally unrealistic. The family’s Judaism cannot be “thrown overboard” like “unnecessary ballast” because it keeps “our life’s ship afloat.”⁷ His wife, the practical one, suggests that conversion is a mere formality and that they could continue to practice Judaism in their hearts. But to Heinrich Marx, this compromise is “sophism of the most dangerous kind”, and he asks how she can “condemn him to a life of steady hypocrisy.”⁸ Though he eventually decides to abandon Judaism with much crying and grief, he worries above all for his mother, “I must cause this pain to you! That this should be the payment for all your hard work and concern, for your faithful, intimate love! Poor, unlucky mother.”⁹

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⁵ Ibid., 345.
⁶ Ibid.
⁷ Ibid., 346.
⁸ Ibid., 347.
⁹ Ibid., 348.
The reader might think that the story should end here. Certainly all the necessary elements of a didactic tale are readily apparent: the tragedy of being forced into such a position as a member of an underclass, the love of nation overcoming the love of one’s God, even the pain of ripping a family apart as one tears oneself from childish pursuit of the faith of the mother to embrace the cold reality of the modern workplace. Yet the unknown author of “From Dark Times” finds it necessary to fashion two more equally melodramatic scenes. The next part opens on Easter as the Marx family prepares to go to church. Despite his wife’s gentle pleading, Heinrich Marx decides that he is just too heartsick and will go on a walk instead of to church so he can commune with God in nature. He walks, seemingly without realizing it, to the house and synagogue where he had been raised. He then bitterly remembers the scene when he attempted to reconcile with his family after his conversion to Christianity, and they treated him as though he were dead and shut the door in his face. As he stands there he realizes that a crowd has gathered in front of the home and decides to go and ask if anything is wrong. He quickly discovers that his mother Eva is dying and blames himself.

His mother near death and he her murderer: the grief over him, his fall from the religion that was so intimately merged with her being and nature that one could not say whether her actions came from her personal character or from religious feeling. It was his fall from the holy faith of the Fathers that gave the deadly wound to the inner heart of the old woman, that broke her courage and destroyed the strength of her soul and body.\(^\text{10}\)

His attempts to go and see his mother on her deathbed are rebuffed by an uncle who asks whether he wishes to “insult her struggling soul” and “intensify the bitterness of the fight with death.”\(^\text{11}\) While they are speaking Heinrich Marx’s mother dies, and he is left

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 351-2.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 353.
in the corridor on his knees, mourning his mother. He holds Christianity and Judaism with their “cruel intolerance, illusion and blindness” responsible for this turn of events and asks when people will arrive “in the beloved land of freedom, the truth”.\(^\text{12}\)

The final scene ties all the ends together and forcefully states the story’s ultimate message about learning compassion for all through the struggle against the forces of inequality and narrow-mindedness. The day of the funeral arrives. In the wake of a sad, graveside service, Heinrich Marx remains behind, mourning, curled up upon the fresh earth. His brother Samuel, the town rabbi (the same one who visited Paris in Chapter 2), finds him there and feels great pity. Heinrich wonders how his brother can embrace a “mother murderer”, but Samuel shocks him by saying that their mother forgave her son for his apostasy and that she asked that Samuel give Heinrich a final kiss for her. Samuel Marx then declares that the brothers must now separate forever, not because of the conversion, but because Heinrich’s “position” will not allow him to be seen talking to a rabbi. This focus on Heinrich’s social standing continues in the final, pleading request Samuel makes of his brother:

promise me that you will use the influence that your position has brought you to work for your former brothers, that you will contribute with all the legal precepts remaining to you to chase away the dark demons of hate, of suspicion and mistrust that ruin our people’s access into the hearts of our princes and Christian fellow citizens.\(^\text{13}\)

Samuel Marx then rapidly expands his vision from Heinrich’s aiding poor Jews to his son Karl fighting for the rights of all humankind. Samuel urges Karl be taught “the

\(^{12}\) Ibid.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 356.
equality of all men” and that the young boy has “a holy duty” to bring about such a vision.\textsuperscript{14}

Any real attention to historical accuracy in “From Dark Times” is subsumed in the piece’s overwhelming desire to present a romantic explanation of the roots of Karl Marx’s philosophy. Heinrich, Henriette, Samuel, Eva, and Karl Marx are merely paper dolls here – toys to be played with to create an appealing story. The actual story of Heinrich Marx’s conversion, as will be explained below, is much murkier, and most likely much more mundane, than “From Dark Times” would allow. Although Heinrich probably did convert to Protestantism because he would have lost his job otherwise, few of the other details from the story can be substantiated. His mother Eva died in May 1823, many years after his probable conversion date and not at Easter. There is also solid evidence that the connection between Heinrich Marx and the rest of his family never completely died out. Samuel Marx named one of his daughters Henriette, Heinrich’s wife’s name, well after Heinrich became a Protestant. Karl Marx remained in regular contact with his multiple Jewish aunts and cousins throughout his life, often writing to them in search of money. Cerf Marx, Samuel and Heinrich’s brother, also converted to Christianity, which suggests that any family stigma against such an action was probably somewhat mild.\textsuperscript{15}

This lack of historical truth, however, does not diminish the importance of certain conversion themes that run deeply throughout the story. “From Dark Times” suggests a variety of interesting questions about conversion that can begin to unravel some of the

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 21 + 357.
problems in fitting conversion into the wider narrative of individuals’ lives. One is the
notion of hypocrisy. Why are the motives for and the strength of conversion always in
doubt? The subject of “mother murder” is also fascinating one. In the story, mothers
represent the culture in which one is raised, the value system and morality that one is
supposed to follow. That is the definition that will be used here, rather than one based
in the copious psychological- and gender-related literature suggested by such a violent
image.16 Because all religious conversions involve a recognizable rejection of the past,
are they indeed killing one’s roots? Is the divide between past and present too stark to
be overcome easily? What is dying in a conversion – the past or the present? Equally
vital in understanding religious conversion in the early nineteenth century is making
sense of it in terms of the social milieu in which it occurs. How does one make the
decision to change and what other factors weigh into that decision? Is it a question of
one’s “position”, as the author of “From Dark Times” proposes, that makes religious
change possible rather than true religious conviction? Are conversions forms of political
statements, personal comments on a world becoming increasingly bureaucratic and
depersonalized? Finally, how does religious conversion happen chronologically? Is it a
moment of stark decision as with the fictional Heinrich Marx or a choice that is made
more slowly, reverberating imperceptibly across time?

16 Some recent literature on matricide includes Alison Stone, “Against Matricide: Rethinking Subjectivity
Psychoanalysis and the Law of the Mother (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Lois Cucullo,
Expert Modernists, Matricide, and Modern Culture: Woolf, Forster, Joyce (New York: Palgrave Macmillan,
113-120; Thomas A. Foster, “Spellbinding Masculinity: Microhistories of Violence, Gender, and Sexuality
in the Early American Family,” The William and Mary Quarterly, 61, no. 2 (Apr. 2004): 361-367; Jane O.
Newman, “Sons and Mothers: Agrippina, Semiramis, and the Philological Construction of Gender Roles in
Early Modern Germany (Lohenstein’s Agrippina, 1665),” Renaissance Quarterly, 49, no. 1 (Spring, 1996):
77-113.
Answers to these questions are frustratingly difficult to locate. Though there are some noteworthy exceptions, few people actually write about the very personal nature of their own conversions. One scholar has suggested, “The inner history of conversion is compounded by the mysteries of divine grace and of human personality, which like bottling moonlight, eludes the effort to capture it, which may not always be understood by the convert…”\(^\text{17}\) There are also many different types of conversion for different reasons, making it challenging to arrive at any firm conclusions. Four conversion narratives will be discussed here: Josef von Hommer, Joseph von Görres, Cerf Marx, and Heinrich Marx. By beginning with the mildest of the conversion experiences and progressing to the most extreme, I hope to elucidate several important elements in the conversion experience of individuals in the early nineteenth century. Firstly, conversion, in all its manifestations, totters between rejection of the past and present and drawing upon them both to making sense of one’s life and place in the world. Secondly, despite serious differences in the nature of their conversions, all of the individuals examined here were radically changed by their decision to convert. Though it may not have happened in a single moment, the conversion experience was for them an answer to the questions society was asking. Finally, the social and cultural surroundings of these individuals played heavily into the choices they made. In particular, the French Revolution, which had opened so many doors, also never fully lived up to expectations of what might be achieved. Thus, all of these gentlemen converted, at least in part, because the rubble of the Revolution left them feeling frightened or disillusioned. Also,

\(^{17}\) Sheridan Gilley, “Loss and Gain: Conversions to Catholicism in Modern Britain” in Dwight Longenecker, ed., \textit{The Path to Rome: Modern Journeys to the Catholic Church} (Herefordshire, UK: Gracewing, 1999), 98.
the fact that they all lived on the Rhenish border between two national cultures may have opened up their minds to the possibility of going across a religious divide that they might not have done otherwise. This focus on outside conditions, however, does not mean that religious conviction or belief in divine intercession did not play a role in these conversions. Data on such emotional, personal matters is naturally much more difficult to uncover and analyze. Still, the documents do suggest a conjunction between these private feelings and public influences lie at the center of the conversion experience.

Two classic Christian converts are St. Paul and St. Augustine. Their narratives have been the starting point for discussions of conversions for centuries. Converts have often turned to these saints for inspiration on their own journeys of faith. Yet how realistic are they in a modern setting? How has conversion changed over the last millennium to speak to newer interests and concerns? One cannot dispute the fact that there is a thread of belief that wends its way through the centuries. However, as Karl Morrison has suggested, “what is called “conversion” is defined by contexts of time and place. Consequently, it is important to determine what is called conversion, by whom it so called, and the language used to analyze it.”

Equally vital in making sense of the conversion experience are changes wrought in the early nineteenth century as Christian faith began to battle secularism whole-heartedly. Thus, here we are watching how the old thread gets woven into new fabric. The thread itself is not necessarily remade into something different, but it does end up looking quite dissimilar from that which had come before.

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The main story surrounding ancient converts like St. Paul and St. Augustine was that their conversions were single, identifiable moments in which they were struck by heavenly inspiration. Paul, struck blind by God on the road to Damascus, converts to the faith that he previously attacked and is granted his sight. In his Confessions, Augustine recalls how in a moment of desperation in a garden a child’s voice came to him telling him to open the Bible and read a passage. “For in an instant, when I came to the end of the sentence, it was as though the light of confidence flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled.” Yet, how can we account for those singular moments of blazing vision that sparkle in Paul’s and Augustine’s tales? Many recent commentators decry efforts to attempt to see ancient and medieval conversions in modern rational terms, to be skeptical of the supernatural power that so inspired earlier ages. Historians cannot judge whether or not a conversion was miraculous or God-driven, but they must keep at the forefront of their discussions that early Christians saw them as such.

 Scholars have also long pointed out that neither saint was fully transformed at a precise point in time. It takes years for Paul’s conversion to be complete enough for him to lead the early Christians. Augustine writes the rest of his work as though conversion was a life-long journey of slow progress toward God. Peter Brown, in


21 Karl Morrison’s work is among the most vehement in this regard. Yet other historians have made similar claims including Frederick Russell, “Augustine: Conversion by the Book,” in James Muldoon, ed., Varieties of Religious Conversion in the Middle Ages (Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 1997); and Brad Gregory, “‘To the Point of Shedding Your Blood’: The Bible, Communities of Faith, and Martyrs’ Resistance to Conversion in the Reformation Era,” in Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton, eds., Conversion: Old Worlds and New (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2003).
particular, has laid out a masterful biography of Augustine as one who takes incremental steps toward conversion both before and after his time in the garden. For Brown, “the ‘conversion’ seems to have been an astonishingly tranquil process.”

Many recent works have suggested that we view historical religious conversion as a dual process, one that simultaneously invokes a heavenly event and perpetual pilgrimage toward God. The language of religious conversion regularly borrowed from the imagery of arts and crafts, of remolding individuals from one substance into another. However, not all would agree with Brown’s assessment of a “tranquil” Augustinian conversion. Along with a much longer conversion process came tremendous uncertainty – what if one was on the wrong path to sin rather than virtue, what if one embraced the comfortable past rather than the unknown future? “Indeed, the fear of recidivism, of backsliding from a moment of enlightenment, was so terrifyingly real for Augustine that he rhetorically exaggerated his ups and downs. True conversion could only be effected through incessant pain.”

One could easily become hypocritical, believing one thing and saying another. What was true for Augustine was equally true for all converts who followed him.

Such an attitude toward the dangers of conversion had clear political implications. Conversion, especially in the early Middle Ages, often happened as a form of conquest. How could one trust converts who may not have been inspired by God at all? Viewing God as a forceful master compelling obedience probably quelled some doubts, but not

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23 Russell, 13; and Morrison, 185-6.

24 Russell, 24.
all. Religious orders also made the slow conversion transformation seemingly less precarious by instituting a careful structure to monitor and transform behavior, becoming quite powerful in the process.²⁵ By the High Middle Ages it was believed that, “In fact, all life, rightly lived, was conversion. Conversion was thought to change the entire direction of human existence itself from a movement toward the grave into a transit toward endless life.”²⁶ Karl Morrison describes this process in terms of “empathy” and “poetic imagination”²⁷, in which people sought to train stubborn emotions over a lifetime to reach toward mystic union with Christ. Thus by the fifteenth century, when people rarely met new converts, the term more often referred to those seeking to become more religious.²⁸

This rosy picture of a careful route to communion with God was muddied on several levels. One of the most important was how Christians would deal with those converts they could not trust. This concern was especially true for medieval Jewish conversos who could never fully escape their Jewish roots, even if they claimed a complete change of heart or divine inspiration. Christians’ “personal religious

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²⁶ Morrison, xii.

²⁷ Ibid., xvi + 188.

experiences forced them to confront the imperfect process of conversion,“ meaning that accepting anyone from outside their narrow circle of fellow believers was always fraught with danger. Though nineteenth-century Jewish converts like Heinrich Marx may not have faced the same exact questions in an increasingly secular world, they still dealt with somewhat similar suspicions. Other groups, women and native peoples in particular, faced comparable challenges in proving their allegiance, but Jews remained the consummate outsiders.

Equally troubling was the underlying current of dissent always present within conversion. The need to convert stemmed from dissatisfaction with the way things were and thus on some level was always “mother murder”. Those close family members and friends who were being rejected could not help feeling slighted.

When converts repudiated the ‘world’ around them, they turned away from their families, neighbors, and countrymen, all baptized Christians. They left behind, as inadequate, the ordinary parish worship of their neighborhood. Every conversion, every plea for conversion, sprang from this negative dialectic, derived its power in part, implicitly or explicitly from disparaging the ordinary life of the christened.30

Nearly all conversion narratives, from the time of Christ forward, contained some sense of this disenchantment.31 Converts had to carefully explain the reasoning and the supernatural elements of their decisions in order to be accepted. Thus conversion in some ways was a battle between individuals and their communities over each person’s


30 Van Engen, 35.

ability to choose their own path and what that meant in how religion would be defined by the corporate whole. While in some cases, like Augustine or Josef von Hommer, such conversion did not mean explicitly rejecting their own mother’s beliefs, it did mean moving forward in a new direction that opposed important community assumptions.

It is this sense of individual decision and tension with corporate ideals that lies at the heart of this chapter. Yet the anxieties and disagreements that underlie conversion are often subtle and infrequently discussed in full. It is also rare that converts are as aware of their own incremental transformation as historians might hope. Among the most explicit in this regard are those who write autobiographies, like Saint Augustine.

Geoffrey Galt Harpham describes autobiographical conversion as a linguistic, two-step process in which there is an “Old Testament” conversion experience “that heralds a sense of true self-knowledge” and a “New Testament” creation of the text of one’s conversion that “confirms or actualizes this certainty in a narrative of the self.”32 Without putting the experience down on paper, conversion remains incomplete and unstable because the convert has not yet reentered the societal dialogue surrounding conversion. Conversion autobiographies help converts extend themselves by allowing their stories to be read and interpreted by others over their lifetimes and beyond.33 This literary process is what in large part defines conversion throughout Christian history. Paul was a guide for Augustine, who was a guide for countless medieval and early modern converts leading all the way through Josef von Hommer. Yet it is implausible


33 Ibid., 43-8.
that only those who record their conversions experience “complete” conversion or even that they necessarily have a more rewarding conversion. However, autobiographical conversions do provide a unique window into how individual converts reject, remake, and become part of the new world around them.

Josef von Hommer was among those attempting to become part of the rich historical dialogue surrounding conversion. Indeed, he himself saw his Christian journey as both an explication of his own reasoning and a model for future Catholics, and penned his autobiography with St. Augustine as his obvious prototype. In his journal, he even dedicated St. Augustine’s feast day, August 28th, to a discussion of how he hoped to emulate the saint.34 Much of Hommer’s conversion narrative reads like a medieval manuscript of the sinful human struggling to lead a saintly life. His opening lines set the stage.

If every day reminded us to be careful and look back on our past life penitently because every day could be our last, so our present times calls us especially to account for our earlier deeds. Therefore I will start today to recall my entire past life and remind myself of my mistakes. Also I will consider how God through his sage advice has led me through all sorts of mishaps, and how I could have brought about my own eternal salvation if I had followed his direction, or at least virtuously live my remaining days as a gift. The close of my own life in which I will appear in front of the highest Judge stands in front of me.35

Two items are particularly striking here that relate directly to Geoffrey Galt Harpham’s suggestions about autobiography and conversion. One is that Hommer clearly saw his autobiography as part of his conversion process. Only by fully embracing his past and


writing it down could he put it within the proper framework of contrition in order to find renewal and holiness. The other is that from his opening sentence onward he clearly viewed his autobiography as much larger than just his own story. The dialogue between sinning humans and their wise deity is a timeless one that Hommer was seeking to enter with his own tale.

Other parts of Josef von Hommer’s narrative also had clear roots in Saint Augustine, but with some important differences. Like Augustine, Hommer spent considerable time discussing childhood not as a time of innocence, but of culpability. But whereas Augustine was willing to condemn even the nursing child as being a center of sinful self-centeredness, Hommer’s child was one cognizant of its own emotional state, but unable to deal with its rapid shifts.

A child knows, and already from a young age, what pleases him and what does not. He is happy and sad, loves and shows dislike for, flatters and is angry with, laughs and cries, and not without knowledge of what one is making use of, not without motive. But what motives they were we forget all too quickly because our unsteadiness keeps us from remaining in one emotional state.

Josef von Hommer was more accepting, perhaps, of his own sinful being, but it did not make him unable to see human choice as a determining factor in the creation of society. He recognized “that God does not promise that he will feed all the hungry, bring rest to the weary…we must do it ourselves, or get others to improve their own lives.”

Augustine’s autobiography obviously wrestled with his own ability to make choices, but with more fear. He often begged God to intervene in his wretched life. “My soul is like a

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36 Augustine, 27-8.
37 Hommer, 21.
38 Ibid., 13.
house, small for you to enter, but I pray you to enlarge it. It is in ruins, but I ask you to remake it.”\textsuperscript{39} One cannot claim, however, that Hommer was lacking in guilt or that Augustine did not see his own actions as having a role in salvation. Overall, their tone was quite similar and easy to place together despite a time disparity of a millennium and a half.

Yet these subtle differences between Augustine and Josef von Hommer are quite important in making sense of what has happened to conversion in the intervening centuries and what modernity had begun to do to religious belief. Why does Hommer’s autobiography appear lighter, less weighed down by sin, and more in control of his own destiny? The answer lies in both socio-political circumstances and individual temperament. Augustine and Hommer both led lives of privilege and had mothers who gave them a strict Christian upbringing. The thread of male conversion ran heavily through both women’s stories. Augustine’s Monica convinced her abusive husband to become Christian. The father of Ursula, Josef von Hommer’s mother, converted from Protestantism to Catholicism. Monica taught Augustine Christian values, insisted upon being heavily involved in every decision he made as a young man, and regularly prayed for his conversion.\textsuperscript{40} Ursula also demanded obedience to authority and to God, dressing her children as Jesuits and carefully controlling all possible playmates and activities. Like Monica, Ursula wept when her son strayed from the appointed path.\textsuperscript{41}

Yet Josef von Hommer was rarely as far from Christianity as Augustine sometimes was.

\textsuperscript{39} Augustine, 24.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 21-32, 68-70, 100-1, 111-3, 192-205.

\textsuperscript{41} Hommer, 23-31, 89-97, 209.
Though Christianity was already entrenched by Augustine’s time, it nevertheless faced stiff competition from rival forms of religious belief. Hommer’s faith was not honed in the sharp fire of contentious religious debate but in the milder flames of a tempered, medieval system that had been slowly developed over centuries.

This lack of fervor was also evident in Josef von Hommer’s actual conversion tale. Hommer had no Augustinian garden moment, at least not one that he related in his autobiography. Some scholars have pointed to an incident in 1781 when Hommer drank heavily during *Fasching* festivities, was heavily admonished by his worried mother when he finally returned home, and promised never to repeat such activity.42 Though he never celebrated quite so hard again and mourned the fact that his mother died less than a year later, it is not clear that Hommer viewed the episode as permanently altering his behavior. He never argued that the *Fasching* incident played a role in his mother’s death. Much of his early life as a priest appeared burdened by the typical sins of young adulthood: overspending, drinking and card playing. Even as late as 1793 when he was already 33 years old, Hommer did not receive a desired position because of his poor behavior. “I had not, however, yet put away youthful habits and did not yet possess moral seriousness in order to be able to win a good reputation among those more highly placed in Coblenz.”43 His reports of these years read like those of a wealthy, modern-day frat boy – more interested in having a good time and his reputation than in his spirituality.

43 Hommer, *Meditationes*, 141, also 89-99.
However, it is also quite evident that Josef von Hommer indeed converted, or turned toward God in a much more serious way, in his later life. The second half of his life story was more somber, filled with purpose and depth. What made this transformation possible and when it occurred are debatable, but Hommer does provide a number of clues. In 1785 Hommer was given his first parish church in Wallersheim, a small community that today is a northern suburb of Coblenz. Being pastor of his own congregation gradually began to change the young cleric. He was able to teach children the catechism, to introduce a new afternoon mass during Lent, and to begin a children’s choir. Yet this congregation was also only a part-time responsibility. It would take transferring to another congregation during the French Revolution to really transform Hommer into a passionate man of faith.

His appointment in 1798 to a small congregation in Schönberg, near present day Kölbingen-Möllingen about 50 kilometers to the east of Coblenz, could not have occurred at a better moment. Josef von Hommer struggled to survive on his diminishing clerical salary, while simultaneously being frightened by the increasingly radical political climate being fomented by young Joseph von Görres and Franz von Lassaulx and their compatriots. Though it was not necessarily the sole moment of his religious conversion, Schönberg provided an intellectual and psychological respite for Hommer, and he used the precious time to reinterpret and solidify the direction of his life. He moved from the quick life of a city cleric trying to make a name for himself to the much slower pace of a tiny village of less than a dozen households where he had to learn to farm for himself.

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44 Persch, 19.
despite “barely knowing the difference between a cow and an ox.”\textsuperscript{45} Hommer surprised himself with the ease with which he settled into a life of quiet study and religious community building. “Still I was happy from the beginning there and became happier by the day.”\textsuperscript{46} When he was forced to return to the rough world of religious politics at Ehrenbreitstein four years later in 1802, Hommer did so quite unwillingly and regularly reminisced about his special time in Schönberg.

Josef von Hommer saw his contentment at Schönberg as having two causes, but in reality the roots of his transformation were intertwined. The first catalyst was the French Revolution itself.

Much contributed to it [his happiness]: I was disgusted by French rule and their striving for the overthrow of the Fatherland, and I groaned in silence. Especially recently when the Reign of Terror sought to exalt its leaders, and I was in danger of losing every support, I counted myself lucky to have escaped persecution and to be able to be happy over a peaceful life.\textsuperscript{47}

Living “far from the noise of the world,”\textsuperscript{48} however, did more than just let Hommer breathe and ignore what was going on around him. As is true of many conversion experiences, Hommer’s dissatisfaction with the way things were led him to explore how he could not only live his own life differently but also how he could inspire others to make similar choices. He labeled the second cause of his happiness a “special eagerness for the ministry,”\textsuperscript{49} but in reality it too was a reaction to the French

\textsuperscript{45} Hommer, \textit{Mediationes}, 157-9.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 161.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
Revolution. Hommer was not willing to “groan in silence”, but really wanted to make some “noise in the world” himself. To Hommer, the violence of the French Revolution far outweighed any social or economic justice that it might have brought. He sought an answer to the moral questions of the day by returning to the solid structures of the past – small Christian communities where people cared for one another.

It required only a short time, in my way, to instruct the people with honesty, sincerity, and sociability, with my willingness to be a pastor by visiting schools and the sick, by assisting the poor, to win to myself the hearts of all by my brotherly company. Everyone loved me and I loved them. All were my children and I was their father.\textsuperscript{50}

Hommer converted to a more complete religious life because he saw the way that modern values were unraveling the social fabric and felt compelled to try and make a difference. His conversion, as well as his efforts to write about it in his autobiography, entered him into a long-standing dialogue about the nature of spiritual life and its role in improving life on earth.

The experience of war and upheaval in the Rhineland, the “deep crisis of identity”\textsuperscript{51} that the Church endured at the beginning of the nineteenth century, did not necessarily equal dechristianization and defeat. Rather, as Horst Carl has argued,

The conflict between the churches and the revolutionary state meant that religious practice and beliefs were no longer self-evident or taken for granted. Instead, adherence to a confession increasingly took on the

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.

character of a conscious decision. In a divided society such a decision also had a political dimension.\textsuperscript{52}

Each European nation responded to the challenge of increasing secularization and decreasing clerical influence a bit differently, but many religious leaders clearly understood the need for political battle. In France, ecclesiastical officials created elaborate missionary revivals, over 1,500 of them between 1815 and 1830, which sought to reconnect the people with their monarchy and their faith. Missionaries used mass spectacles to awe, cajole, and frighten people back to the faith and away from all the values of the Revolution that the religious community so heartily rejected.\textsuperscript{53} Without a long-standing tradition of Catholic religious monarchy and with a less cohesive populace, Prussia’s religious revival had a different form that was more religiously divisive.\textsuperscript{54} It will be discussed at length in Chapter 6, but religious revival is important to briefly consider here as an inherent part of Josef von Hommer’s mindset. His

\textsuperscript{52} Carl, 227.


conversion to a more serious faith was in large part due to his recognition of the political/religious war at hand.

However, a problem remained. How should one respond to such a drastic challenge? What tools did Josef von Hommer have at his disposal? Hommer was not one for elaborate spectacle like the French. Interestingly, Hommer chose the same thing that Franz von Lassaulx did – education. Though the word *conversion* rarely appears in Hommer’s autobiography, the term *education* shows up regularly. Both Lassaulx and Hommer feared the chaos of lawlessness, but their responses diverged substantially. Whereas Lassaulx sought to solidify the gains of the French Revolution permanently by building a cadre of talented lawyers dedicated to the *Code Napoléon*, Hommer sought to reestablish another type of community. His time in Schönberg confirmed Hommer’s belief in the necessity of properly educating all members of the Christian community – from the tiniest child to the parish priest. Childhood was where conversion to Christian belief began, where a bulwark against heresy and unbelief was birthed. “Little by little the educator develops in the child an adherence to this religion, even if not immediately, so that they will be protected indirectly, even if other religions try to shake their foundations or eliminate their memories.”55 For Hommer, the child lay at the center of a communal web of learning and understanding. From writing songbooks to learning early forms of communication with the deaf, Hommer sought to inspire all his congregations to a greater love of God.56


56 Persch, 24-7.
Yet the only way that web could remain strong in the buffeting winds of the
Revolution was through the proper education of the educators – the parish priests.

After Napoleon’s fall in 1815, it took some time for the Catholic Church to reorganize
itself in the Prussian Rhineland. It was not until 1824 that Josef von Hommer was
formally appointed the first Bishop of Trier after others had turned down the position.
From the very beginning of his tenure, Hommer focused heavily on the instruction of a
fervent company of priests. The French Revolution had deeply damaged the Church in
Germany, much more so than it had the judiciary that Lassaulx was trying to rebuild.
Disbanding religious orders and dismantling older dioceses had led to considerable
confusion, fear, and a huge clerical shortage.

Hommer saw the need to create a fresh class of religious warriors to fight skepticism and dangers of the modern age brought about by the coming of the French.

We would like to only pay attention to that which is known to all and lays nearby, while the mysterious epidemic marches through the men of the land like a destroying angel, it also gradually gets closer to our borders….One has loosened and knocked down the old, venerable tree of belief and obedience which Christ had planted deep in the hearts of men and had poured his own blood upon it, and which lived calmly in the peaceful shadow of our Father, and replanted in its place the freedom tree of unbelief and insubordination whose boughs strive to spread themselves over the whole world.


Converting others to the cause of defending the Church and its traditions inspired not only Bishop Hommer’s actions but also his autobiography.

This ideological war could only be fought by an impassioned clergy fully aware of the danger and equipped with the proper tools to do battle. One had to be smarter than one’s enemy. Philosophy and reason were, "weapons that the Sophists use against Catholic truth. If we the Church want to protect itself against our enemies, we must use similar weapons."  

Education needed to be a lifelong pursuit for priests who had to strive to lead holy, sober lives, both externally and internally. In lecturing new seminarians Bishop Hommer was firm:

He who comes here because it is so customary, because it is a path to a career that one has taken upon oneself, who thinks one or two years goes quickly if at the end you receive a parish that you can leisurely care for….I would tell him: friend, you do not belong here. Go home!

Your purpose for being here is to make yourself a clergyman; to ministers who are called to represent the high priest of our redemption, to be teachers of the people, and to go before as a light to the Christian community with a good nature. All in the world must be taught. Here you should learn the means.

The priestly calling was not for the weak-willed, but for the strong-minded who could most fully defend it. Bishop von Hommer’s rallying cry was "Es muß Einheit seyn" or "There must be unity." The religious corps that Hommer trained to do battle lay at the center of the defensive shield that the Church had to establish against the forces of

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59 Hommer, Mediationes. 83. One weapon that Hommer used in Trier was history itself. Hommer recognized that historical documents could be used to further a Catholic agenda and actively collected material. He inspired a generation of historian clerics. His historical reputation was so strong that Joseph von Görres offered to sell “his expensive collection of handwriting samples” to Hommer (Gross, 108-9).

60 Hommer, Es muß Einheit seyn, 58. See also Ludwig Jakob, Das Trierer Priesterseminar im Restaurationszeitalter, besonders unter Bischof Hommer (Manuscript, Trier Diocese Archive).
modernity. Only by working together and being fully engaged, much like Lassaulx’s newly trained lawyers, could the clergy succeed.

It would be easy to see Josef von Hommer’s conversion just in terms of a long-standing tradition of people becoming more religious in response to the changes around them. Certainly such reasoning drove Hommer in the same way that it had Paul, Augustine, and many of the medieval converts that followed. He also converted not in a single instance, but over time, especially after arriving at Schönberg, where his life’s mission came into focus much more clearly. In writing his conversion into his autobiography, Hommer became part of an established dialogue of inspirational conversion literature. Yet, what Hommer reacted to was quite different than anything his predecessors had faced. The power of the medieval Church had gone and a rising secularism was taking its place. Paul and Augustine were also clerical warriors, but they fought for the establishment of the Church rather than trying to find a place for it in a modern world stressing individuality and personal freedom. Thus, in a way Josef von Hommer was indeed “murdering the mother” with his conversion to a more religious life rather than accepting the increasingly worldly value system that had surrounded him since birth. Yet he was not turning away from the past, but toward it. As will also be seen in the case of fellow Catholic convert Joseph von Görres, returning to one’s roots can make as radical a statement about current conditions as stretching out in a new direction.

Though Hommer’s conversion followed a medieval outline, its path was a much more modern one. The historiography surrounding modern conversion experiences bears striking resemblance to that of those studying ancient and medieval narratives.
Yet there are also considerable differences. William James’ seminal 1902 explication of psychological conversion remains relevant both to the past and present. To him, “To say that a man is ‘converted’ means, in these terms, that religious ideas, previously peripheral in his consciousness, now take a central place, and that religious aims form the habitual centre of his energy.” Conversion could occur slowly or quickly, but involved a crucial change in direction. Yet as Karl Morrison determines, understanding individual conversion is difficult because so little occurs verbally, or even consciously.

William James suggests,

It [the subconscious] lies around us like a ‘magnetic field,’ inside of which our centre of energy turns like a compass-needle, as the present phase of consciousness alters to its successor. Our whole past store of memories floats beyond this margin, ready at a touch to come in….So vaguely drawn are the outlines between what is actual and what is only potential at any moment of our conscious life, that it is always hard to say of certain mental elements whether we are conscious of them or not.

Focusing on the individuation of the conversion experience is clearly a modern phenomenon that has been widely studied, much more so than it has for earlier eras.

For all his psychological insights, however, James focused too heavily on the individual. James’ subject was not set within any real cultural or political framework and thus

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62 Morrison, xii-xiii.

63 James, 191.

floated amorphously from one position to another. Not only do we not have a moment of conversion, we lack any real sense of time or the role of difference in experiences.

Others have suggested an anthropological or sociological understanding of conversion within its social and political context is necessary. Lewis Rambo argues that modern conversion is multi-dimensional and influenced by a huge variety of factors. “Conversion is a process of religious change that takes place in a dynamic force field of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations, and orientations….There is no one cause of conversion, no one process, and no one simple consequence of that process.” 65 Such a viewpoint further complicates an arena of study already made difficult by the very personal nature of conversion. Yet it also allows for a much wider range of experiences. 66 Beginning with a crisis and a quest for something different, most converts actively seek out a new relationship with the world around them. “The potential convert, like all other people, is motivated by a desire to experience pleasure and avoid pain, maintain a conceptual system, enhance self-esteem, establish gratifying relationships, and attain a sense of power and transcendence.” 67 However, they can only successfully complete their search for self-fulfillment from within an already established framework of interconnected relationships and commitments from their past and present. Sociologists Darren Sherkat and John Wilson suggest that converts are consumers, choosing from an array of religious choices in front of them. Yet the

65 Lewis Rambo, Understanding Religious Conversion (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993).

66 For example, scholars examining former slave conversion narratives have applied a cultural framework that suggests that slave conversions are less related to Christianity as a faith then they are with a need for converts to see themselves as individuals. Clifton Johnson, ed. God Struck Me Dead: Religious Conversion Experiences and Autobiographies of Ex-Slaves (Philadelphia, Pa.: Pilgrim Press, 1969), vi-viii.

67 Rambo, 167.
choices that convert consumers make are heavily based in past socialization and previous religious consumption.\textsuperscript{68} Josef von Hommer’s conversion, however medieval at first glance, is only made possible through the network of modern friendships that he built at Schönberg and the atmosphere in which he was raised.

While extremely rich in cultural insights, such perspectives still miss a key aspect of the modern conversion experience – the political need for an active response to a changed world. Industrialization and nationalism rewrote older frameworks in such a way as to question the need for religion at all. Gauri Viswanathan’s fascinating study of conversion in India boldly attacks what modern ways of thinking have done to religion. In her view, religion has been rendered impotent by placing it in a carefully constructed, structural box outside of rational behavior.

Secularization not only polarizes national and religious identity; it also privatizes belief and renders it subordinate to the claims of reason, logic, and evidence. Henceforth all these claims are identified with the rationality of the state and its institutions.\textsuperscript{69}

Viswanathan upbraids historians for ignoring the important role of religious belief in the construction of human consciousness and claims, “conversion is arguably one of the most unsettling political events in the life of a society.”\textsuperscript{70} Disruptions to a community happen whether conversion is to a majority faith or a minority one, but those dissidents who convert to a less popular faith clearly have a great impact. “By undoing the concept of fixed, unalterable identities, conversion unsettles the boundaries by which


\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., xi.
selfhood, citizenship, nationhood, and community are defined, exposing these as permeable borders.”71 This is one reason that converts can be accused of living lives of “steady hypocrisy” – they challenge the border lines of the modern self that are themselves often hypocritical. Other scholars echo this theme of conversion as a political answer to the challenges of modern identity. In his study of twentieth-century Roman Catholic converts in Britain, Adam Schwartz suggests that converts look back to an uncompromising Roman Catholic Church as a source of “cultural rejuvenation”, and the only possible response to increasingly frightening, and dominant, ways of thinking.72 Thus one’s ancestors become radical models for modern change.

Few converts better exemplify the starkly political decision that a turn toward religion in an increasingly secular age could be than Joseph von Görres. As was true of Josef von Hommer, Görres’s actual conversion narrative lies hidden, despite the fact that he was a prolific writer. Yet few could dispute the fact that he was transformed by a rediscovery of Catholicism and that he then helped lead the transformation of Roman Catholicism in Germany. By the end of Görres’s life, German Catholicism had become a national, political force in part because of his own conversion.

Joseph von Görres grew up in the same Catholic Coblenz that Josef von Hommer did, though about a decade and a half later. Archbishop of Trier, Clemens Wenzeslaus, resided in Coblenz throughout Görres’s childhood, and created a fertile religious

71 Ibid., 16.
atmosphere in the city. One commentator went so far as to suggest that when Görres was a schoolboy one could not go “one hundred paces without seeing a religious image” and that there was “rarely an hour day or night” when one did not hear the ringing of bells in Coblenz.  

No doubt Joseph von Görres’s turn to Roman Catholicism later in life had its roots in a childhood rich in religious iconography. Yet as Hommer himself mentioned regularly, when the Jesuits fell into disfavor in 1773, gymnasium instruction became increasingly anti-clerical and revolutionary. Hommer lamented the fact that Catholicism was not proactive in its response to the Enlightenment and reform, and soon even older professors found themselves having to adapt to the new ways of thinking. By the time that Joseph von Görres entered the gymnasium, teachers had become much more radical despite the fact that many still had clerical ties.

For Görres this shift in attitude meant that though he and his friends were raised with religious principles they “often threw off the religious dress when the Revolution offered them the opportunity.” Yet though he was critical of the Church at times, Görres rarely attacked it with the abandon that some of his compatriots did because he was more interested in the common ideal of civic freedom than in frontal assaults upon

74 Hommer, 33, 41 + 63-9. Görres’s son Guido had similar arguments in his father’s biography, Guido Görres, “Josef von Görres,” Historisch-Politische Blätter für das katholische Deutschland 27 (1851): 118. See also Reitz, 4.
the Catholic Church. Günther Wohlers even suggests that Adam von Lassaulx, Görres’s future father-in-law, may have introduced the young schoolboy to Febronianism and the ideas of Nikolaus von Hontheim. Hontheim’s interest in reforming the Church based itself in a universalism that mirrored Görres’s own principles throughout his life. Hontheim in some ways foreshadowed the German national Church that Görres later sought to create. Other scholars have also pointed out the Görres’s complaints about the Church were more about the current condition of the Church than the “ideal Church” with strong moral standards that he imagined could be.

However, to argue that Joseph von Görres had some exposure to the idea of a universal national Church or that he regularly heard church bells does not mean that he had Hommer’s level of religious indoctrination, or that he had much interest in the Church at all as a youth. One might label him a minimal atheist or perhaps deist, or at least someone who rarely, if ever, attended actual services. At age twelve, after composing a satirical poem about the Pope, he commented to a teacher, “That is nothing but doctrinal stuff, it is only a trench you want to hide yourself behind.”

Over the next several years as the French Revolution began affecting Coblenz in earnest,

77 Ibid., 28.


Görres published his opinions at an increasingly furious pace. He often linked the Church with absolutism and highlighted the dangers of clerical involvement in politics. The Church, in his view, had to obey the higher authority of a state constitution based in pure, natural law. Yet overall, Görres tended to use religion to describe other societal problems. In one article, he lumped religion in with a wide range of current cultural movements that seemed to have lost their way to rational thought.

The trombone voices proceeded loudly: The philosophical century! – Jesuits! – Kabala! – Visionaries! – The philosopher’s stone! … Rosicrucians! – Messiahs! – Magnetism and Somnambulism! Therein fluttered the mysterious words, the most miraculous movements originate, which whirl over Europe now.

As was true of many thinkers of his age, young Görres felt religion hindered progressive thinking and prevented reform from happening more quickly. Yet he was less bent on its complete destruction than in watching its slow demise in an age that no longer needed it.

Joseph von Görres’s attitude toward religion began shifting after his disappointing visit to Paris. His positive view of progress seriously undermined by observing Napoleonic bureaucracy in operation in Paris and Coblenz, Görres began a slow turn toward Catholicism. When he married Katharina von Lassaulx in 1801, they did not have a church wedding. His daughter Sophie was born in 1802 and son Guido in 1804 and neither were baptized. Yet with the birth of his third child Marie in 1808, all three children finally received baptism. The reasons behind Görres’s sudden willingness to

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81 Ibid., 52-3; and Joseph Görres, Gesammelte Schriften, Max Braubach, ed., vol. 1, Politische Schriften der Frühzeit (1795-1800) (Cologne: Gilde Verlag, 1928), 48.

82 Görres, Politische Schriften, 362.

83 Reiße, 53; and Vanden Heuvel, 273.
at least minimally formalize the family’s relationship with the Church remain quite hidden. However, his actions clearly point to a changing attitude toward the possible role of religion in his life, even if he did not actively attend Catholic mass.

By 1810 there were several other indicators that Joseph von Görres had begun searching religion for answers to his philosophical questions. His *Mythengeschichte der asiatischen Welt*, as discussed in Chapter 3, dug deep into Asian myths to find the root explanations, not only for German culture, but also for the human condition as a whole. Knowing these core elements, Görres believed, would help bring understanding of how all the pieces of the puzzle fit together. “There was one worship and one myth in the beginning of time, one church and also one state and one language.”84 He had come to see the center of all existence as containing an eternally unchanging spiritual force. “Religion therefore in its innermost essence has like God no history, only in its positive outwardness it becomes history, and ultimately all history is religious history, as all life is divine life.”85 While none of his musings were necessarily Roman Catholic in focus, they were catholic in tone – he clearly believed in the unity of religion and its followers.

Over the next several years Joseph von Görres remained on the outskirts of formal allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church. In an 1818 letter to friend Adam Müller, Görres declared,

> you have Christianity for religion, I however take for a religion the summit, middle, spirit and soul of all the others. Therefore the work of prehistory is for me the childlike Christianity, Judaism, with the mysteries of heathenism, its youth in which I have looked for many eccentric pathways, and finally


85 Ibid., 384. For a complete discussion of how myth pervaded Görres’s religious thought from the very beginning see Schönfelder, 14-20.
Christianity the ripening, but that like all grand, historical phoenixes has no absolute ending.\textsuperscript{86}

His faith was too broad to be contained within the doctrines of a single church. Yet his political writings had an increasingly religious tone as he began using Catholic imagery much more regularly.

Görres’s \textit{Germany and the Revolution} (1819) not only moved him firmly out of the Prussian camp and into exile, it also showed a new found appreciation for what Catholicism could offer his ideal nation, and the challenges it faced in Protestant Prussia. The Prussians, in his view, had injured the Catholic Church even more than the French, and he warned ominously that Catholics could become dissenters under the new regime.\textsuperscript{87} Yet he also began linking the Church and state together, as two halves, ideal and real, of the same whole.

But the relation between the two spheres [church and state] is such, that the ideal [the Church] is free in its nature, self-powerful, reposing on itself, self-transparent, and enlightened by ideas which, like stars in the conflux of their light, intersect each other, and are bounded and encircled by that serpent, which ever returns to itself.\textsuperscript{88}

From Catholicism would come morality, which joined with intellect, would found a new, more sober German nation.

From the purity of morals which still characterizes the Roman Catholic clergy in Germany, an enthusiasm will easily rise, which will once more impart the long-forgotten life to all forms. They will find that it is not the persecution of intellect, that noblest gift of Heaven, if but properly


\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 552.
employed, but its union with religion, that can dispel darkness and frivolity, the hot-beds of infidelity.\textsuperscript{89}

Though other sections of \textit{Germany and the Revolution} highlighted clerical abuses, Görres had obviously begun exploring how to properly fit Catholicism into his evolving understanding of a universal world.\textsuperscript{90}

Most scholars, however, point to the years immediately following his forced exile as the period during which Joseph von Görres fully embraced his religious calling. Jon Vanden Heuvel suggests several reasons for the transformation: a homesickness for the Rhineland to which he would never return; a growing dislike of Prussian Protestantism and its interest in subordinating the Church to the state, the artistic, emotional appeal of medieval cathedrals, and a sense of connecting to the experiences of common people who had never really listened to his message.\textsuperscript{91} Görres rarely wrote about his religious conversion, but a letter to a friend in August 1822 does illuminate some of his thoughts. “In religious matters, I have, after deep reflection, decided that it is better to build on the old construct, whose foundations were laid thousands of years ago…rather than to build with my own hands my own swallow’s nest, out of straw and paper…which in stormy weather provides little sturdiness.”\textsuperscript{92} The similarities with Josef von Hommer are striking. Görres did not necessarily find God in a remote farming

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid, 572.


\textsuperscript{91} Vanden Heuvel, 274-8.

\textsuperscript{92} As qtd. in Vanden Heuvel, 275.
community, but he did locate his faith apart from his hometown like Hommer had, uprooted by political circumstances and forced to reevaluate his beliefs. As Viswanathan suggests, conversion for both men was a politicized reaction to a world that no longer made sense, a world that constructed categories of rational behavior which purposely ignored a past these men held dear. Their solution was also similar – construction of a unified faith community where morality still held center stage.

Reactions to Görres’s conversion and subsequent embrace of political Catholicism varied. His Prussian enemies felt that he had purposely chosen to attach himself to the Catholic Church because, “religious comrades are a stronger ambush for him than lovers of freedom.” Thus they also subtly accused him of hypocrisy and discarding one means of attacking those in power for another, not for religious reasons but for practical ones. Another accused him of taking from a variety of traditions to create a dangerous mix,

Absorbing an intensity from the Jacobins, the shaggy eavesdropper Görres came to the Romantics, he came from the sinking yeast to the seething. Sly in the art of agitation, he decided to increase the discovered fermentation by solar heat from the ancient Indian-Egyptian religion.

Interestingly, they feared Görres not only for his knife-like pen but also for his universalism. Ultimately Görres never abandoned his central breadth of vision – it is what keeps the charge of hypocrisy from sticking and what made him dangerous to the exclusionary status quo. He, and Josef von Hommer for that matter, created a radically new understanding of modern society that was at odds with a narrow Prussian nationalism that attempted to eradicate difference rather than accepting it.

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93 Konrad Engelbert Ölsner, 2. October 1813, as qtd. in Raab, ed., 168.

94 Johann Heinrich Voß, 1826, as qtd. in Raab, ed. 252.
Many of his friends, including Clemens Brentano, embraced Görres’s decision. Brentano himself had returned to Catholicism in 1818, spending several years in seclusion at a monastery. In a playful letter to his good friend, Brentano praised the fact that Görres has come back to the Church despite the many obstacles in his path.

In everything I know how God led you and your family, and give him therefore the innermost thanks that he protected you from decay, burning, weathering, petrifaction, yes from idolization at the time and that you were in the incomplete, but surplus, confused, obliged, polished off, falsely cited library of all discoveries and methods of this fallen, rushed life. Like a good bloodhound keeps his nose healthy…and finds the path to God and people in his Church, and on it bellows and hunts wooden and wild devils, wolf in sheep’s clothing, great foxes and menagerie lions, also border stone destroyers.95

He begged Görres to write of his experiences, urging him to write an autobiographical conversion narrative like Augustine’s.

From the youngest youth you were always an open mouth, early talker and candid, and with God’s grace now come back through the Church’s door, from which you had walked away. I always wish that you would describe your journey, so agitated and inspired and humble as that of Augustine…96

Görres’s decision not to follow Josef von Hommer’s path in composing a spiritual autobiography is an interesting one. Joseph von Görres was a prolific writer, and he certainly had written of his own personal disappointments and resulting change of attitude after leaving Paris in 1800. Perhaps the journey to Catholicism was simply too personal to Görres for public consumption or, in the words of Karl Morrison and William James, it occurred too far in the subconscious to frame on paper. Ingeborg Schöenfelder

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96 Ibid., 178.
argues that Görres saw the renewed Church as emerging from each private conscience, Christ being reborn in the internal soul.\textsuperscript{97}

Görres’s battlefield was clearly the richly polemical journalistic realm rather than the seminary of Josef von Hommer. In 1824 while in exile in Strasbourg, he began writing for \textit{Der Katholik}, a struggling Catholic journal based in Mainz. Just like newly appointed Bishop Hommer, Görres saw before him a weak, ineffective Catholic intellectual world unable to defend itself against the incursions of modern culture and politics.\textsuperscript{98} To strike unexpected, solid blows against the strong Prussian opponent that had forced him from his beloved Rhineland may have given Görres as much of a new life force as any study of the Bible, call from God, or talk with a priest.

As will be described further in Chapter 6, Joseph von Görres spent the rest of his life until his death in 1848 as a leading polemist for the growing German Catholic political party. During the mid 1820s he resided in conservative Catholic Strasbourg writing for \textit{Der Katholik}. Görres ranged between pieces comparing Catholicism and Protestantism, to the nature of church-state relations, to mysticism, a subject that never ceased to fascinate him. In 1827, he moved to Munich at the behest of the Ludwig I, who offered Görres a history professorship at the university just founded by the young Bavarian monarch. Görres’s strong Catholic stance appealed to Ludwig who chose him

\textsuperscript{97} Schönfelder, 76.

over Leopold von Ranke. Görres soon began writing for Eos, a small Bavarian Catholic journal that worked hard to keep Ludwig I away from any liberal tendencies.  

At the heart of Görres’s religious turn, however, was more than just a desire to compete on a political battlefield for the morality of a nation. The bulk of his later years were spent composing a massive four-volume work, Christian Mysticism, which appeared between 1837 and 1842. It was not well accepted by any party because of its thoroughly non-rational stance that bordered on sensationalism. Yet his mysticism, as biographer Jon Vanden Heuvel describes, was where Görres found his inspiration.

For Görres, a vibrant mystical life testified to religious well-being. Much of his scholarly life was devoted to the retrieval and renewal of myth….Görres believed that Catholicism could only pervade all social institutions, could only regain its hold on the modern mind, if its myths were alive…by self-consciously embracing the myth of another era, sought to underline his sense of alienation from the man-made rationalistic world that his contemporaries had built. Görres, as the French writer and historian Edgar Quinet put it, ‘had put himself at war with the present.’

Christian traditions and music may have motivated Josef von Hommer, but he was not quite under the spell of the ancients the way that Joseph von Görres was. Yet for both men, it was the past that undergirded their vision of the present, a past whose universalism could challenge the individualism, compartmentalized nationalism, and growing bureaucracy of their age. Görres may not have been “murdering his mother”, but his conversion did radically challenge and undermine the values of his childhood. What he had spent his early life fighting for had failed him and he turned to the past, both imagined and real, in an attempt to slow the rushing onslaught of modernity.

99 Vanden Heuvel, 278-315.
100 Ibid., 319.
At first glance, the conversion narratives of Heinrich and Cerf Marx from Judaism to Christianity would seem to belong in quite a different category from Hommer and Görres. Hommer and Görres were thoroughly dissatisfied with modern ways of thinking and sought a return to the past. Neither was forced into conversion, and neither was making a radical break with his roots. The Marxes, on the other hand, converted much more out of necessity and were at least in part accepting the role that modernity had pressed upon them. Yet, as stated in the opening story, it would be a mistake to merely see the Marxes as having no control over their own destinies. Like Hommer and Görres, they reacted to a world that disappointed them and their decision to convert was a clear, radically politicized response to that world. Rather than judging Christian and Jewish conversions in different lights, we need to embrace their startling similarities. Conversion was not about the individual triumphing over corporate belief or individuals being subsumed by it, but rather how the individual and corporate identities coexisted and reshaped one another in a new age.

Only recently have scholars begun calling for a joint examination of Christian and Jewish religious experiences in the nineteenth century. Much of this discussion has been about confessional differences. As Ranier Liedke has suggested, "In the absence of comparison there will be no challenge to accepted paths of thinking and no test of peculiarities."101 Others have pointed out that how people from different confessions understood one another was the basis for how they understood themselves. Rather

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than some form of fading, dull religious feeling, conflict and emotion defined religion in the nineteenth century, according to Christopher Clark and Helmut Walser Smith, cultural differentiation constituted the center; that this is what made the nineteenth century a period of cultural collision, and that this was the norm. An analytical framework burdened by the normative ballast of modernization theory and by the dystopia of cultural homogeneity will necessarily overlook this ‘normality.’ In the process it will flatten out a history that, for all its unfortunate turns, was in some ways extraordinarily rich.¹⁰²

Clark, for one, creates a masterful portrait of the way in which religious prejudice continued to define Jewish emancipation and conversion debates in spite of the Enlightenment, especially among Prussian leaders like Friedrich Wilhelm III.¹⁰³ Yet, one also cannot ignore the fact that Catholics and Jews faced some similar circumstances in the nineteenth century. Protestant Prussia feared both religions as proto-national groups threatening their authority. Some Prussians were even willing to go so far as to see Catholicism as “a foreign religion inspired by Jews” and to claim that neither group could really be German.¹⁰⁴ Thus even if Catholics and Jews were often antagonistic toward one another, they shared a certain bond in moments like conversion.

Historians of Jewish conversion approach the field somewhat differently than those examining Christian converts, but there are still strong threads that tie the fields


together. Some explanations of Jewish conversion sound markedly similar to Christian ones. Gary Porton, for example, lists the circumstances necessary for Jewish conversion to Christianity:

before they changed communities, the prospective converts had to experience ‘acutely felt tension.’ They also had to operate normally ‘within a religious problem-solving perspective,’ which means that they sought out the religious dimension of everyday events. Furthermore, they needed to be ‘religious seekers,’ who were open to alternative explanations of the religious aspects of the events they experienced. Additionally, they had to come into contact with the ‘new’ religious system at a turning point in their lives. This meant that they could become free of their previous relationships…

All of these conditions, of course, would be equally true of converts within Christianity like Hommer and Görres. Porton also highlights the fact that conversions were more likely in times of social upheaval, again ideas which fit equally well within a French Revolution framework.

Scholars of Jewish conversion also highlight several issues that are related more directly to the Jewish experience. As discussed earlier, one strong theme in the literature is that of lack of acceptance of Jewish converts by their Christian brethren. This distrust was not just in the medieval era but continued into the early modern and modern ages. David Graizbord suggests that early modern Jewish converts were liminal figures, existing in the borders between faiths as simultaneous insiders and outsiders. They easily risked the charge of “steady hypocrisy”. *Conversos* were proof that the supposedly rigid outlines of faiths were actually quite permeable. Their willingness to bend boundaries to their needs made Jewish converts a recognized threat to their communities. Interestingly, Graizbord also argues that historians need to

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reconfigure their understanding of “conformity” and “dissidence” in light of these religious border crossers, who at times responded to cultural constraints with acceptance and at times revolted against them.\textsuperscript{106}

One could, of course, make similar arguments about Christian converts like Hommer and Görres. Though they were not forced into conversion, they did go back and forth between agreement and disagreement with society’s evolving modernity, sometimes sounding hypocritical. Gauri Viswanathan takes this duality one step further in claiming,

regardless of whether conversion is an assimilative or an oppositional gesture, the specific circumstances, historical context, and political climate in which conversion occurs might suggest a more complicated trajectory. In somewhat paradoxical fashion, assimilation may be accompanied by critique of the very culture with which religious affiliation is sought. Equally, dissent may aim at reforming and rejuvenating the culture from which the convert has detached himself.\textsuperscript{107}

Thus, Jewish or Christian conversions are markedly similar in using a combination of critique and acceptance in plotting their direction. Even within seemingly “forced” conversions, the individual convert marshals the social forces surrounding them in making unique decisions that consent to and react against the world.

Such an ability to make one’s own path is complicated for Jews in the modern era by the issue of political emancipation. As described in Chapter 2, the French Revolution

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\textsuperscript{106} David Graizbord, \textit{Souls in Dispute: Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora, 1580–1700} (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 2-7, 172-8. Jews that converted were also traditionally not accepted any longer by their former families and neighbors who were to consider them dead. However, at the same time, converted Jews could not escape their Jewishness – they were to be perpetual heretics. See Shulamit Magnus, “Good Bad Jews: Converts, Conversion, and Boundary Redrawing in Modern Russian Jewry, Notes toward a New Category,” in Susan A. Glenn and Naomi B. Sokoloff, eds., \textit{Boundaries of Jewish Identity} (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 2010), 134-5.

\textsuperscript{107} Viswanathan, 39.
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and Napoleon had opened up a new era of political rights for Jews in granting them a level of citizenship. The height of this movement was the calling of the 1807 Parisian Grand Sanhedrin during which Jews professed their allegiance to the French state in return for being granted occupational and legal freedoms that had previously been impossible. Other European states were not far behind. Prussia emancipated its Jews in March 1812 with the “Edict Concerning the Civil Conditions of Jews in the Prussian State.” Though Jews did get some rights, the edict also took away much of their communal authority. Jews could not keep business records in Hebrew or have their own courts. They also had to take German surnames and perform all required civic duties. Implementation of any new rights also proved difficult. As Christopher Clark describes, “The removal of Jewish legal disabilities was a drawn-out, haphazard affair that proceeded with halting steps at varying speeds in different times and places. It was not for the most part about rights…but about one-off concessions that could be delayed, reversed, or reinterpreted.” Moments like the anti-Semitic Hep! Hep! riots in 1819 further clouded Jewish hopes for emancipation. In the Rhineland, Prussia continued to apply French anti-usury and residency restrictions for more than 50 years. Local interests, rather than state concerns, controlled how Jews were treated.


In addition to the theme of legislative confusion and inactivity, historians have highlighted several other things in making sense of German Jewish emancipation in the first half of the nineteenth century. They range from how emancipation impacted nation formation to how it affected individual converts. Some scholars have focused on how the nation-state defined itself through the qualifications it created for religious minorities wishing to join it.111 Others explain the impact of emancipation upon the Jewish community as a whole – because emancipation focused on individual Jewish actions, communal bonds between Jews weakened considerably.112 This growing acculturation into Christian-based value systems also meant that Jewish conversion was a less radical step in the nineteenth century than it had been earlier.113 Still other historians reject the notion that Judaism necessarily weakened with the coming of modernity, but instead see the faith as responding in a variety of different, very individualized ways.114 Integration for Jews was never easy – there were always blockades, seen, unseen, and forever evolving, which were placed in the paths of Jews trying to take advantage of emancipation.115 The final, and most important issue for this discussion, was that


113 Elsheva Carlebach, Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500-1750 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), 228-9. Magnus also discusses this changing attitude toward nineteenth century Jewish converts in terms of “good bad Jews” – converts in Russia who could be accepted because of how they continued to assist the Jewish community (Magnus, 132-7).


115 Borut and Heibronner, 477-88.
emancipation often disappointed Jews who by 1817 had already begun feeling that conversion was the only remaining route to real acceptance.\textsuperscript{116}

The age in which the Marx conversions took place was one of considerable upheaval for Prussian Jews and Christians alike. Jews faced tremendous pressure from all sides to convert. Not only did Jews face anti-Semitic rioting and virulent polemics, but they also had to deal with concerted efforts by a powerful bloc of Prussian administrators to convert them. Prussian leaders including Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm III and the “Berlin Society for the Promotion of Christianity among the Jews” saw conversion as an answer to the question of whether Jews could truly be trusted with citizenship. The Prussian monarch refused to appoint any Jews to state positions and offered money to any Jew who converted and listed him as a godfather. Only through conversion could all doubts about national trustworthiness be put to the side.\textsuperscript{117}

A number of Jews, including members of some prominent families in Berlin, converted during this era and wrote about their difficult decisions in a variety of different ways. As many as 4,000 Prussian Jews converted between 1812 and 1846.\textsuperscript{118} At the beginning of his career in 1819, Jewish lawyer and historian Eduard Gans, attempted to


\textsuperscript{118} Lewis Feuer, \textit{The Conversion of Karl Marx’s Father} [London: Heinemann, 1972]. Also attached to \textit{Jewish Journal of Sociology} 14, no. 2 (December 1972), 154.
get a professorship at the University of Berlin, arguing, “I belong to that unfortunate
class of human beings, which is hated because it is uneducated, and persecuted
because it tries to educate itself.”

His protests were to no avail and he was forced to convert in order to teach. Heinrich Heine went even further in blaming his conversion
directly on the political forces surrounding him.

The baptismal certificate is the ticket of admission to European culture. My
becoming a Christian is the fault of those Saxons who suddenly changed
saddles at Leipzig, or of Napoleon, who really did not have to go to Russia,
or of his teacher of geography at Brienne, who did not tell him that Moscow
winters are very cold.

Yet not all Jews saw their conversions merely in terms of politics or economics. Joseph
Michael von Arnsteiner argued to his parents that his conversion was led by, “a
conviction that I will find salvation and peace of mind on a different road.”

The Enlightenment had also altered how many Jews felt about faith in general. Moses
Mendelssohn’s son Abraham, viewed himself as a deist, who, though unsure of God’s
existence, felt that the prick of conscience was a guide to proper behavior and faith was
a natural desire to do good. Thus, he explains his decision to have his children raised
Protestant as,

We have educated you and your brothers and sister in the Christian faith,
because it is the creed of most civilized people, and contains nothing that
can lead you away from what is good, and much that guides you to love,


obedience, tolerance, and resignation, even if it offered nothing but the example of its Founder, understood by so few, and followed by still fewer. If faith was not based in God-driven definitions of right and wrong, but instead in human ones, then changing faiths was simpler.

Exactly what combination of these ideas helped Cerf and Heinrich Marx to make their decisions is impossible to tell. However, the redefinition of religious and national frameworks and disenchantment with emancipation reforms were clearly at the heart of their choices. Despite the fact that there are few real documents from Cerf’s own pen and the longest source on his life is quite biased, one can piece together quite an interesting conversion tale. Cerf was a younger brother of Samuel and Heinrich Marx, born in 1790 when his brothers were fifteen and thirteen, respectively. As a younger son of a rabbi, Cerf would probably have received training in more traditional Jewish occupations if his father had not died when he was fourteen and the French Revolution had not opened new career paths. He was obviously a bright boy, winning multiple top prizes in French, algebra, and mathematics at Trier’s gymnasium. In 1813, Samuel took twenty-three year old Cerf to Paris so he could begin training as a watchmaker. Cerf spent the next seven years training in Paris, London and Luxembourg. He met his wife Henriette Medex in Luxembourg while living with his mother who had moved there after the death of her second husband. By 1820 Cerf and Henriette had moved to Aachen, Henriette’s hometown, and Cerf began attempting to set up a hood and cap/watch making business of his own.123


123 Schöncke, ed., 429-32.
The roadblocks began almost immediately. Aachen continued to enforce Napoleon’s 1808 *Décret Infame* demanding Jews apply for business license long after the emperor’s downfall. In 1822 Cerf was listed among those deemed worthy enough to receive one. Over the next several years he continued to retain his license, but his financial position became increasingly precarious. In 1823 he requested his tax bill of 8 Thaler be lowered because:

1. It is to be known that for the last ¾ of a year, I have had no hood and cap shop anymore, which I have declared multiple times.

2. I have no watch shop, but instead I am a watchmaker whose business right now is so poor that I can only provide the barest necessities for my wife and two children through my handiwork. Another proof of this is that my sad state makes me feel compelled to sell my apartment and live in the room where I from now on must also do my work.\(^\text{124}\)

Though there are no records of Cerf requesting further assistance in the years that followed, it is obvious that his finances remained precarious. By 1830 he had five daughters and a newborn son to support. His son’s death at the age of two months\(^\text{125}\) may have been the trigger that led him finally to firmly consider conversion.

The source of the rest of Cerf’s story is unluckily a tremendously biased one. In 1831, Leonhard Nellessen, priest of St. Nikolaus Hauptpfarrkirche in Aachen, triumphantly published “The Baptism of a Jewish Family on the Eve of the Holy Pentecost Celebration, 1831.”\(^\text{126}\) For Nellessen, the conversion of Cerf Marx’s family by his own hand was a moment to be celebrated because he had convinced a man who

\(^{124}\) Cerf Marx in Schöncke, ed., 441.

\(^{125}\) Ibid., 442-5.

\(^{126}\) Nellessen was trained in Hebrew by a rabbi, but much of the rest of his biography is that of a strongly conservative priest fighting for the reestablishment of the Jesuit order in Aachen and against anything threatening the unity of the faith. See NBD/ABD Deutsche Biographie, [http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/xsfz71057.html](http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/xsfz71057.html), accessed August 12, 2011.
was the grandson, son and brother of a rabbi to turn to the “right” faith. That the priest himself ultimately had little to do with Cerf’s actual decision made little difference. God had saved one more Jewish family from its own self-imposed destruction. Nellessen hoped that his pamphlet would be a “reverberation” with others of the “truth” of Paul’s claim that “belief is a gift from God.” He outlined Cerf’s past, highlighting Cerf’s intellectual talent, his brother Samuel’s attendance at Napoleon’s Grand Sanhedrin, and Cerf’s decision to become a watchmaker. In Nellessen’s view, the hopefulness of the age and Cerf’s family led him to falsely believe that it was possible to “clear away the reproach that the Jews were only hucksters and did not want to learn any handicrafts.” Yet, according to Nellessen, underwriting this secular career choice was always God. “This may have been the first grace for him because he was at least taken away from the rabbinate.” Cerf, obviously, may have felt quite differently and viewed his career as being free to do something of his own choosing or as a political statement of his worthiness to be a citizen.

Nellessen continued his focus on God-directed conversion rather than increasing societal openness as his tale moved the Marxes closer to Christianity. The Marx family had spent the previous ten years in Aachen and had earned the respect of both Jewish and Christian neighbors. Cerf, however, in Nellessen’s view, had become increasingly dissatisfied with Judaism, no longer attending the synagogue regularly and sending his children to Catholic school. In 1829, Cerf first visited Nellessen and expressed interest


in converting, but his wife Henriette was not yet ready. Nellessen urged him to “recommend the problem to God”\textsuperscript{130} and wait until she changed her mind, but the priest also began instructing Cerf and gave him a New Testament to read. Henriette, impressed by “the love-filled language and lofty ethics”\textsuperscript{131} of the Evangelists, eventually agreed to become a catechumen along with her husband and daughters. Several items are missing from Nellessen’s dogmatic account. Most importantly, he glossed completely over any social, economic, or political advantages that conversion clearly held for Cerf Marx and his family. Nellessen also ignored the fact that others might have had different levels of religious experience and commitment than his own. That Cerf no longer went to the synagogue regularly or sent his children for religious instruction was most likely more an indication of an increasingly secular age than necessarily a strong dislike for the faith of his childhood. The same could also be said of Joseph von Görres’s Catholic upbringing or lack of it.

The majority of Nellessen’s pamphlet was a detailed account of the ceremony of baptism and conversion. Its largest problem was its focus on conversion as a single moment of divine revelation and change rather than the lifelong process that it really was. Still, Nellessen’s tract did highlight important themes in conversion literature and offered tantalizing clues as to what this moment may have meant to the Marxes. Nellessen saw Christianity as more precious to Cerf’s family because of the struggles that they had to earn the right to call themselves Christian. “You know to treasure the grace that has cost you so many battles and sacrifices better than those…who…had the

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 448.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
right conferred by birth.” As such, they were examples to both Jews and Christians of what faith could be. Yet what they had been was now dead. They had crossed an abyss between the faiths. As part of their baptism, Cerf and Henriette had to remarry and the entire family took on new names. Henceforward Cerf would be known as Heinrich Paulus Marx and his wife as Clara Henrika Marx.133

So how should Cerf’s conversion be understood? Was it, as Nellessen saw it, a complete break with the past? It is difficult to tell, because after converting Cerf and his family disappear completely from the historical record. It is as if Nellessen used them in much the same way as the author of “From Dark Times” used Heinrich’s conversion account. The Marxes were merely play actors that Leonhard Nellessen used to create the message that he wanted. There are hints going in both directions as to whether Cerf was “murdering the mother” and rejecting the past, or not. Nellessen himself mentions one line of continuity between past and present – there were Jews in attendance at the conversion ceremony.134 However, any close relationship with the rest of the Marxes still living in Trier seems to have dissolved. If Cerf’s perpetually impoverished nephew Karl had had any contact with the family in Aachen, he certainly would have written to them begging for funds as he did with all of his other relatives. There is no record of him doing so. Yet there is also no clear proof that the family’s

132 Ibid., 466.

133 Ibid., 429 + 448 + 467. Nellessen surprisingly did not see fit to record the baptisms in the church’s baptism registry. It is hard to imagine why this was the case. Perhaps anti-Semitism played a role here or maybe a simple error was made.

134 Ibid., 448.
conversion is what caused a breakdown with relatives in Trier. It could have happened earlier and for completely different reasons that have been lost in time.

The most likely scenario is that Cerf’s conversion, while a moment of firm shifting toward a new life, was also a decision retaining strong connections to his past. Did conversion cause him to have to live a “life of steady hypocrisy”, play acting one set of beliefs while actually clinging to another in his heart? We cannot know, but it is clear that his conversion, for all its sense of disappointment and rejection, was also what Viswanathan would label a threat. Cerf’s individual choice showed just how hypocritical society could be in offering emancipation and then qualifying it with such a list of requirements as to make it impossible to achieve. If Cerf’s conversion was not whole hearted, as it likely was, it also pointed out the fact that society could control only some parts of his decision making. Cerf himself always controlled the level of commitment that he was willing to make.

One could argue that his brother Heinrich responded in a similar way to similar circumstances. Because of his famous son Karl, the conversion of Heinrich Marx has been a topic that has long fascinated historians, and the discussion has been rich enough for historians to develop a separate historiography for it. Yet the problem with previous scholarship has been a focus not on Heinrich as an individual, but rather how his decisions impacted his son Karl. While Karl’s development is an important issue and will even be discussed briefly toward the end of this chapter, a different approach is necessary to understand Heinrich in his own context. Otherwise, Heinrich remains what the author of “From Dark Times” suggests – someone living towards the future rather than in his own present and as such someone lacking in control over his own destiny.
The end of French rule in Trier brought changes to Jews and the community as a whole. The city now had about 13,000 residents (up from 10,000) and had a Jewish population that had grown from twelve families to around 200. Mayor Wilhelm Haw reported that relations between the faiths in Trier were quite smooth, and there is no indication from other sources that large problems existed. In fact, visitors and residents alike commented upon Trier’s tradition of religious toleration. However, there were important underlying tensions in the community. As was true of other areas of the Rhineland, Trier suffered considerable economic problems after Napoleon’s army left. The Rhineland had done well under the Continental System because it did not have to compete with English goods. New economic competition coupled with a series of harvest failures and decreasing production of iron meant that by 1837 there were only 1184 “habitable dwellings” in the city. The lack of concern among the Prussian leadership for their new territory and the new seemingly arbitrary regulations they imposed rankled Trier’s residents. As seen in the 1834 Casino Society incident described in Chapter 5, Trier’s elites, Heinrich Marx included, were not above voicing their displeasure, even if they sometimes got in trouble for it.

Trier’s Jews faced additional challenges. Poverty in Trier was naturally exacerbated in the Jewish community. In 1827, Heinrich’s brother Samuel reported to Wilhelm Haw that less than 50 Jewish children in the entire consistory had the funds to

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135 Hubert Schiel, Die Umwelt des jungen Karl Marx. Ein unbekanntes Auswanderungsgesuch von Karl Marx (Trier: Verlag Jacob Lintz, 1954), 5-7 and Monz, Karl Marx und Trier, 107-8. The same could not be said the relationship between Trier’s Catholic leadership and the Prussian state who were regularly at odds with one another throughout the first half of the nineteenth century.


137 Ibid., 9-10.
attend school. In 1815 Heinrich penned an impassioned letter to the Prussian government, “Some remarks over the Napoleonic Decree of 17 March 1808 on the occasion of the happy union of our country with that of the royal Prussian monarchy,” petitioning for some relief from the onerous regulations of Jews. The document holds important clues into Heinrich’s mind as he began considering conversion. He commenced by urging tolerance, arguing that in modern times anything else would be “laughable.” During the French Revolution tolerance was threatened because demagogues controlled the state, scaring people into false beliefs about Jews in order to further their own power. But evil politicians could not succeed in taking away the Jews’ one main defense: their humanity connected them to all fellow beings.

Then, with infinite thanks to the Eternal One, we were and are still human....And who after such a long oppression is not totally degenerated carries the unmistakable stamp of noble humanity; there lies in his bosom the ineradicable seeds of virtue, and a spark from God inspires his spirit. It is true and it gives me pleasure to confess it loudly; it was not due to our Father’s merit alone if we remained upright to some extent. The gentle spirit of Christianity can often become dark through fanaticism; the pure morals of the gospel stained through ignorant priests. But it could not be missing that also in the darkest times such gentle teachings could not occasionally find gentle teachers...one also had a Las Casas to exhibit.

Here two faiths united as one since neither could renounce that inherent, sacred spirit which gave them life. In much the same way as Josef von Hommer and Joseph von


140 Ibid., 141.

141 Ibid., 142.
Görres, Heinrich had imbibed a universal religious spirit that saw faith as a broad band across time and space.

Yet the piece drew equally upon the secular universalism of law in arguing against the Décret Infame using reasoning that Franz von Lassaulx would have praised. Laws, by definition, could be neither capricious nor exclusive; they had to apply to all people equally or risk being accepted by no one. Laws were firm lines drawn in the sand that kept a society whole, connecting the tissue of local affairs to universal societal values. “If a law should be fair and wise, it must stand in closest harmony with general legislation. If deviation is inevitable in some nearby items, then every confusion must be averted, the borders specified very accurately.”\(^\text{142}\) When law did not fulfill this basic function, when it singled out individuals or groups without reason, then it risked angering and disheartening the very people it was trying to make citizens. Thus under Napoleon, “The best minds became shy and left their careers; and those few who were steadfast enough to continue to change – finally in old age let their hands sink in despair as they saw too late that they were not strong enough by themselves to defy the dominant spirit of the age.”\(^\text{143}\) In the openness of the years immediately following Napoleon’s downfall, Heinrich and other Jews hoped that a new age of universal law and faith had finally opened in Prussia.

As had been true for Josef von Görres, Heinrich Marx found the universal aims of Enlightenment and revolutionary reforms decimated in the wake of the Congress of Vienna. Heinrich, however, had already endured enough during his struggles to

\(^{142}\) Ibid.

\(^{143}\) Ibid., 143-6.
become a lawyer to recognize that any reforms would be difficult. In June 1815, shortly after “Some remarks on the Napoleonic Decree” was sent, Heinrich wrote another letter to General Governor Sack in Düsseldorf in which he offered his assistance with “holiest pleasure” in “making my fellow believers useful citizens and prove them worthy of their lofty monarch’s mercy.”\textsuperscript{144} Heinrich argued that his own “not completely gentle path” to acceptance would allow him to better assist his fellow Jews on the path to emancipation and citizenship.\textsuperscript{145}

Yet he could not necessarily help himself. In 1815 Friedrich Wilhelm III decreed that Jews were to be banned from public office, and by 1822 he had banned them from all “liberal professions.”\textsuperscript{146} In April 1816 Paul von Sethe, Trier’s Oberlandespräsident, urged that the justice minister make an exception for Heinrich Marx and two other Jewish lawyers and allow them to continue to practice law. Sethe’s recommendation was based on the opinion of the president and general procurator of Trier’s appeals court who characterized Heinrich as having, “much knowledge; very diligent; good speaker: and thoroughly honorable.”\textsuperscript{147} Sethe had met him personally and was impressed even though he only met him briefly:

the three Israelites are natives. They have rightfully attained their employment; they have confidence in the law, which does not exclude Jews from public offices, selected this branch of trade. They will become unemployed if they lost it. Also they have the royal assurance given without

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 147.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} Raddatz, 6.
\textsuperscript{147} Paul von Sethe in Schöncke, ed., 148.
restriction by certain officials, that if they behaved in an incorruptible manner that they would be able to keep their positions…

If other areas of Prussia used the government’s ambiguity about Jewish emancipation to be anti-Semitic, that was not necessarily the case with officials in Trier. Unluckily, such an open attitude toward Jewish emancipation did little good. The Prussians insisted upon conversion for Heinrich to continue to be a lawyer in their courts.

As was true for Josef von Hommer and Joseph von Görres, confirming an actual date of Heinrich Marx’s conversion is impossible. His conversion, like theirs, was something that happened in stages without firm chronological boundaries. An exact marker like a baptismal date is missing, in part because Marx converted to the Lutheran Church, which was not yet strong enough in Trier to have precise baptismal records. However, one can ascertain that Marx most likely converted after Sethe’s letter was written in April 1816 and before his own children were baptized in August 1824. The childrens’ baptismal document stated that a Prussian military pastor named Mühlenhoff had baptized Heinrich earlier. Most historians have argued that Heinrich Marx’s conversion would have occurred shortly after Sethe’s failure to convince the authorities

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149 The anecdotal evidence that he converted, at least in part, to remain a lawyer is overwhelming. Multiple relatives recalled in later years Heinrich’s forced conversion. His brother Samuel’s son Moses said in 1884, “When Trier became part of Prussia, he was given – so I was told – the choice by the Prussian government, to allow himself to be baptized or give up his position. He did the former and converted to Christianity with his wife.” (Schöncke, 62) In 1896 Wilhelm Liebknecht, a close friend and biographer of Karl’s, reported a similar story being told to him by Karl’s daughter, Eleanor (Schöncke, 357 and Feuer, 150). Edgar Longuet, Karl’s grandson, repeated the tale in 1949 (Schöncke, 359). Georg Adler, a cousin of Karl Marx, was another relative who gave this account (Hans Stein, “Der Übertritt der Families Heinrich Marx zum evangelischen Christentum,” Sonderdruck aus dem 14. Jahrbuch des Kölnischen Geschichtsvereins. Cologne, 1932: 126). Other historians of Marx have also accepted this scenario including Raddatz, 49; Wheen, 10; Schöncke, 104; and Jerrold Siegel, “Marx’s Early Development: Vocation, Rebellion, and Realism.” Journal of Interdisciplinary History III, no. 3 (Winter 1973): 481.

150 Schöncke, 833.
in Berlin to grant Heinrich Marx the right to be a lawyer. 151 Hans Stein went further in arguing that Marx's conversion would have to have occurred prior to August 1817 when another minister replaced Mühlenhoff and an official Lutheran congregation was founded in Trier. 152

These dates are probably the best possible guess as to when Heinrich converted, but they are not the only possibility. Stein offers no proof that Mühlenhoff necessarily left Trier immediately. Heinz Monz argued that Mühlenhoff could have remained for quite some time since the new Lutheran minister was serving several area congregations and would have needed assistance. Up until 1818 it was even possible for Protestant children to be baptized by Catholic priests in Trier because the Lutheran Church was not yet completely established. 153 Even more important, if we view Heinrich's conversion as a process rather than a momentary event, are several other dates related to Heinrich's career. Between 1817 and 1819, Heinrich served as a member of the Jewish debt commission, a body charged with the tricky task of assessing Jewish tax debts. Richard Laufner has proposed that Heinrich could not have converted before this work was complete because the commission would not have accepted a non-Jew as a member. 154 Of course, Laufner could easily be mistaken.

151 Eugene Kamenka, “The Baptism of Karl Marx,” The Hibbert Journal (November 1956): 340; Feuer, 150; Raddatz, 4; Birnbaum, 46; Siegel, 481.

152 Stein, 128-9. The congregation met in a chamber of the Oberappellationsgerichtes until 1819, so Heinrich may have been baptized in the very courtroom where he argued cases. Ulrich Hahn, “Evangelische Kirchengemeinde Trier,” in Blick über den Zaun: Juden und evangelische Christen in Trier (Trier: unknown, [1987]), 6.

153 Monz, Karl Marx und Trier, 135.

about the commission’s willingness to accept a converted Jew, or Heinrich could have kept his conversion well hidden from his Jewish friends. What Laufner’s evidence does suggest, however, is that the demarcation line between Christian and Jew was porous.

As a border figure, Heinrich Marx acted as a bridge between the two worlds for quite some time. The issue of Jewish taxes and protection money owed to Christian authorities had existed for centuries, but it became more confusing in the wake of the French Revolution as governments kept changing, taxes were uncollected in periods of unrest, and Jews relocated. By 1817 assessed Jews complained that their communities were not under Trier’s jurisdiction, that Jews who had moved should also have to pay, and that they did not have the funds. This delicate situation became even more so in 1819 when local authorities decided to reject the work that had been done previously and develop yet another list. Lawsuits soon followed. Heinrich Marx was the lawyer for Mayor Haw and the Jewish debt commission and represented them in civil trials beginning in 1825. By the time the case ended up in the appeals court in Cologne in 1829, Marx no longer headed up the defense but continued to do work on the case. Heinrich had to ask multiple times to receive an honorarium for his work and was finally granted 67 Taler in 1831.¹⁵⁵ Thus Heinrich Marx’s connection to the Jewish community as a whole continued well after he converted, whatever the actual date of his baptism was.

Perhaps Heinrich Marx’s conversion process would be better viewed not by the rate at which he turned away from past associations, but by his slow movement toward the Prussian Lutheran sphere as part of his growing successes as a lawyer. At first

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 12-6.
glance Marx’s conversion to Lutheranism rather than Catholicism seems rather odd. In 1825 in Trier 11,927 residents (94.1%) were Catholic, while only 500 (2.9%) were Lutheran. Yet Prussia’s dominant faith made noticeable inroads in Trier over the next 25 years, more than doubling their membership.\footnote{Karl Marx und Trier, 39-41. See also J.F. Gerhard Goeters, “Neubegründung evangelischer Gemeinden in der Rheinprovinz während der Franzosenzeit,” Monatshefte für evangelische Kirchengeschichte des Rheinlandes 39 (1990): 25-31.} Thus Heinrich Marx’s religious decisions as to what faith to choose had clear, pragmatic roots in the direction he wished his career to progress. In October 1819 Marx purchased his first home, a comfortable dwelling in the Simeonsgasse near the Porta Nigra, the ancient city gates.\footnote{Schöncke, 166-8.} As described in Chapter 5, he successfully completed the state exam in procedural law to become an Advokatenanwalt, or lawyer-attorney in July 1820 after being recommended by someone in the upper judiciary. Marx was now a fully certified attorney able to go to court and represent clients by himself.\footnote{Heinz Monz, “Advokatenanwalt Heinrich Marx: die Berufsausbildung eines Juristen im französischen Rhineland,” Jahrbuch des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte 8 (1979): 137-8; and Schöncke, 104.} It is also possible that Marx converted shortly before this exam took place because he viewed the test as an important career stepping stone for which he was willing to convert.

However, the most interesting moment in his conversion journey was the conversion of Heinrich Marx’s children at his home on August 26, 1824. One day after his children’s conversion, Heinrich Marx was listed among the enrolled attorneys for the Rhineland’s appeals court.\footnote{Schöncke, 105-6. Of the five couples who served as godparents for the Marx children, three were lawyer families and an additional one was a member of the government (Monz, Karl Marx und Trier, 134-5).} This moment marked the final formal step in his
conversion process. Jewish conversions to Christianity were usually seen as incomplete until their children had converted. \(^{160}\) Had Marx been told that his legal standing would only be secure if he proved his loyalty through the conversion of his children? Such a scenario is possible, but again Marx’s own voice in this decision becomes mute. Marx may also have waited for this moment to have his children convert for other reasons. His mother had died the year before. His wife Henriette did not convert until the following year, after the death of her own parents. One might indeed accuse him of hypocrisy, of waiting until part of his older life had died, before fully embracing the new. Yet, as stated earlier, Marx neither abandoned his connections to the Jewish community or those with his own family. Those threads, however loosely woven they became with his conversion, did not break because they were bound across familial generations. What Heinrich had been, what Karl would become, could not be severed by a conversion that was incomplete, even if formally certified by signatures on a baptism document.

Heinrich Marx’s conversion highlights better than most the extremely messy nature of the process of religious change and the difficulty in defining it. Even Marx’s own descendants argued over his conversion’s source and meaning. Karl Marx’s daughter, Eleanor Marx Aveling, saw her grandfather’s conversion as due entirely to his being told that he had to convert. Eleanor, however, was drawn to Judaism herself. She was known to give lectures in Yiddish to proletariat crowds in Whitechapel and once urged that, “We Jews must band together.” \(^{161}\) Eleanor might have easily adapted anything

\(^{160}\) Carlebach, 149.

\(^{161}\) As qtd. in Birnbaum, 79. See also Feuer, 150-2 and Birnbaum, 49. Eleanor’s biographer, Yvonne Kapp, argued that Eleanor was indifferent to the plight of Jews early in life but became increasingly
that she heard from her father about her grandfather into a mold of tragic, forced conversion. Another of Karl Marx’s daughters, Laura Marx Lafargue, viewed her grandfather’s conversion in the entirely different light of the Enlightenment. In 1907 she wrote to John Spargo, an American socialist writing a biography of her father, “My paternal grandfather renounced the Jewish religion for Protestantism in 1824: he did so freely and not in obedience to any official edict. He believed in God, he told his son, as Newton, Locke and Leibnitz had done before him. He also believed in Voltaire.”

It is true that as a well-educated, liberal lawyer Heinrich Marx would have embraced many Enlightenment philosophical principles, ideas that could have led him away from the faith of his ancestors. At his death his library contained (in addition to copious numbers of legal codes and foreign language dictionaries) works by Schiller, Thomas Paine and Herder, among others. However, Lafargue may have had just as narrow a vision of her grandfather’s conversion as her sister. Christianity was just as much under attack by the Enlightenment as Judaism, so it is difficult to believe that Marx would find one faith more appealing than another for strictly philosophical reasons.

Historians since Karl Marx’s time have argued back and forth between the two opposed views of Laura and Eleanor. Yet the version of Heinrich’s transformation that

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162 As qtd. in Feuer, 151.
163 Schöncke, 293-6.
164 Feuer, 152.
is most realistic remains that of Lewis Feuer. He made a case that, "neither Eleanor nor Laura had grasped the whole truth of their grandfather’s conversion to the Evangelical Church, but that none the less both had accurately apprehended parts of the situation."\textsuperscript{165} Heinrich Marx’s conversion was not driven by just one portion of his life. His decision was not just because he was being forced to convert, not just because he wanted financial security, not just because he was a deist. Marx’s conversion occurred at the center of all these concerns and as such was as much self-motivated as it was controlled by the world around him.

Late in life Heinrich Marx wrote a series of letters to his beloved son Karl, then attending universities in Bonn and Berlin, that allow us to probe more deeply into Heinrich’s private religious feelings. In trying to make sense of Heinrich Marx’s conversion, many historians quote the line, “For you to become a lawyer, there are not nearly the difficulties that there were for your father.”\textsuperscript{166} Yet the overall impression from reading Marx’s words of advice to his son is not so much that of a careerist but that of someone with a heartfelt, underlying spirituality that he wished to impart upon his offspring. Shortly after Karl Marx began his university career, his father wrote in November 1835,

That you remain morally good, that I do not really doubt. Still, a great lever for morality is the pure belief in God. You know that I am anything but a fanatic. But this belief is for man, early or late in life, a genuine need, and there are moments in life when even an atheist [Gottesleugner] is drawn to

\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., 156.

\textsuperscript{166} As qtd in Monz, “Advokanenanwalt Heinrich Marx,” 141, among others.
pray to the All-Highest. And it is a commonplace...for that in which Newton, Locke, and Leibniz believed in, everybody...must submit to.¹⁶⁷

Here we observe religious sensibilities at their deepest. Heinrich Marx was not trying to convince a wider public of the importance of religion as Josef von Hommer or Joseph von Görres did after their conversions. Marx wanted instead to impress his feelings about faith upon his own child. Yet there remains a connection between what Marx was doing and what Hommer and Görres had done. As Geoffrey Galt Harpham might have suggested, Heinrich Marx’s explanation of faith to his son was also an autobiographical moment for himself in which writing down what he believed helped confirm it. Sharing his views also meant hoping that they would spread, if only to his son.

Heinrich Marx’s faith, however, did not have the confident depth of Josef von Görres’s or Joseph von Hommer’s. Instead, it was a hesitant belief of a prudent man more at home in day-to-day realities than in the pondering of the eternal. In another letter to his son, Heinrich admitted, “you know that I, a practical man, am not altogether so unpolished as to be insensitive to the Noble and the Good, but nonetheless I do not willingly withdraw from the earth, where I have a base, exclusively into the ethereal spheres, where I have no firm ground.”¹⁶⁸ Yet even if Marx’s faith was not as central to his existence, it did have a breadth easily equal to that of many of his contemporaries. A few months before his death and a few days before the death of another of his sons, Eduard, Heinrich again wrote to Karl about his understanding of how the puzzle pieces of life fit together.


¹⁶⁸ Heinrich Marx (Trier) to Karl Marx (Berlin) 2 March 1837, Padover, 501.
One is a man, a spiritual being, a member of society, and a citizen, hence physical, moral, intellectual and political ennoblement. Only when there is harmony in one’s efforts to achieve these great objectives, can a beautiful and attractive whole be produced, pleasing to God, men, parents and one’s girl, and which can be called a genuine picture with more truth and naturalness than the meeting again of one’s old school comrade.  

For Heinrich Marx, his religious life was all about balance – how could he best create an overall moral code by which to live. Thus, conversion for him was a form of reestablishing an internal equilibrium after circumstances had undermined his old one. The process of religious change was made easier by the fact that what he converted from and what he converted to were similar puzzle pieces because they both recognized an eternal, moral presence.

Heinrich Marx’s son Karl never found the peace with religion that his father did, and his uncertainty was derived in part from the amorphous nature of his own conversion experience. Though he converted to Protestantism at the age of six, Karl Marx could never completely escape his Jewish roots, despite his earnest efforts to paint himself otherwise. His writing about Judaism was often bitter and contradictory. His essay, “On the Jewish Question,” placed Jews outside the boundaries of society.

But the Jew likewise can only adopt a Jewish attitude, i.e. that of a foreigner, towards the state, since he opposes his illusory nationality to actual nationality, his illusory law to actual law. He considers it his right to separate himself from the rest of humanity; as a matter of principle he takes no part in the historical movement and looks to a future which has nothing in common with the future of mankind as a whole.

Jews were naturally hypocritical and their loyalties were always to be questioned, making their fate inescapable without conversion. His letters also sometimes contained

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169 Heinrich Marx (Trier) to Karl Marx (Berlin) 9 December 1837, Padover, 508.

anti-Semitic remarks about his opponents, and he regularly equated Jews with everything that he despised about the bourgeoisie in general. Yet one could not argue that he completely ignored his own connection to Judaism. With his uncle and fellow convert to Christianity, Lion Philips, Karl Marx discussed the Pentateuch and Spinoza. He eagerly courted his Jewish aunts and other relatives when he was short on money. His family also nicknamed him “The Moor” due to his Jewish appearance, a moniker that he seemed to have readily accepted. His daughter Eleanor’s willingness to learn Yiddish late in life to speak to Jewish crowds also shows a small, continued connection to Judaism across generations.

So was Karl Marx Jewish or not? If we only use baptismal and confirmation records as evidence, then we must see him as a Protestant. However, one striking element in modern literature on Karl Marx is the number of scholars who not only highlight the challenges that he faced in declaring that he was not Jewish, but also some who continue to unapologetically label him a Jew. This rigid classification continues despite the horrors of the Holocaust and the recognition that the Nazis regularly mislabeled Jewish converts to Christianity and those who intermarried as still

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171 Kamenka, 349; Birnbaum 71; and Feuer, 164.

172 Feuer, 164. Lion Philips married the sister of Karl’s mother in 1820 and converted to the Netherlands Reformed Church in 1826 along with the rest of his family. Karl Marx stayed with Philips for two weeks while visiting Europe after the death of his mother.

173 Schöncke, 317, 384, 398, 419; and Padover, 172-3.

174 Birnbaum, 78. See also Kapp, vol. 2, 510-26.

175 Julius Carlebach, Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism (Boston, Mass.: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 310-2; Monz, Karl Marx und Trier, 180-1; Birnbaum, 48-50, 70-1; Feuer 157; Kamenka, 344-5.

176 Endelman, 115.
Jewish. Why? One obvious reason was the age at which Karl Marx converted – he was too young to have chosen conversion for himself. Calling Marx Jewish also speaks to the racialization of Jewish identity, especially in the nineteenth century, which prevented Jews from ever escaping their fate. Yet the actual story behind Karl Marx’s reaction to religion was not based in the rigid boundaries between faiths, but in the fluidity of those borders when faced with the challenge of conversion.

Trier in the 1820s and 1830s lay at the intersection of different religions. One can most readily observe this phenomenon in walking the city and reading its placards. The Jewish synagogue of Samuel, Heinrich and Cerf Marx at Weberstrasse 183 was only a few houses away from the back of the Jesuit-founded gymnasium attended by Karl Marx. That gymnasium is today home to Trier’s Catholic seminary where Josef von Hommer had previously trained priests. The seminary’s church is the Jesuitenkirche, which lies next door. In Heinrich’s day, this church was the one given to the newly founded Protestant congregation in Trier. Thus, Heinrich watched his son being confirmed in the Evangelical Church only a few blocks away from where he himself had learned Jewish traditions. When faced with so many different options both in the city and in his own home, Karl Marx came away confused and lacking in a feeling of religious belonging.\(^{177}\) Cynicism and questioning the necessity of having religion at all were natural byproducts.

For the previous generation, however, the religious and social freedoms proffered by the French Revolution meant quite a different reaction to the question of faith. Josef von Hommer, Joseph von Görres, Cerf Marx and Heinrich Marx lived an age of

\(^{177}\) Monz, *Karl Marx und Trier*, 180-3.
expanding possibilities in which previous limits or boundaries came into question. As was true of religious conversions throughout the ages, all of these gentlemen converted in part out of dissatisfaction with the status quo, a sense of disappointment in what they had hoped the Revolution could achieve. The reasons behind their discomfort ranged from the religious concerns of Hommer to the political ones of Görres to the social ones of Cerf and Heinrich Marx.

Yet all of their conversions also spoke to the radically nebulous nature of conversion, and ultimately religion, itself. In none of these cases can one point to a moment in which conversion was complete, in which their former selves ceased to exist or play a role in their lives because they were now enlightened. As converted Jews, Cerf and Heinrich Marx (and Karl – to his extreme frustration) never fully escaped the distrust traditionally heaped upon Jews. Heinrich especially lived most of his life in a religious borderland in which he at times crossed back over the confessional dividing line to help Jews in need. There is only a single record of Heinrich ever taking communion.  

Joseph von Görres also faced complaints that his newfound Catholic polemic was merely that – a recently discovered way to continue battling against something, anything that could allow him to see himself as a warrior with a pen. Josef von Hommer, now a religious bishop carefully guarding his flock, did not completely abandon the ways of his aristocratic upbringing. One person complained privately to friends about Hommer’s excessive partying during a local famine long after

178 3 June 1827, Schöncke, 195.

179 Konrad Engelbert Ölsner, 2. October 1813, as qtd. in Raab, ed., 168 and Johann Heinrich Voß, 1826, as qtd. in Raab, ed. 252.
he had become bishop. Such questions, however, are not meant to insinuate that any of these converts were without religious conviction or even that such beliefs could not be driving forces in reconfiguring their lives. The main argument here is that rewriting one’s life was a balancing act between past and present, meaning that no conversion was ever finished.

So if the convert can never be completely converted, if conversion, as they say, is a journey rather than a destination, what does that mean for religion itself, especially in such a tumultuous age like the French Revolution? Do all converts inevitably “live lives of steady hypocrisy”? If one wishes to paint all conversion portraits within the rigid lines of a societal paint-by-number, then the answer would have to be yes. However, if we view conversion instead from the viewpoint of converts then the answer would be no. Instead, individual converts themselves become cultural arbiters and play a role in defining what religious faith is and where the boundaries are between different confessions. Social, political, and religious forces do set standards of behavior, create ceremonies of induction and regularly provide warnings as to what might happen to those who wander from the flock. Indeed, Chapter 6 will focus on another of these borderlines, that of mixed marriages, and how even converts like Hommer, Görres and Marx found it necessary to comment upon them and rigorously defend them. However, individuals who convert undermine such standards merely by their presence because they wash away such divisions in the incompleteness of their conversions.

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180 Monz, *Karl Marx und Trier*, 47.
And if religious converts are crossing boundaries established between faiths in the aftermath of the French Revolution, what does that say about other boundaries, like national ones, that are being created at the same time? As Gauri Viswanathan argues,

the key factor lies in the multiple affiliations opened up by conversion—the possibilities of occupying several positions in relation to both nation and religion. The blurring between the objects to which the convert assimilates and those he (or she) challenges—with a free crossover between assent and dissent—is precisely the source of the power of conversion.\textsuperscript{181}

Ultimately, however, it is not about making all things relative, but instead about making all things relevant—relevant to each individual’s experience of a moment. One might argue that Hommer, Görres, and the two Marxes were all “murdering their mothers” but only if that meant rewriting societal expectations. One could equally write the reverse, that these gentlemen were embracing societal ideals, the ones that they found pertinent in their own lives. Conversion was not the stark imagery of one life chosen over another, but rather the more complicated and rich picture of lives, religions, and peoples interwoven together.

\textsuperscript{181} Viswanathan, 42.
Near the end of his life, seventy-seven-year-old Bishop of Trier Josef von Hommer faced a thorny dilemma. Hommer's life journey, though comfortable due to his social position, had not always been smooth. The French Revolution, the Napoleonic era and now the Prussians had all challenged his sense of place and duty. Events had led him from being a rather self-satisfied young clergyman to a new role as a regional Catholic leader on a mission to rebuild and defend the Church against the challenges of modernity. Through it all, Hommer had sought compromise, trying to be aware of both where the Church needed reform and where it needed to stand its ground.

Although the Church, so much as it is a human institution, particularly in the area of discipline is penetrated by many abuses like all human mechanisms tend to unavoidably be, it is nevertheless better to bear the abuse than destroy unity through its removal. There are bad states of affair everywhere. Remedy one, and another comes.¹

He was neither in favor of ideological lines drawn in the sands nor of bombastic preachers purposely antagonizing their opponents because both could destroy Church unity. Instead he sought quietly, but firmly, to educate the next generation of Catholics, trusting that God would provide the change of heart necessary to bring people back to the Church.

Now he was confronted with an unavoidable difficulty from an unlikely source – his nephew, Friedrich von Hommer. Friedrich was the son of Josef von Hommer’s much beloved brother, Peter Melchior von Hommer. Peter had been a second father to

Josef², and Friedrich, only thirteen years younger than his uncle, would probably have been more like a younger sibling to Josef than a nephew. Friedrich had had a career in the French and Austrian militaries, had settled in Hungary with his wife and three daughters, and had become a government lawyer. In June 1835, Friedrich wrote his aging uncle for advice. “I find myself alone in a predicament…a predicament of another kind from which you do the favor of freeing me.”³ Friedrich’s youngest daughter Lina had recently received a marriage proposal from the son of a close friend, Herr von Brüderssohn. The match would be an advantageous one in which his daughter would be well provided for. The problem was that the bridegroom was Lutheran rather than Catholic. Friedrich had told his daughter “no” due to the difference in faith, but the young man had persisted. Friedrich then suggested that he might allow the couple to wed if they agreed to raise any children as Catholics, but the man said that his parents would not consent to such conditions.

Living in a small community, Friedrich knew that he would make enemies if he did not allow the marriage. However, he feared for his daughter and any possible grandchildren – would they be teased and become indifferent to their faith? Would he be giving too great an advantage to the Protestants and above all, would he be risking what “seems to me to be a great sin”?⁴ Friedrich begged his uncle to write back as soon as possible with, “your definite opinion without any consideration of nearness but

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² Ibid., 203.
⁴ Ibid., 285.
upon known, true Catholic principles.” Friedrich desired an answer that was definitive, something upon which he could hang his faith and his decision proudly, without any doubts. In fact, he so often mentioned the need for clarity in his letter that one wonders if Friedrich too recognized his uncle’s penchant for careful equivocation.

It was an issue that the Hommer family had faced before. Josef von Hommer’s grandfather Johann Cramer had converted from Protestantism to Catholicism. Friedrich’s own niece, Franziska von Seckendorf, had married a Protestant and was now raising her children as Lutherans in Norway. Josef von Hommer’s response to his nephew, while somewhat generous in his praise of Protestantism, drew a tentative line between the two faiths. The bishop recognized that Lutherans were pious with strongly held beliefs. If Lina’s proposed Protestant spouse was a good man who loved her, he might not make any overly harsh criticism of her different faith. Yet problems would arise, Josef von Hommer warned, when children entered the picture. “But with respect to the raising of children there is something quite different. Differences in religion are always an obstacle to spouses loving each other as they should.” If Friedrich had had sons rather than daughters, the situation would be easier since men were masters of their homes and their families’ faith. As a woman, Lina would perpetually face, “a hidden pain of the soul.” Life in a mixed marriage would be difficult and would not allow the couple to focus on what was ultimately most important – God.

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5 Ibid.
6 Hommer, Meditationes, 209.
7 Josef von Hommer as qtd. in Weber, 286.
8 Ibid.
I cannot tell you that your grandchildren would be of different faiths or that a similar danger happens, that they have none. The time that we live on earth is short. Money, goods and fortune do not make us happy or satisfied. Nothing can make us content except a view above where a judge awaits us…

Hommer’s response was carefully qualified. He neither completely condemned mixed marriage nor considered it a fully viable option for a healthy union. Instead he turned to God as an ultimate heavenly judge.

Josef von Hommer’s answer did not fully satisfy his exasperated nephew who obviously wanted a firm condemnation of mixed marriage that he could take back to his wife and townspeople to prevent any further discussion of the matter. While Friedrich’s August letter thanked his uncle for allowing him to, “ground myself more fully in my duty as a Catholic,” his lingering doubts had led him to consult other Catholic writings on the issue. Reading some of the pope’s recent letters convinced Friedrich that any equivocation on mixed marriages was sinful – such unions were forbidden. He gently admonished his uncle for providing such a cautious response to his question.

Also you, dear Herr Oheim, have not been totally candid with me in this respect. Then otherwise how you could have not added your disapproval of such mixed marriage in your letters that we exchanged over this issue? Your statements should not be written as if I could have other opinions. Am I allowed to have another opinion than that of the Church?

For Friedrich, the answer was now clear – he must find another suitable Catholic mate for Lina. Although the young Protestant man tried once more to win Lina’s hand a few months later, Friedrich declined, saying that their family friendship was now at an end.

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9 Ibid., 287.
10 Friedrich von Hommer as qtd. in Weber, 287.
11 Ibid., 288.
In June 1836, Friedrich wrote one last time to Josef that his daughter had finally married a good Catholic.¹²

What could be considered a simple family matter had much broader historical implications. The issue of mixed marriages between Catholics and Protestants roiled the Rhineland in the mid to late 1830s. Josef von Hommer did not just face questions from his nephew but was confronted with serious pressure from all sides on the issue, even on his deathbed. Tensions reached their climax in November 1837 with the arrest of Cologne’s archbishop, Clemens August von Droste zu Vischering, for refusing to allow Catholic priests in his diocese to perform such unions. Pamphlets and books from both sides rolled off the presses as anyone of any importance felt the need to comment. Joseph von Görres, now a rising Catholic polemicist, made the most important and long reaching political contribution to the debate with his seminal piece, *Athanasius*. Even Heinrich Marx, then also near death, found the strength to give his own legal impressions of the matter.

The whirlwind of the French Revolution unleashed yet another critical debate that ultimately centered on the validity of borderlines drawn between different groups. With all of its societal questioning, the events of 1789 had already opened new vistas into how one’s societal, regional, religious, legal and gender obligations might be rearranged and managed. New categories emerged that challenged religion’s monopoly over critical societal building blocks like marriage. Simon Schwartzfuchs has suggested that this fundamental shift seriously undermined all religious authority.

Before the French Revolution and the introduction of civil marriage, mixed marriages had been an impossibility, a legal nonsense, as it was impossible

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¹² Ibid.
to marry two persons who did not belong to the same faith: one of them would have to convert to the other’s religion in order to allow them to marry. This was not necessary any more. As a consequence, mixed marriages, which did not involve apostasy on either side, had become possible. Their number grew without any possibility of counter-action, except moral persuasion, on the part of the community.\footnote{Simon Schwarzfuchs, \textit{Napoleon, the Jews, and the Sanhedrin} (Boston, Mass.: Routledge, 1979), 191. Marriages between different cultures have some of the same characteristics. One interesting volume on the challenges of mixed cultural marriages is Rosemary Breger and Rosanna Hill, eds., \textit{Cross-Cultural Marriage: Identity and Choice} (New York: Berg, 1998).}

As was also true of religious conversion, the issue of interfaith marriage in the Rhineland showed just how porous group boundaries could be in a world of changing allegiances. Not since the Reformation several centuries earlier had debates over who belonged to what faith been filled with such vitriol and significance. Yet arguments were now about much more than sinning against God. What had previously been a personal matter dealt with in the home, or at most within one’s local community, had now taken on national significance. Could an emerging Germany be both Protestant and Catholic? Or were mixed marriages a path to secular disinterest with children doubting the necessity of faith in a modern world? What role should state politics play in matters of personal conviction?

Where better place to ask such questions than a region that was already on the outskirts of Prussia? As a center of legal, linguistic, and political change, the Rhineland was a prime arena for such difficult discussions. Rhinelanders knew better than most the challenges of proving one’s loyalty, of the ways in which differing belief systems could interact across boundary lines arbitrarily drawn by distant politicians. Yet intermarriage in the Rhineland was an issue over which many felt that lines of distinction should be strengthened rather than erased. Both Josef von Hommer and Joseph von
Görres, to varying degrees, argued against Prussian nationalists who felt that one of the best routes to national integration was through religious intermingling. Rhinelanders feared not only for their Catholic faith, but also for the ultimate direction that this new, more open way of thinking might be taking them. The gradual slope towards less distinct faith boundaries was inexorable, but only when viewed from the present. Dissenters would prove multiple times that new directions were only as solid as the support behind them.

The issue of religious integration as national policy was shaped by the French Revolutionary experience. Many religious wars had been fought throughout Europe over which region would belong to what faith. However, it was not until the early nineteenth century that the state began to take such a keen interest in how to instill national pride among culturally diverse religious groups. As seen in Chapter 2, Napoleon’s efforts with Jews through the Grand Sanhedrin clearly demonstrated his strong desire to overcome any sense of Jewish religious exclusivity and make them into loyal French citizens. The assimilation of Jews into the polity challenged nation-states for decades to follow. The Jewish question raised many of the same issues about private versus public affairs, the societal role of religion, and how governments could achieve enduring national integration. While Catholics and Protestants were never as far apart as Jews and Christians, similarities between how these groups discussed emerging national and religious interests, especially in regards to mixed marriages, are striking.
Napoleon’s decision to bring Jews, or as he called them, the “vilest of all nations”\textsuperscript{14}, into the French state required multiple lines of attack. From drafting Jews into the army to creating Jewish consistories of community leaders who reported directly to the government, Napoleon sought to diminish Jewish cultural ties in favor of national ones. His most radical and far-reaching recommendation dealt with intermarriage between Jews and Christians. His goal was that, “in every three marriages [there should be] only two between Jew and Jewess and one mixed marriage between Jew and Christian. If the application of this disposition should prove to be too difficult, measures must be taken to engage to instruct, to encourage, to command in order to reach this aim.”\textsuperscript{15} In this way, Napoleon said, “the Jews’ blood will lose its particular character.”\textsuperscript{16} The emperor embraced the only real physical means of joining two such culturally diverse peoples – forcing them to marry one another in order to erase a difference that was inherent in their very blood. Unlike being in the army or working in a “useful” profession, here was a way in which Jews could truly prove their loyalty by sacrificing their children up to the nation by marrying them into it. There could be no turning back, in Napoleon’s view, after one had grandchildren born to devoted French citizens.

No question evoked more disagreement between Napoleon and the Grand Sanhedrin than that of intermarriage. Like the emperor, the Sanhedrin recognized that mixed marriages were of vital interest in defining what Jewish faith and culture would

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\item \textsuperscript{14} Napoleon Bonaparte as qtd. in Jay R. Berkowitz, \textit{Rites and Passages: The Beginnings of Modern Jewish Culture in France, 1650-1860} (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 121.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Napoleon Bonaparte as qtd. in Schanzfuchs, 98.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 100. See also Berkowitz, 123.
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become in the future. French government representatives knew that some of Napoleon’s ideas were unconstitutional and did not tell the Sanhedrin all of Napoleon’s ideas for fear of scaring or angering the Jews. Napoleon had Jewish leaders assemble in two meetings – the Assembly of Notables in May 1806 and the Grand Sanhedrin in February 1807. The second meeting, attended by Heinrich Marx’s brother Samuel, was merely meant to affirm the results of the first with a larger number of Jewish leaders. Napoleon asked Jewish leaders to confirm their loyalty to the French state by responding to twelve questions based upon guidelines that the emperor provided. Only one question caused the any real hesitation or debate – intermarriage.

At both meetings, conservative and liberal factions battled over how to interpret Mosaic Law in a changed world. Some rabbis argued that marriage was a religious act, so both partners had to be of the same faith. Others felt that since the Bible did not expressly forbid such unions, they should be allowed. One particularly astute commentator noted, “Great stress has been laid on the domestic inconveniences which would result from such marriages; but has a word been said of the great political advantages they would produce? If both should be put into the scale, could the superiority of the last be doubted?” In the end, Napoleon got some, but not all, of what he wanted. The Sanhedrin refused to give its blessing to mixed marriages, but

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17 Ibid., 101.
19 Berkovitz in particular focuses on the fact that rabbis still refused to grant religious sanction to mixed marriages and thus were stronger in opposing Napoleon than usually they receive credit for (Berkovitz, 125).
they agreed to recognize such civic unions as legally binding and not excommunicate any Jewish mixed marriage partners:

Such is the opinion of the Rabbies [sic], members of this assembly. In general they would be no more inclined to bless the union of a Jewess with a Christian, or of a Jew with a Christian woman, that Catholic priests themselves would be disposed to sanction unions of this kind. The Rabbies [sic] acknowledge, however, that a Jew, who marries a Christian woman, does not cease on that account, to be considered a Jew by his brethren, any more than if he had married a Jewess civilly and not religiously.20

The rabbis acknowledged a radical modification of religion’s place in the world. Since the Middle Ages, marriage had always been within only religion’s purview. It was a holy moment sanctified by God. Now civil authorities claimed their own rights over marriages and demanded that the institution be redefined in a more open manner. Jews could do little to control this shift in authority.21 It ultimately meant that they could not really reverse the direction that modernity was taking them, though they would make multiple efforts to slow it down.

The Prussians were much slower and more deliberate than the French in considering Jewish-Christian intermarriages, and it was not legalized until 1875. Much of the historiographical literature on German Jewish mixed marriages after this date concentrates not on those actually marrying outside the faith, but on the general impact that mixed marriages had on the faith as a whole.22 Statistical analyses of the number of intermarriages, where and when they occurred, and whether they were more


21 Cople Jaher, 124-6.

22 One of the scholars who examines the German Jewish mixed marriage issue is Alan Levenson, Jewish Reactions to Intermarriage in Nineteenth-Century Germany (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State, 1990).
prevail among men or women dominate the discussion. Other historians focus on whether Jewish-Christian mixed marriages were radical or mainstream and lump marriage issues together with those surrounding conversion, claiming that both were done for “secular and opportunistic” reasons. Steven Lowenstein uses his data to disprove such a simplistic analysis of intermarriage and asserts that intermarriage rates overall remained low when compared with Catholic-Protestant and endogamous marriage rates, despite strong communal fears. Above all, and with due cause, historians have emphasized the role of anti-Semitism in this process. Some even go so far as to argue that mixed marriages have not been widely studied because those Jews who did intermarry were not going to be accepted by non-Jews anyway. Thus, the issue of assimilation becomes moot since it was ultimately impossible to achieve.

While all these interpretations add considerably to the historical record, they ignore the wider framework of the debate – what role did the state play in allowing mixed marriages and how did intermarriage fit into a wider view of the changing societal place of religion? Critical to this discussion is more comparative analysis of Jewish and Catholic experiences. As Ranier Liedke has suggested, “The treatment of religiously

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24 Todd M. Endelman, Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History, 1656-1945 (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1990), 4-6.

25 Lowenstein, 23-40.

26 Levenson, 2.
defined minorities was symptomatic of changing notions of citizenship and shifting balances in the perception and reality of relations between the civic and religious spheres. Minorities were agents and objects in the redefinition of citizenship...”

In the early nineteenth century under Napoleon, Catholics could argue that the radical paradigm shift in definitions of citizenship only applied to Jews, a recognizable threat to national integration. But it would not be long before authorities would make the same requests of Catholics. As Catholic leaders in the Rhineland would discover, it was difficult to balance civil and religious commitments once the nation-state had intervened.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Prussian nation-state carefully cultivated and labeled religious activity. One had to register one’s faith as well as any changes that one wanted to make. Though one could declare oneself “without religion”, this option was rarely taken until the early twentieth century. In other words, the burgeoning state used religion as a tool to force citizens to categorize themselves. Thus the government subtly directed any future changes in the direction of the nation’s faith, especially among minorities. As seen in Chapter 5, Friedrich Wilhelm III and Friedrich Wilhelm IV were both heavily involved in efforts to solidify Protestant Prussia through the control of religious minorities. The issue of mixed marriages was one of their largest battlefronts. Friedrich Wilhelm III did not formally declare the state to be Christian the way that his successor would, but he did subtly push a Protestant agenda. At times, as his critics pointed out, the Kaiser’s interest in promoting his faith was in

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28 Kaplan, “Redefining Judaism,” 17; and Lowenstein, 24.
direct conflict with the *Rechtsstaat* he also sought to establish – a state based upon constitutional law that applied to everyone. This ambiguity was especially apparent around issues like mixed marriage.\(^{29}\)

Part of building any nation state is simultaneous belief in inclusivity and exclusivity. One establishes borders and cultural boundary lines to keep some people out, while at the same time strengthening the connections between citizens by increasing their loyalty to the state. Intermarriage highlights the challenge of joining together such opposing principles. As Adrian Hastings has pointed out, “Intermarriage can undoubtedly in some circumstances threaten the very existence of a community, just as in others it can threaten its purity and act as a red rag to a bull in actually exacerbating an existing nationalism.”\(^{30}\) Mixed marriages are proof that the carefully constructed boundary lines between people are arbitrary and without historical basis. In examining how the British dealt with religious mixed marriages in India, Gauri Viswanathan concludes, “Just as persistently, the focus lingers on the notion that an undivided community preceded the disruptions wrought by mixed marriages, which also posed threats to a stable religious identity.”\(^{31}\) Decisions made by individuals call into question the cultural hegemony of the state.


Then why was Napoleon, and later Prussia, so willing to promote mixed marriages if, "Interrmarriage and nationalism remain practical contraries…"?\(^{32}\) Perhaps it is because they recognized how society could be reconfigured to better match their national religious ideal, rather than their opponents’. Mixed marriages might be a dangerous tool. If they were mismanaged, one could create indifference or even opposition to nationalism. But if used properly, intermarriage could break down competing forms of identity like the exclusivity of Judaism or the universalism of Catholicism. Individuals could be made more loyal to the state. Plans of developing national pride based in Protestantism did not always succeed, but they were an underlying force in Prussia’s mixed marriage policies in the early nineteenth century. Many Prussian nationalists also studied theology and regularly mined religious imagery in their efforts to spread national ideals. The nation was merely the highest imagining of Biblical creation and any diversity in understanding God’s religious plan needed to be slowly but surely eradicated.\(^{33}\)

Whereas many Prussian Protestants intellectuals heavily invoked religion in developing their understanding of nationalism, markedly fewer Catholic intellectuals did so, with the notable exception of Joseph von Görres, as will be discussed below. German Catholics looked much more towards the Habsburg past to make sense of the German nation. To Catholics, Germany needed to embody the ideals of a universal state with strong ties to the Church, rather than being a liberal, individualistic entity that

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\(^{32}\) Hastings, 206.

was ultimately exclusionary. Even into the present era, German Catholics have had a different cultural code and are willing to defend their understanding of morality any time that it is jeopardized.

For Catholics, the state can only function within the larger Catholic moral order. When the embodiment of the nation in its state constitutes a permanent violation of cultural norms, threatens the survival of the people who make up the nation, and when it is a violation of divinely revealed and natural law, then the nation is in opposition to the state and thus the Catholic individual should oppose the state.34

This alternative vision of Germany’s past and future obviously threatened Prussia’s hegemony over nation building.35

However, at first glance the Rhineland did not seem to be an ideal hotspot for a religious battle over the definition of nationhood. Due to its lack of a firm centralized government, Germany had long had considerable religious diversity. The Rhineland, while heavily Catholic, had a tradition from the early modern period of accepting renegade Protestants in their midst. These Protestants, who were trying to prove themselves, built a solid reputation as good workers and helped solidify the region’s reputation for religious toleration.36 Jonathan Sperber estimates that in the early nineteenth century 75% of the population in the Prussian Rhineland was Catholic, 1.5% was Jewish, and the rest Protestant. On the left bank of the Rhine, including Trier and Coblenz, 95% of the population was Catholic, but there remained important pockets of


Protestantism. Throughout Prussia, the upheaval of the French Revolution and its aftermath only increased this tendency toward religious mixing as soldiers and administrators from elsewhere socialized with locals. For instance, in Coblenz in 1808 Protestants made up 3% of the population, a seemingly small number, but Protestants had only been 1% of the population less than fifteen years earlier. 

Yet despite tendencies toward religious toleration in the Rhineland, Prussian rule in the Rhineland was marked from the beginning by clashes between Catholics and Protestants over a variety of issues. While most of these arguments remained local ones and generally did not spark widespread protest, they were important markers of a growing distrust between the two sides. Though Friedrich Wilhelm III had promised to protect his Catholic citizens as well as his Protestant ones, his administration did little to instill the confidence of Rhenish Catholics. Catholic bishops, now chosen by Prussian authorities, were carefully watched to ensure that their allegiance to the state was stronger than their allegiance to the pope. Rhenish Catholics found themselves heavily discriminated against when applying positions of power within the civil service or judiciary. Prussians argued that former Rhenish bureaucrats could not be trusted since

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37 As cited in James Brophy, Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland, 1800-1850 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 257.


they had previously served the hated French. Additionally, the Prussians gave more money to Protestant schools than to Catholic ones. Large celebrations of Lutheran anniversaries like the 1817 commemoration of Luther’s Reformation and the 1830 commemoration of the Augsburg Confession also increased confessional animosity. As Michael Rowe suggests, “Though the degree of Prussophobia should not be exaggerated before the late 1830s, Catholic Rhinelanders never doubted that the monarchy was essentially Protestant. Prussia was not their state, but that of their confessional rivals.”

Non-religious, economic problems in the Rhineland further diminished any strong sense of Rhenish-Prussian nationalism.

The situation in Trier provides an excellent example of some of the tensions between Catholics and the incoming Prussian bureaucrats. Despite the fact that Trier had a reputation for religious toleration, several issues rankled Catholic residents. The number of Protestants in Trier increased rapidly so by 1817 the group was large enough to found a congregation. However, finding a proper home for their church was not easy. At first they met in a courtroom in the appeals court and then from 1819-56 at the Jesuitenkirche. Catholics, however, wanted their church back and regularly suggested other meeting places for the Protestants, including a church that was in ruins and was being used as a horse stable. All of these locations were rejected until Friedrich Wilhelm IV, in an effort to connect his legacy to ancient Rome, decided to rebuild the

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ruined Constantine basilica for the Protestant congregation. Lutherans have remained there to the present day. Other areas of contention included the Trier gymnasium where a Protestant female teacher was brought in to teach Catholic girls and Catholic and Protestant hospitals treating patients of the opposite faith. There were also disagreements over the religious distribution of government funds to the poor. Protestants were able to give out money as they saw fit, while Catholics were carefully regulated and had to give their money out to anyone requesting it.⁴¹

Catholics had several means of reacting to overbearing Prussian rule, but their methods also sometimes exacerbated tensions. Some Catholic priests saw Protestant anniversary celebrations as a real threat that had to be addressed from the pulpit. In 1827 Prussian authorities banned controversial sermons, but they continued to be a problem. In July 1831 after several demands that he do so, Josef von Hommer finally told his priests to tone down their language and avoid political preaching.

By its very nature, it is clear that the comprehensive subject of religious change cannot be properly handled in a sermon. Orations of this kind can only be one-sided and deprecating….Truth and love will be violated, and Christian meaning will not be spread but, rather, destroyed, as the most recent decade instructs us….If some Protestant preachers within our bishopric have zealously and unlovingly neglected to do this, this is not cause for you to do the same.⁴²

Even if the Prussians gained some control over Catholic leadership, they did not always have the same success with the general Catholic population. Authorities feared large


⁴² Josef von Hommer as qtd. in Brophy, 282.
Catholic demonstrations and tried to ban pilgrimages using decrees from Catholic archbishops and bishops. Such efforts were not particularly successful and private pilgrimages continued unabated into the 1840s. At times, such processions showed Catholic power in impressive numbers. In 1844 an official pilgrimage to the Holy Robe in Trier involved 500,000 pilgrims in six weeks, over 10,000 a day. Pious Catholics refused to let the Prussian state dictatethe boundaries of their faith.

The largest area of tension between Catholics and Protestants in the Rhineland by far was that of mixed marriages. Although it was not until the 1830s that true conflict broke out between the two camps, seeds of the debate had been planted much earlier. Prussia had first codified mixed marriages in 1803 when it ordered that children of interfaith marriages be raised in the religion of the father when any conflict arose. Catholics in eastern Prussia had not really objected to this idea, but it caused instant tension when it was introduced into the Prussian Rhineland. A long-standing tradition in the Rhineland held that interfaith couples marrying in front of priests normally raised their children Catholic. However, in August 1816, only months after taking over the region, the Prussians were already allowing mixed marriage couples to marry in front of Protestant ministers if Catholic priests refused to marry couples who would not formally pledge to raise children Catholic. In April 1819 the Kaiser began extending the 1803 law of paternal religious decision making into his western provinces. Because of the

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increasing number of Prussian soldiers and bureaucrats in their towns, Rhenish Catholics saw the rule as a tool of conversion. 44

The Trier Generalvikar timidly responded in 1822. He argued that only the pope could decide the legitimacy of mixed marriages and feared the rejection of older traditions would break apart a long-standing peace between faiths. Other priests were much less conciliatory. Father Leonhard Nellessen of Aachen, the same priest who would later triumphantly convert Cerf Marx from Judaism to Catholicism, was among the most outspoken critics of the new Prussian policy. In 1819 he was already refusing to baptize children of mixed marriages with Protestant godparents. By the 1820s he had begun preaching controversial sermons on the issue and was investigated ten times between 1827-37 for possibly promoting civil disobedience. However, Nellessen was careful never to go too far and get himself arrested. The fact that he came from a powerful, old Aachen family probably helped in this regard. 45

It was into this increasingly acrimonious situation that Josef von Hommer was appointed Bishop of Trier in August 1824. The Catholic Church in the Rhineland had been reorganized in 1821 with the Archbishop of Cologne put in control of the bishoprics of Trier, Münster and Paderborn. However, general disorganization and a lack of suitable candidates led to a prolonged search for a new bishop in Trier. As seen in Chapter 5, Hommer found a bishopric in need of serious reform. He also recognized

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45 Brophy, 284-5 and Monz, 105.
from early in his tenure that his position was a very political one with multiple possible pitfalls.

I feared that because I had received this honor from a non-Catholic king that the people would consider and believe that I would adhere more easily to the principles of the Protestants and neglect the protection of the Catholic religion. But this fear was unfounded. This honor has not changed my right understanding in the least. I remain the same true Catholic and will always remain so.\textsuperscript{46}

Hommer’s phrasing is interesting here. He assumed a natural connection between being a “true Catholic” and an ability to defend the faith. Yet his willingness to compromise would lead other, more rigid Catholics to view Hommer’s actions as somewhat disconnected from his beliefs. Being named to his position by Protestants created a bond between the bishop and the Prussians that he could not shake off so easily.

Negative reactions to Josef von Hommer’s time as bishop were widespread and covered a variety of issues. The largest of these concerns centered around Hommer’s position in the wider debates surrounding the German Church’s relationship with Rome. There were two main camps at the beginning of the nineteenth century. One side was based in tradition and a strong association with the Holy See and centered around Joseph von Görres’ friend, Clemens Brentano. The other group focused on reform and adaptation to the dual challenges of Lutheranism and secularism.\textsuperscript{47} The new Trier bishop fell into this later category. Febronianism and Hermesianism, two major reform movements in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, influenced Hommer’s

\textsuperscript{46} Hommer, \textit{Meditationes}, 233.

views. Febronianism was linked to Johann Nikolaus von Hontheim, the mid eighteenth century auxiliary bishop from Trier who wrote a book challenging papal authority and infallibility. The complaints of Hontheim and other Rhenish bishops led to a meeting at Ems in 1786 in which papal nuncios agreed to less interference in the affairs of local German bishops. Although young priest Hommer probably did not attend this meeting, he received his first clerical tonsure from Hontheim at age eight and visited Paris with Hontheim’s nephew before the French Revolution. Thus Hommer’s connection to reform had deep personal roots.

Georg Hermes (1775-1831) was a clerical reformer from Bonn whose rational theology also appealed to Josef von Hommer. A major task that Hommer undertook early on was a rebuilding of the Trier Priesterseminar. Not all Catholic Enlightenment principles attracted Hommer, but he did recognize that replacement of old school instructors was essential and felt that the Hermesian school in Bonn was where his own teachers could get the best training. In Hommer’s view, his young teachers would grow into their positions and create an enthusiastic priesthood better able to cope with the challenges of the age. In one of his lectures to seminarians, Hommer introduced the new way of thinking,

Now a new philosophy, Hermesianism, has distinguished itself and is suitable to work against both rationalism and mysticism; alone it requires a

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49 Persch, 38.
good head and is misunderstood by many. Therefore it must still be explained and also for weaker talents…to make it more popular...

Hommer’s support of Hermes was controversial. Clemens Brentano argued that Hommer, “is not able to fill his seminary with teachers and sends so-called talented chaplains to Bonn to learn an introduction to philosophy with Hermes…what will happen with the future generation of priests is not foreseeable.” Quite antagonistic to all who opposed him, Hermes created a bitter controversy in the Rhineland and the Church at large. In 1835 the pope condemned Hermesianism and Hommer’s Hermesian instructors were later replaced by his successor.

However, Josef von Hommer’s larger problem was his unwillingness to create or inflame controversy in an age full of dogmatic battles. In the summer of 1831 two clerical reformers in Trier, encouraged by a burgeoning reform movement in Hesse-Darmstadt and Baden-Württemberg, wrote letters to the Cologne archbishop urging a stronger German Church, the abolition of celibacy, and a German mass and breviary. They intimated that Hommer and other bishops supported their efforts but would not sign on to the movement officially out of fear of their superiors. More conservative clergy and the press soon came out in opposition to these ideas. Both sides demanded a response from Hommer. One newspaper goaded Hommer to do something soon:

One cannot fail to notice that the Bishop, who spends a large part of the year on visitations in his diocese, should not have had in this whole period one little scent of the intrigues among his clergy….German bishops must

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50 Hommer, *Es muß Einheit seyn*, 82.


open their eyes and see the abyss that opens in front of them. They must carry their shepherd’s crooks, the symbol of their power and duty, without compromise.\textsuperscript{53}

In September, Hommer finally sent out a pastoral letter, but his even-handed response against wholesale reform of clerical tradition satisfied neither side.\textsuperscript{54}

Hommer’s reputation for civility was widespread and thoroughly praised, but it also meant that he was seen as weak and ineffective in moments of crisis. One religion professor in Bonn highlighted Hommer’s strengths and weaknesses. “He enjoys an excellent reputation in the religious community. All speak of his kindness. The one demerit that one can make against him is his timid nature and his lack of important guts to bring certain things to an end.”\textsuperscript{55} Even better at evaluating Josef von Hommer’s character was Joseph von Görres himself. In his \textit{Athanasius}, Görres described Hommer sympathetically but also critically,

Growing up under conditions in the first half of his life that were quite different than today….He did not gain every steel rod of character that the present times require. He could be weak and through pretenses win for himself a false peace and let himself be intimidated through threats from disadvantages that the Church would be afflicted. But upright, sincere, and true as he was, and with religious character, he could, as open minded as he always was, satisfy his conscience for a time on the grounds that defined him, but at length did not bring him peace but deafness.\textsuperscript{56}

Unluckily, interfaith marriage would prove to be the issue that most defined Hommer’s tenure as bishop because it highlighted his inability to be dogmatic. As a border

\begin{footnotes}
\item[53] Kempkes, 6. See also 2-5.
\item[54] Ibid., 7-9.
\end{footnotes}
resident, Hommer understood better than most the ineffectiveness of inflexibility and usually sought the path of pragmatic compromise. However, he could not easily convince others to follow him.

The first moments of tension over mixed marriage in Hommer’s diocese were mainly local in nature. After several years of inaction on the issue, Prussian authorities inflated passions once more in August 1825 when they confirmed that laws for eastern Prussia also applied to the Rhineland – mixed marriage children were to be raised in the faith of their fathers. The government also threatened to remove any priests who refused to perform marriage ceremonies for couples not agreeing to raise their children Catholic.57 In Trier, Wilhelm Torsch, priest of the city parish of St. Gangolf, began using the issue to attack the authority of the new bishop. Torsch’s dislike of Hommer’s liberal tendencies set in early. In response to Hommer’s first pastoral letter in 1824, Torsch wrote in disappointment of the new bishop’s,

great devotion toward the state, the principles of the Congress of Ems, reformation in respect to the liturgy, light attitude toward abstinence and also in regards to mixed marriages which the same should perceive more seriously. The Trier clergy see themselves as slighted, as idiots...

Torsch, in a letter signed by five other priests, complained in 1826 to the bishop about not being able to preach about mixed marriages. Hommer’s advice to Torsch and his followers firmly advocated caution.

You know which decrees concerning mixed marriages have been issued by our mighty and gracious King. You also know which settlements we have

57 Rowe, 249; Monz, 105; and Kempkes, 10.

given in particular cases so that we both comply with the wishes of the King and also will salve our consciences. So we forbid you to touch upon this material of mixed marriages in public lectures and mainly because the poorly educated people usually falsely understand and interpret such measures. If you believe that you must in certain cases admonish people, do this in domestic and private remonstrances. Everyone, no matter what confession they are, dissuade against mixed marriage as disadvantaging both sides of religion. But if at once the bridal pair is determined to marry, dazzled by mutual love, so it is to choose between the lesser of two evils and namely that which will best protect the peace. [my emphasis].

For Hommer, one could be both a citizen of Prussia and a good Catholic only through reasoned compromise and careful consideration of individual cases. To do otherwise was to risk returning to the chaos of the French Revolution in which passion overcame the need for societal stability and peace.

Torsch clearly did not share Hommer’s desire for harmony. In 1827 Torsch was brought before Hommer’s court for refusing to marry an interfaith couple whose husband did not want to raise his children Catholic. After Torsch refused to recommend another priest to the couple who would marry, Hommer granted the couple a formal dispensation to wed. He also warned Torsch and his followers that they risked prosecution from the government for their continued protest. Torsch continued to preach on the issue and in 1828 raised new objections regarding last rites for non-baptized children. Again Hommer urged caution. Hommer did not want to reject families in a weak moment by refusing last rites. He believed that a more compassionate response might actually bring wayward followers back to the Church. Throughout the rising tensions of the early 1830s, Torsch continued to remind Hommer

59 Hommer as qtd. in Reitz, 228.
of his duty to protect Catholicism at all costs, while Hommer continued to proceed thoughtfully.\textsuperscript{60}

Bishop Hommer wrote at length on his views of mixed marriage in his 1828 autobiography. His comments were a mixture of pragmatism and anger and highlight just how important Catholics felt that intermarriage could be in defining their future. Hommer began his discussion of mixed marriage from a similar point of other opponents of the practice – frustration over anti-Catholic Prussian views and their impact on the Rhineland. Hommer’s opinions appear shockingly strong for someone whose job was dependent upon Prussian approval.

They [Protestants] threw intolerance before themselves and usurped for themselves the highest power against the Catholics in confidence of the religion of the king. They were not afraid to set up that old principle: His whose rule, also the religion. Thus the Catholics stood strongly under an obligation to slave-like obedience. They did not want to release larger hatred against themselves by opposition or calling on their old freedoms.\textsuperscript{61}

Unlike the Jews who had long faced prejudice, Rhenish Catholics must have felt lost in a new world in which they clearly did not hold the upper hand. Hommer and the faithful that he served had to negotiate new boundaries as to what would be acceptable compromises with authority and where they would stand up for themselves.

Hommer clutched the past in an effort to understand a radically different present. He reminisced about interfaith marriages of old, claiming that he could remember no instances where the Catholic requirement for mixed marriage children being raised Catholic ever causing tension in families or the wider community.\textsuperscript{62}

Increasing numbers

\textsuperscript{60} Reitz, 229-32. See also Thomas, “Bishop Hommer von Trier,” 82.

\textsuperscript{61} Hommer, \textit{Meditationes}, 235.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 237. Also cited in Thomas, “Bishop Hommer von Trier,” 76.
of mixed marriages and new Prussian rules about them had altered that sense of
harmony. Hommer had little doubt that the Prussian king and his administration had
designed their regulations with the explicit purpose of conversion.

   No wonder that...the first and strongest of the non-Catholic princes [the
Prussian king] believes himself to be especially called by God to spread the
religion of the Protestants. He personally is devout and his confession is
correspondingly religious. He believes without doubt that the Augsburg
Confession is the only true one, and that his duty is to win more believers
and where possible, all men, to the faith. Because he cannot achieve this
with force, he attempts to reach his goal through indirect machinations [like
mixed marriages].63

Whether the Prussians were openly or circuitously attempting to increase the number of
Protestants in the Rhineland, they naturally saw things a little differently than Hommer.
What is interesting is that Hommer did not use national language in describing what the
Prussian monarch was attempting to do. For Hommer, the debate was centuries old –
all rulers saw themselves as individual protectors and expanders of their religious views.
For Prussians, however, national religion meant national security. The closer everyone
was culturally and religiously the more likely they were to unite behind a joint vision of
the future.

   Josef von Hommer's concerns about the impact of interfaith marriages also had an
explicitly religious tone. His arguments ranged from the impact of mixed marriages on
families to Catholicism to society as a whole. Such unions, in Hommer's view, were
bound to be unhappy since the couple did not agree on the most personal and holy of
issues and married for lust or money rather than true love. Children would be raised in
religious confusion, leading to an increasing indifference to Catholicism. Thus every
faith would be weakened as all religious beliefs became equal and emotional

63 Hommer, Meditationes, 239.
connection to faith was lost. Then the state itself could be destabilized. Another portion of his argument was quite legalistic, with an interesting twist in support of women’s marital rights. In his later letters to his nephew Friedrich, Hommer lamented women’s inability to control their own lives because of their weak societal position. Here he argued that under Roman law women had the same rights as men in the home since they were the ones that raised young children. Now those rights were being stripped in favor of rigid patriarchy. A better solution, argued Hommer, would be if the majority faith in any area would be the faith in which mixed marriage children were raised.64

Yet for all of his religious concerns and the ways in which he used the past to understand the present, Josef von Hommer also remained someone who recognized the need to reform and the ways in which political systems operate. He could not have risen to clerical leadership without realizing that appreciation of his opponents’ perspective and compromise were essential.65 The Catholics were in a very tenuous position and he knew it. Dogmatism was a much greater risk than finding a middle ground. “What is worse, angering the king who can injure the Church through many ruthless actions, he who can remove priests and close churches, or permitting marriages, which can never be completely prevented and avoided, without such guarantees?”66 If a Catholic priest refused to marry a couple, they could easily go to a

64 Ibid., 239-49.


66 Hommer, Meditationes, 251.
Protestant minister or to civil authorities to perform the ceremony. Thus the Catholic partner could be drawn even further away from the faith and towards Protestantism. Couples marrying outside the Catholic faith “are no longer obligated to fulfill the Church’s other commandments. We make them slowly more suitable and ready to accept the religion of their partner.” Mixed marriages were still valid no matter what the priest did, and ceremonies in front of civil authorities also made divorce easier.

There was also the question of what to do with women once they had married a Protestant. Were they to be accepted by the Church? Could they go to confession or had they sinned too deeply? It was difficult to cut them off if their marriages were valid. Also, it would be impossible to draw their children back into the Church if they were treated too harshly. Intermarriage needed to be treated with careful concern, not rigid policy because it was not going to go away simply because priests refused to marry people. “Only a priest without feeling, a dried out and half dead man, who has no idea of the world, would declare this.” Hommer recognized that the world had changed with the coming of the French Revolution and its aftermath. The Catholic Church had no choice but to adjust itself. Religious conversions after the French Revolution highlighted the tenuous dividing line between faiths as converts moved back and forth between them. So too did mixed marriages. Josef von Hommer was clearly not willing

67 Ibid., 301.

68 Ibid., 253-7.

69 Ibid., 305. The challenge of how the church should deal with advising mixed marriage couples has had a long history since Hommer’s time. Two nice contrasting pieces by clerical leaders in different eras are Francis Janssens, Catholic Diocese of Natchez (Miss), *Instruction on Mixed Marriages* (Natchez, Miss: s.n., 1884); and Catholic Church United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *When a Catholic Marries a Protestant* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB Publishing; 2007).
to go so far as to make all faiths equal, but he did accept the fact that the Church could no longer count on the denominational wall being as stable as it once was.

So what exactly was Hommer’s solution to the growing mixed marriage crisis? Again, compromise and patience were critical. Though one general policy covering all mixed marriages would lessen confusion on the issue, priests and bishops needed to recognize that each situation was different. One had to create balance between the requirements of the state and the requirements of the Church.

The virtue - the truth lays in the middle. Bishops should hold onto and defend regulations and principles that bridal pairs of different religions can only get married with Catholic rites when the non-Catholic partner promises to raise children of both sexes in the Catholic faith. If his royal majesty issues and threatens even stronger decrees, he will not accomplish what he wishes to do by distancing himself from his bishop seats…

Still bishops should instruct their pastors in such cases not to proceed tyrannically and uncivilly, but instead request a reflective explanation in a fine manner. If the non-Catholic bridegroom refuses such an explanation with explicit words, then they should very politely dismiss the bridal pair with the remark that it is not permitted for them to assist in the marriage ceremony. If the declaration of the non-Catholic partner is doubtful or conditional, then the minister should continue the discussion as though he has not understood…

Thus, for Hommer, ambiguity was essential. One should not ask too many questions of a couple – just get a general sense that they would probably agree to raise their children Catholic. Only if the bridegroom explicitly stated that he would not follow the normal Catholic practice would the couple be denied permission to marry. This policy is a vaguely discomforting one that bordered on deceit, or at least a level of insincerity on the part of the priest and the bridal pair. What did Hommer hope to accomplish? He optimistically dreamed of a brighter future. “Our reason for this kind of action is that in

70 Hommer, Meditaciones, 258-9.
this way the principles of the Church will be protected until another time comes.\textsuperscript{71} If Josef von Hommer had learned anything from living on a border during the French Revolution, it was that any situation could change very quickly. Careful watching and waiting, an ability to adapt, were critical to the survival of anything one truly held dear.

The aging bishop’s vision of a rosier, less antagonistic future was not entirely impractical. He knew that in eastern Prussia the Catholic position was treated much more respectfully than in the Rhineland. Eastern Catholic bishops had control over dispensations offered for mixed marriages and could thus better manage the process.\textsuperscript{72} Unluckily, geography played a critical role as tensions continued to mount from all sides, eventually engulfing Hommer himself. As a distant borderland, the Rhineland could not be trusted, particularly with a majority Catholic population. The Prussians knew their own minority Catholics and did not view them as a similar threat to the creation of a German nation.

Both the Rhenish clergy and the Prussians waited eagerly for the papacy to decide the issue of mixed marriages more permanently. In March 1830, one year after becoming pope, Pius VII finally issued a statement. Prussia’s papal representative was not well respected in Rome, and Prussia’s petition for a new mixed marriage policy was totally rejected. The most that the pope would offer was a vague policy that spoke of desiring mixed marriage children to be raised Catholic without laying out the specifics on how best to achieve this goal. Pius VII was prepared to accept and not censure such unions, but he was not willing to go so far as to allow Catholic marriage

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 301.

\textsuperscript{72} Thomas, “Bishop Hommer von Trier,” 81+86; and Thomas, ed., \textit{Meditationes}, 436.
ceremonies for couples reluctant to commit to raising children Catholic. The Prussians were not at all pleased with the contents of the papal proclamation, knowing that it would be used as grounds for priests to stop performing all mixed marriages. Indeed, when Josef von Hommer published the papal document, conservative clergy like Wilhelm Torsch immediately asserted that no mixed marriages or baptisms could occur without confirmation that children would be raised Catholic. Hommer’s nephew Friedrich also cited Pius’ pronouncement in correspondence with his uncle deciding against his daughter’s Protestant suitor.  

Berlin did not immediately forward the papal instructions onto the Rhenish bishops and returned their representative immediately to Rome to renegotiate, but the pope declined to meet with him. Prussia then turned up the pressure on the Rhenish bishops themselves to interpret the papal ruling more mildly and closer to Berlin’s own wishes. Josef von Hommer’s letters over the next several years continued to show restraint and a desire for compromise. He was somewhat resigned to what was coming. In October 1832 he wrote, “But I bear and will have to bear, what I will not be able to prevent. Time and circumstance contribute in order to make a people sensitive to strange things and innovation. All that happens super fast has its dangers, especially in religious things that are the holy, common property for all people.” He still spoke in terms of the disadvantages to the Church of closing the door to mixed marriage couples.

73 Hommer, *Es muß Einheit seyn*, 48; Kempkes, 10; Monz, 105; Reitz, 231; Thomas, ed., *Meditationes*, 436; Thomas, “Bishop Hommer von Trier,” 87-8; and Weber, 288.

I do not know a direct and absolute way out, but perhaps there could nevertheless be modifications that could prevent some inconveniences….There are cases of mixed marriages for which one is convinced that the children will be educated Catholic. For what then is the requirement? There are some for which one is certain that they will soon move to Protestant lands and will not let their children be raised Catholic. Should one let the Catholic woman move without priestly benedictions? Do we attribute so little power to this benediction to make it completely unfruitful?...Shouldn’t it be better to have to make such exceptions in order to save the principle and not run the risk of giving up the same completely?\(^75\)

Yet despite his reservations about rigid interpretation of the papal ruling and vigorous pleading by Prussian officials, Hommer (along with his fellow bishops) continued to formally oppose mixed marriages without a guarantee of raising children Catholic.\(^76\)

In the Prussians’ view, the situation remained untenable because it highlighted how ineffective they were in bringing the Rhineland firmly into the Prussian state. They decided to go after the weakest link in the Catholic chain – Archbishop of Cologne, Graf Ferdinand von Spiegel. In June 1834, only a year before his death, Spiegel was ordered to Berlin for a meeting. The results of this *Berliner Konvention* showed just how vulnerable the Catholic position had become. Spiegel, at the urging of the Prussians, reinterpreted the pope’s position on mixed marriages to mean that mixed marriage couples were to be treated mildly with a focus on “instruction and admonishment.”\(^77\) Priests were no longer to inquire about how couples might raise future offspring. Clergy could also only refuse to officiate such unions when the arrangement clearly had an air

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\(^75\) *Weichenstellungen, Entscheidungen und Reaktionen mit besonders Berücksichtigung Westfalens* (Hamm: [Selbstverl.], 1986).

\(^76\) Ibid., 138-9.

\(^77\) Thomas, “Bishop Hommer von Trier,” 89-90; and Thomas, ed., *Meditationes*, 436.
of “culpable carelessness and indifference”\textsuperscript{78} around it or when it would not have been permitted for other reasons like pregnancy or age of the couple.

Archbishop Spiegel’s change of heart put the bishops under him in a difficult position. Hommer and his fellow bishops at Münster and Paderborn had no choice but to wade deep into the controversy and declare their allegiance with one side or the other. By mid July 1834, the other two bishops had agreed to support Spiegel and the Prussians and began drafting new instructions to their clergy. Josef von Hommer took some more convincing, and it was not until the end of July at a meeting with Spiegel and Prussian officials in Coblenz that he reluctantly signed the document.\textsuperscript{79} In a letter in late August 1834 to Münster bishop Caspar Maximilian von Droste zu Vischering, Hommer hoped that the agreement would calm down the rhetoric and protect the Church from deeper injury.

My decision is founded in my hope that the fate of the Catholic Church would become improved and the character of the Protestants made milder. I also believed that every promotion of a counter demand provoked casual Protestants who before would have been willing to raise their children Catholic….Then I also feared that His Majesty, who has seemed to have made the issue a personal affair, would proceed from distant insubordination (Widersetzlichkeit) to strong precautionary measures, as he already sometimes threatened and would make the situation worse for Catholics.\textsuperscript{80}

This line of thinking fit well with all of Hommer’s earlier commentary on mixed marriages and the need for compromise and patience, despite the fact that he so wanted to remain loyal to the Church and the papacy. As Alois Thomas has pointed out, Hommer had

\textsuperscript{78} Monz, 105. See also Brophy, 254; Kempkes, 10; Thomas, ed., \textit{Mediations}, 437-8; Rowe, 249; Schrörs, 160; and Thomas, “Bishop Hommer von Trier,” 359-62.

\textsuperscript{79} Persch, 48; Thomas, ed., \textit{Meditationes}, 438; Kempkes, 10.

\textsuperscript{80} As qtd. in Kempkes, 10; and Thomas, “Bishop Hommer von Trier,” 364-5.
grown up in an era in which politics and religion were bound together in the figure of the archbishop of Trier. Thus, for Hommer, giving allegiance to secular authority, even if that authority belonged to a different faith, was as important as the allegiance that he owed the Church.\footnote{Thomas, “Bishof Hommer von Trier”, 364.} The French Revolution had divided politics and religion in a way that Hommer could not fully grasp. It greatly troubled him to have to try to decide between two sides of what he had always viewed as a single coin. When forced to chose, Hommer relied upon friendships, especially that with Archbishop Spiegel, the continued embodiment of religious and secular power, to hopefully lead him in the right direction.

Josef von Hommer regretted his choice for the rest of his life. To Droste-Vischerung, he wrote, “Regardless of this, my signature on this issue lays heavily on my heart and I already envision the contradiction which we all await...[but] I am comforted by the thought, ‘God never abandons His Church.’”\footnote{As qtd. in Kempkes, 10-1; and Thomas, “Bishof Hommer von Trier,” 365.} Though both the Rhenish clerical leadership and the Prussian government had good reason to keep the June/July 1834 agreement as quiet as possible, Hommer was already writing by October of that year that the secret negotiations would not remain so much longer. He was correct in his assessment. By April 1835, Der Katholik had reported on the meeting and other conservative Catholic newspapers were soon condemning the accord. Reaction was particularly strong near the Rhenish border with Belgium, centered around Leonhard Nellessen in Aachen.\footnote{Thomas, ed., Meditationes, 439; Thomas, “Bishof von Hommer”, 367; Schrörs, 161; Kempkes, 11; and Brophy, 272.} Bishop Hommer also faced challenges from Wilhelm Torsch in

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82 As qtd. in Kempkes, 10-1; and Thomas, “Bishof Hommer von Trier,” 365.
83 Thomas, ed., Meditationes, 439; Thomas, “Bishof von Hommer”, 367; Schrörs, 161; Kempkes, 11; and Brophy, 272.
his own diocese. Torsch accused Hommer and his fellow bishops of now answering to the Prussian authorities and continued to refuse to perform any mixed marriages. The death of Archbishop Spiegel in August 1835 temporarily put the mixed marriage issue to the side. Prussia controlled the archbishop election process from the beginning, but they found few suitable candidates to replace Spiegel. Eventually they settled on Clemens August von Droste zu Vischering, the brother of the bishop of Münster, and had him elected by the cathedral chapter. The new archbishop had previously been the auxiliary bishop of Münster and had been living in seclusion due to earlier disagreements with the Prussian authorities. His election was a bit of a surprise but was seen as a move by the Prussians to offer mild concessions to the Catholic nobility in order to get their support.

The papacy heard the rumblings of insubordination and Prussian threats and by March 1836 were demanding some explanation. Prussia quickly sent letters assuring Pope Pius VII that there was no new agreement between Berlin and the Rhenish bishops and that any misunderstanding was entirely the fault of the papal secretary who had mistranslated documents. The Prussians then set about pushing the bishops to write letters to Rome affirming that they would uphold the basic principles of the 1830 papal letter, making no mention of the 1834 *Berliner Konvention*. The other bishops obediently wrote their letters. However, a government representative sent to Trier on

84 Kempkes, 231-2; and Thomas, ed., *Meditationes*, 439.

85 Schrörs, 213. On the ballot Droste-Vischering was opposed by Hommer, but it was a false choice set up by the government since Hommer was recognized to be too old to actually become archbishop. See also Catholic Encyclopedia (1913), “Clemens August von Droste-Vischering,” http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_(1913)/Clemens_August_von_Droste-Vischering, accessed 5.25.2012.
September 30, 1836 found Josef von Hommer on his deathbed. The representative composed Hommer’s letter for him and convinced Hommer to sign it on October 1st.  

Joseph von Görres later described the dramatic scene in *Athanasius*:

> The Oberregierungsrat Schmedding meet in Trier on 1 October, the death date of the earlier Trier bishop, Saint Nicetius, his present-day successor who was himself near death, having chosen to receive last rites. Entering into the bishop’s courtyard, he found the ill man surrounded by the cathedral chapter. When Schmedding came back two hours later in order to present him with the known final remarks and multiple words of thanks, the bishop refused to sign, begging that he be left alone for his few remaining days. He only signed after being assured that it was only a formality and after he had seen the signatures of the other bishops.

The world refused to give Hommer peace on the mixed marriage issue, even as he entered his final days. Hommer supposedly said to Schmedding, “You are Catholic and I hold you to be a truthful man. You see what condition I am in. Since you have the most exact knowledge of the whole thing, I give you my trust. I will sign what you have brought.” One dying bishop was not going to stand in the way of Prussian national religious integration.

Yet Josef von Hommer ended up, at least in part, doing exactly that. Though he had already received last rites, Hommer did not die for another six weeks. As his real death drew nearer, Hommer continued to be bothered by the choices that he had made and sought to bring closure to all remaining areas of tension from his life. He called Wilhelm Torsch to his bedside and they made peace. To the associates surrounding him, he lamented his errors. “But I enjoyed the best and most religious parents. I had

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87 As qtd. in Kempkes, 13. See also Schrörs, 439.

88 As qtd. in Thomas, “Bishof von Hommer,” 369.
the best teachers. I received very many and large mercies and did not use them. Oh, if I only could find grace...”

In the end he decided that his soul could not be right with God if he did not make some kind of amends in regards to the mixed marriage issue. On November 10, 1836, the day before he died, Hommer wrote another letter to Pius VII, this time in his own hand. He reported exactly what was going on in Prussia, which allowed the pope finally to react fully to the truth rather than the lies that the Prussian government was spreading. He said that he was in error and recanted both signing the 1834 Berliner Konvention and the letter from the beginning of October. He began by discussing why he agreed to sign the 1834 document before explaining his change of heart.

For my part, then moved by persuasion and the pursuit of peace, so the Catholic Church would be able to turn away from greater evil [I signed]...

But now disease has corrected in the point of truth, enlightened by divine grace....I have discovered that I have injured the principles of the Catholic Church and therefore as far as this very important matter I have erred reluctantly. In free mind and of my own initiative, led by repentance, I most humbly ask Thee, Holy Father, for the good of my flock, that Thou would respond after my death to my cathedral chapter...

For his entire life Josef von Hommer had tried to do God’s will, but what exactly he thought God might be telling him changed as rapidly as the world around him. Because of the tensions unleashed by the French Revolution, the firm borders, both denominational and geographical, with which Hommer began life no longer existed by the time his life closed. Hommer attempted to live his life in peace, negotiating his way

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89 Ibid., 372.

90 Thomas, ed., Meditationes, 440; Monz, 106; Reitz, 232; and Schrörs, 438-9.

91 As qtd. in Thomas, “Bishof von Hommer,” 372.
through conflict rather than attacking to prove his point. Though he found tranquility in death, it is interesting that it took until right before his life ended to bring that sense of order. One wonders how long any sense of serenity could have lasted for Hommer because societal dividing lines were too contentious and unsettled.

On the issue of mixed marriages, Josef von Hommer may have even left a larger, more bellicose mark than he himself intended. Though he took a stand to bring himself inner peace, the effects of his decision to recant were felt much more broadly. The Prussian government found itself on the defensive with officials in Rome. The Prussians claimed that Hommer's 1834 signature and October papal letter were the true signs of his views rather than the deathbed declaration.

Schmedding claimed that Hommer had merely asked for his assistance in composing the October papal letter and that its content was what Hommer himself had intended. However, it was clear that few believed the Prussian version of events. Hommer's reputation for genuine sincerity and faithfulness to the Church made it clear to

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92 As qtd. in Kempkes, 13.

observers that his conscience had troubled him to the point that renouncing what he
had previously signed was his only viable option. In *Athanasius Görres* wrote,

> So shows one man, that one must personally have known, to feel the whole
weight of this his testimony….We know from eyewitnesses of his lack of
peace of mind…and that it did not cease until he got rid of it through the
solemn recognition of that heavy burden. One will not neglect to make the
objection that his view was made muddy by his fears and unrest as death
neared and that it should be considered less than what he had decided and
done while he was healthy and fully aware. This is already inadmissible
and one must grant full belief to the judgment of the dying that he spoke of
his decision in calm words as the most truthful and incorruptible even if the
matter that he refers to is unknown to us.\(^{94}\)

Though Görres’s interpretation is most likely accurate, it is also clear that he is willing to
employ Hommer’s dramatic death to his own advantage. Hommer’s memory was not
used in a plea for toleration and compromise, as he himself would have wished, but as
part of an inspirational call to arms that would ignite Catholics throughout Germany.

One of the first to be encouraged by Hommer’s example was Cologne’s new
archbishop, Clemens Droste zu Vischering. A Prussian official asked Droste-Vischering
before his election whether he would abide by earlier mixed marriage agreements. Not
entirely clear what they contained, Droste-Vischering agreed only to realize afterwards
that he had been misled. The new archbishop looked to Rome for advice and, after
feeling fairly sure of the pope’s support, Droste-Vischering decided to take a stand and
ignore all previous concessions that had been made. In May of 1837, six months after
Hommer’s death, the Prussian government ordered Droste-Vischering to step down as
archbishop for his refusal to endorse mixed marriages. When he ignored them, the
Prussians ordered his arrest. On November 20, 1837 the archbishop was surrounded

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\(^{94}\) As qtd. in Thomas, “Bishop von Hommer”, 373; and Kempkes, 13-4.
by twenty-four troops, taken to the citadel town of Minden, and placed under house arrest without a civil trial.\(^5\)

Droste-Vischering had not been a particularly popular choice for archbishop so at first there was little protest, but after the pope objected to the arrest widespread turmoil grew in the Rhineland. Catholic reaction took many forms, some of them quite violent. Ecclesiastical authorities supporting the Prussians faced Katzenmusik with men singing anti-Protestant songs at their windows during the night and throwing rotten food at them. Some mixed marriage couples, both before and during the crisis, had excrement anonymously smeared on their houses. In Trier, the new bishop Wilhelm Arnoldi preached against the earlier agreements from the pulpit, and government placards announcing the arrest of the archbishop were pulled off walls during the night. Though there were some efforts at compromise, small waves of religious violence continued to rock the Rhineland over the next several years. In October 1838 in Cologne there was bloodshed after the rumored arrest of a Catholic priest for urging Catholics to defend themselves. The Prussians called in 300 troops, nine protesters were wounded and over 50 were arrested. In Aachen in 1839 Catholic residents fought soldiers in the streets as they attempted to halt a mixed marriage by stoning the bridal pair.\(^6\)

Popular songs about the crisis flooded the streets from both sides, each a mixture of fervent patriotism and loathing of their opponents. Das katholische Herz called Catholics to arms.

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\(^6\) Brophy, 139-4 + 253; Altgeld, “German Catholics,” 106; Monz, 106; and Rowe, 250.
Our band holds a dance of death;
And holy is the victory in fight,
The band, which heaven blesses
And raises up the flag of faith
Already the enemy’s grim chorus roars.
Loyally united Catholic hearts
Bravely attack the enemies of faith…
You still battle on the edge of the grave
For bishops, pope and Christendom.\(^97\)

The first kernels of a popular German Catholic nationalism were inherent in the angry lyrics. The Catholics had their own flag, their own music and dance, blessed by an eternal spirit of connectedness. Songs from the Protestant side taunted Catholics for the attempting to create a separate space and for inserting religion into a secular moment.

For sticking your nose in all things
That is none of your business
Want to make everything Catholic
Interfering between man and woman.\(^98\)

The two sides were no longer speaking the same language. The Protestant Prussians could not imagine that the Catholics needed a national space of their own. Medieval religion had been overcome in a new, modern secular age – had it not? By turning the argument away from the fact that conversion of all non-believers to Protestantism was their hidden national objective, the Prussian government made the Catholic cause appear specious and unworthy of consideration. To be good Prussians, Catholics would have to abandon their faith.

German Catholics needed more than a few rocks, songs, or even a fervent archbishop to make the claim that Prussian nationalism could have more than one

\(^{97}\) As qtd. in Brophy, 89.

\(^{98}\) As qtd. in Brophy, 90.
definition. Their cause needed better roots, ones founded in the new definitions of state and nation as laid out by Napoleon. The pamphlet war unleashed by the mixed marriage crisis was a fertile breeding ground for reimagining Catholic religious identity. The paper battle began almost as soon as Droste-Vischering’s arrest. Prussians, first anonymously and then more publically, published a justification for the actions and attached multiple letters of support and documentation to it. Rome soon followed suit with its own carefully laid out arguments. Readers could now place the two views side by side and decide for themselves. Over 300 mixed marriage pamphlets survive from an astonishing variety of perspectives. Commentators included presiding judges from Bessel, Cologne diocesan historians, theologians and lawyers from Munich, rationalist Protestant theologians from Jena, French historians and publicists, and Prussian Church leaders in Berlin.99 As Thomas Nipperdey described it, the pamphlet war, “with great rhetorical pathos popularized, simplified, sharpened, and polarized the concrete legal questions that established fundamental distinctions between church and state, Catholicism and Protestantism.”100 Local arguments between Protestants and Catholics became wider debates of national self-definition that brought in voices from throughout the Rhineland and Germany at large.

Surprisingly, one person who thought that the mixed marriage crisis was important enough to comment upon was none other than Heinrich Marx. As a local lawyer from the edge of a distant province, Marx’s contribution to the deluge of pamphlets was


100 As qtd. in Brophy, 269-70.
probably not more than a drop in the proverbial bucket. However, the fact that he wrote at all is critical. The French Revolution had opened the door to political participation in a way completely unknown to previous generations. Now anyone could contribute to political discourse and feel pride in any small nuance that they added to the argument. As had been true for Josef von Hommer, the battle over intermarriage was a bookend for Marx’s long, eventful career. Marx spent most of the late 1837 and early 1838 slowly dying from liver disease, to which he would finally succumb on May 10, 1838. He rarely left his bed from the beginning of that year until his death. Yet in the spring of 1838, he felt well enough to pen a short response to the issue of mixed marriage. It was his only known writing from this period besides a few letters to his son Karl. Why did such a sick man, one who had been born Jewish and was only a somewhat tepid Protestant, feel it necessary to write about a private, religious matter? It was because he and many others in the Rhineland considered the mixed marriage debate at its core to be neither private nor religious.

Whereas Josef von Hommer had tentatively used Roman law to assert women’s marital rights as part of his larger argument against interfaith marriages, lawyer Heinrich Marx saw the issue in completely legal and political terms. Marx may not have been a completely enthusiastic convert to Christianity, but he was a determined convert and preacher of the legal principles introduced by Napoleon. He began his piece by describing its purpose: to reduce all the complicated arguments surrounding mixed marriages because, “it is here to complain that the simplest, which it is a duty to

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consider, will be pushed aside.‖ He protested about the arena in which interfaith marriages were being debated. For Marx, law was a rarified setting of only the highest discourse, but now both sides were demeaning it by using it for less lofty goals. “It [law] was ripped out of its higher spheres and demeaned to sophistry.” One needed to return the issue to politics, where it belonged. “Therefore it is the responsibility of nature to appreciate more closely its regulations and pronounce them loudly where a simple public law, political question has presented itself.” Here Marx’s training in the Code Napoléon and the Enlightenment is obvious. The law could not be used to push a certain agenda because then it would be moving target based in political whims. Of course, the tension of the Code Napoléon’s very political birth is equally evident in Marx’s defense of the law. However much Marx might disapprove, the French Revolution had made clear that the malleable bonds between law and politics were not easily broken.

After his bold assertion about law’s seemingly ethereal realm, Heinrich Marx rapidly moved in quite a different, and quite political, direction. As described in Chapter 4, he acted in much the same manner as the rest of the burgeoning legal community. Because law existed outside of political and economic contingencies, it was, in Marx’s view, the most likely to be rational, and thus it was the most qualified to comment upon issues otherwise tainted by power struggles and emotion. Marx decided to explore the

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103 Ibid., 281.
104 Ibid.
legal foundations of political rule as it related to mixed marriages. He deftly interwove basic legal principles and political contingencies throughout the rest of his discussion.

The real political question is this: May the regent of a country in urgent, dictatorial cases regarding the well-being and security of this land seize upon such regulations that are not in full accordance with common law or even more injure the common law?

Actually this question is neither new nor doubtful. The preservation of peace and security in the state is unconditionally the first law of regents. Therefore his first responsibility is the prevention of all that endangers this peace and security.¹⁰⁵

Thus, at first Heinrich Marx appears quite the Prussian apologist. In the mixed marriage crisis, the monarch had a legal right to do as he pleased if he felt as though the stability of Prussia was at stake. Only a ruler had the wisdom and breadth of vision to overstep normal legal boundaries.

Marx asserts that one could not deny that even in republican governments, political threats, both internal and external, could dictate abandoning legal principles temporarily. A most basic principle of law was ultimately that rule of law itself could under certain circumstances be briefly abandoned.

World history is here and everywhere world law. The same principle holds true under all people and under all forms of government and in the strongest republics sometimes the infringement of the law treads on the agenda….

So is one truly inclined with astonishment to ask: Where does this laughable, pitiful cry against the decree of an unlimited monarch come from, while similar foundational principles in a so-called constitutional state are not even superficially depended upon?¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

For Marx, as had been true for Napoleon, societal stability was an underlying foundation of legal principle everywhere. All governments had a duty when their society turned toward chaos or disruption to temporarily forsake other legal rights. The type of government was ultimately less important than keeping people safe.

Yet Heinrich Marx was not a mere apologist for all forms of supreme authority. Moments in which a society threatened to crumble were rare, and the mixed marriage crisis was not necessarily one of them. By debating mixed marriages on such narrow legal grounds as societal stability, its opponents were missing the wider implications of the Prussian monarch’s claims. “And then on what grounds do these dwarfs take the liberty to so bitterly criticize a common law far less injurious than the Prussian king celebrating the enjoyment of full state power that he portrays as necessary and inevitable?” The Prussian king was doing more than just claiming complete authority in a moment of crisis – he was asserting his full rights over the public and private lives of his citizens in perpetuity. Prussian citizens had a right and duty to complain about such a wide power grab. “It can in fact only be highly honorable for Prussia if one subjects the actions of its king to such hard criticism. One cannot contest the legal union of executive and legislative authority [in the king], because he [actually] injures private rights law.” Again, Heinrich Marx’s French Revolution heritage was fully evident, in all its complexity. Monarchs had great authority but only if they did not infringe upon the fundamental private rights of their subjects. Marx’s work highlights

107 Ibid., 282.
108 Ibid., 281.
how amorphous the divide between public power and private liberties, and between stability and chaos, really was.

One of the more interesting aspects of Heinrich Marx’s commentary on mixed marriage is that he did not actually use the terms “mixed marriage”, “marriage”, “Catholic” or “Protestant” regularly. It is difficult to determine if he was in favor of Catholic-Protestant weddings or against them. However, what ultimately concerned Marx in the mixed marriage debate had little to do with religion or conversion. For him, an issue like mixed marriage highlighted how private emotional bonds could be forced into a public, national arena. Heinrich Marx attempted to lay bare the essential dilemma between public and private born out of the French Revolution, but he did not necessarily succeed in solving it. The question was larger than the legal principles that Marx so heartily embraced or the religious answers for which Hommer so desperately prayed. It demanded a response founded not only in law, religion, or politics, but one that drew from all three areas to help create another definition of German nationalism.

That responsibility would fall to Joseph von Görres. By 1837 Görres was in exile in Munich and hard at work on what he considered his most important composition, his four-volume Christian Mysticism. His previous works only rarely mentioned mixed marriage, but he approached the issue of interfaith relations from his own, typically unique, vantage point. Görres’s long study of different mystical traditions had led him to the conclusion that most faiths had a strong, underlying connection to one another. This tendency was equally true of Protestantism and Catholicism. In his 1819 Germany and the Revolution he wrote, “…when the dross is removed from both, the pure silver appears, so in this respect Protestantism and Catholicism are related to each other as
integral and differential methods.”¹⁰⁹ Yet despite these natural bonds, Prussian Protestants were using rationalism to treat Catholics with contempt and to attempt to relegate Catholicism to obscurity. Prussians presumed,

that Catholicism was dead and gone, and had only forgotten to get itself buried; and which now offers out of compassion, as it were, to do honor to the deceased, by attending the funeral, and to assist in breaking the chain which has enslaved the human mind, and overthrowing the tyrant.¹¹⁰

Thus the Prussians did not treat Catholics any better than the revolutionary French had, and the condition of Catholics had in some cases worsened. As Josef von Hommer had also highlighted, Görres recognized that Prussian promises of religious equality had not been implemented. “Edifying discourses on piety and Christian virtue supplied to a certain extent the old official style; but the Christian maxim of giving to every one his due, was not practiced.”¹¹¹ So from early on in the Rhenish Prussian era, Görres desired religious cooperation on some level, yet he distrusted the Prussians to meet Catholics at the negotiating table.

Though Joseph von Görres had been deeply engrossed in writing his next volume of Christian Mysticism, the arrest of Droste-Vischering caused him to switch directions rather quickly. Within eight days of the arrest of the archbishop, Görres had committed himself to composing a piece on mixed marriages and Catholic politics. Yet Görres approached mixed marriages much more carefully than he might have in his younger years. Before writing he thoroughly reviewed all the existing materials on the topic so that he could properly inform his reading public. Indeed, as one of the German-


¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 529.
speaking world’s most recognizable political voices, it seemed almost preordained that the public would turn to him expecting both an explanation and response. Görres had been writing pro-Catholic pieces for Der Katholik and Eos since the beginning of his Munich exile over ten years earlier. A young second cousin of Görres’s wife Katharina, Ernst von Lassaulx, urged Görres to “raise again your thunder voice and hit hard without pity.”

Görres, however, hesitated just a bit to be sure that he had both the support of the pope and the people of the Rhineland. Getting people to listen to him was easy, getting them to act in concert with one another by listening to his inspirational words was quite another.

Four weeks and 160 pages later Athanasius was finally complete. In January 1838 Görres wrote to close friend Josef von Giovanelli about how much he did not want to join into this “phrased and paraphrased deviltry.” However, he felt commanded to,

Take the feather to the hand and write what should be said! And so I have made no short work of it and have written and written four weeks long and now you can see what has come out it. How I see it now two days later and interpret it, angering myself over the mistakes, I wonder myself now and then how the issue will turn out....It will cut deeply into rotting meat, and this

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112 As qtd. in Schrörs, 557. Ernst was the son of Johann Claudius von Lassaulx, cousin and childhood playmate of Katharina and Franz von Lassaulx. Görres and Ernst had regular correspondence throughout the 1830s with Görres offering Ernst regular advice. Ernst himself edited other pamphlets during the mixed marriage crisis. Ernst was a well-traveled academic who had multiple appointments in ancient philosophy throughout Germany during his lifetime. For further information see Reichert and Röttgen; Joseph Görres, Gesammelte Briefe, ed. Franz Binder, vol. 3, Freundsbriefe (Munich: Commission der literarisch-artistischen Anstalt, 1874), 394-448; and Literarischer Handweiser zunächst für alle Katholiken ..., vols., 43-44, 53-7, http://books.google.com/books?pg=PA54&lpg=PA55&dq=peter%20einsiedel%20würzburg&sig=IvZWBc2UYV0yOIFHCoTiKXJaD-Y&ei=Tb6dTq_hGYXkiALLI9X9CQ&ct=result&id=SuEaAAAAAYAAJ&ots=ekZYP4rkhZ&output=text, accessed 2.25.2012.

113 Schrörs, 557-60.

114 Görres, Gesammelte Briefe, 485.
is always very sensitive, highly painful to hear, but compassion because of this would be horrible...\textsuperscript{115}

Despite his age and experience, it was obvious that Görres’s love of a propaganda battle had not faded over the years. He may have been more careful in how he phrased his ideas, but he still did so with a certain amount of vitriolic glee. \textit{Athanasius} marked a high point in Görres’s career, a culmination of his philosophy now firmly based in his Catholic faith.

However emotional Görres’s private correspondence at the time, he judiciously laid out his text as straightforward and rationally as possible. Görres named his piece in honor of St. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria (296-373). Athanasius had been heavily involved in the controversy surrounding Arianism and endured at least four periods of exile as governments regularly switched positions on what version of the faith to follow.\textsuperscript{116} By using such a venerable example of careful orthodoxy, Görres laid the foundation for his own meticulous argument. His introduction to \textit{Athanasius} claimed, “The writing is not noisy and does not rush. It seeks only to see things based in reason…. Thus it does not excite, then the truth does not excite. It calms much more in that through the awarding of rights. Where rights are found, it grants the mind the beginning of satisfaction.”\textsuperscript{117} Görres was determined above all to push his Catholic readers into a sluice of his own design, from which any thoughtful mind would see no need to escape as he pushed them firmly toward action. The Catholics needed a plan

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 485-6.


\textsuperscript{117} Joseph Görres, \textit{Athanasius}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Regensburg: G. Joseph Manz, 1838), iii.
of offensive attack, a way to vent their anger properly at how they were being treated, and Görres would provide it for them. "It is thus a serious thing which requires a serious word, which we want to turn in these pages to it, so that if continuing passion arms itself against passion they find the terrain between themselves occupied by some consideration." The Prussians would only completely respect the Catholics’ argument if it were reconfigured for the modern age. Otherwise, Protestant leaders in Berlin would continue to dismiss the Catholic cause as antiquated, irrational, and unconnected to the driving forces of the nineteenth century: nationalism and individualism.

Thus Görres centered all his arguments on the newer ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. The question to be asked about mixed marriages was basic: "Should continuing power go before right or right before power?" Josef von Hommer had been mainly interested in survival of the Church – how could they compromise on mixed marriages in order to keep the faith as intact as possible? Hommer’s stance was clearly defensive with no desire to antagonize those in power. Görres, on the other hand, sided with Heinrich Marx and boldly went immediately to the heart of the matter by asking a question central to the French Revolution itself – where did power end and individual rights begin? Marx, however, had attempted to rationally view all sides of the complicated issue. Ever the polemist, Görres went straight for the emotional heart.

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118 Ibid., 1-2. For a discussion of Görres’s new willingness to use the masses in promoting his religious agenda see Vanden Heuvel, 329-32.

119 Ibid., 2.
Görres knew what common cultural language to use in order to best make his case. The Catholics should be united behind a single cause.

Then they all have one and the same goal and this goal is: the complete and whole realization of solemnly granted religious freedom, and the promised political and civic equality of the confession to its fullest extent without endangerment or ambush…

As Heinrich Marx had also recognized, legal and political parity and freedom to practice one’s faith were hallmarks of the modern age, not before. Günther Wohlers has gone so far as to suggest that Görres,

was neither on the Prussian nor the anti-Prussian side…it was not a narrow confessional attitude that Görres put forward as his position in the Cologne Affair; his platform was only and along the old liberal attitude of tolerance for human rights….His fight was a fight for maintaining 'state free spheres' in the sense of those men who in Görres’s birth year had declared a bill of rights, and in the sense of those who a few months after Görres’s death at the Frankfurt Parliament wanted to give the German people fundamental rights.

Prussians would have difficulty defending their own anti-Catholic biases when faced with the issues of human rights and equality that the majority of citizens now believed to be inherent and natural.

Yet defeat of the Catholic position on mixed marriages was still relatively certain without the creation of a much firmer, more recognizable Catholic party. Modern politics did not just involve private freedoms being trampled upon. It also meant taking individual concerns and making them corporate by creating larger political entities to advance their cause. The driving force behind all of these efforts was nationalism.

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Each group strove simultaneously to prove their own national credentials while maintaining the primacy of their distinctive interests. As the religious faith of generations, Catholicism was in a unique position to translate religious bonds to national ones. The line of historical scholarship linking the birth of nationalism with Catholicism has been long and distinguished, especially in regards to France. Colette Beaune has examined the interweaving of Catholic religious imagery into the creation of French national symbols. ¹²² David Bell has suggested that the French Revolution did not so much destroy religion as use religion as a rich treasure trove for ideas and practices that would help revolutionaries convert France into a national community. ¹²³ Catholics in France and elsewhere pushed back hard against definitions of the emerging nation-state that did not include them. Suzanne Desan’s study of the Catholic revival in the Yonne argues that radical efforts to reclassify what was sacred in national terms often backfired, causing local populations to revolt and remake such imagery as they saw fit. ¹²⁴

However, one of the strongest in making connections between Catholicism and clashing definitions of the nation-state has been Raymond Jonas. His examination of the cult of the Sacred Heart from its foundation during the French Revolution through its growth in the nineteenth century presents a strong imagined national Catholic community that clearly competed with a secular one. The symbolism of the Sacred


Heart bound together a community of like-minded individuals in sharp opposition to a changing world. “Safeguard and insignia, the Sacré-Coeur answered compelling needs: the need to make choices, the need to seek protection, the need to break out of a sense of embattled isolation. Pinning on the Sacré-Coeur expressed conviction, secured comfort, identified allies.”¹²⁵ For Catholics, community had much deeper roots in a tradition that could be remolded and shaped to counteract all attempts to disconnect them from the nationalism debates that swirled about them.

Joseph von Görres’s entire journalistic career had been bound up in questions of political authority and the nation-state, so it was fairly easy for him to convert a religious Catholic sense of community to a new national stage in Athanasius. He pointed out that Catholics already had the weapons with which to fight against the encroachment of mixed marriages. “Your faith has collected you well around itself. There is no bond that unites more firmly, more reliably and inseparably than this.”¹²⁶ Yet to make such a claim would merely affirm the right of Catholics to defend themselves, but not the ability to go out on the offensive, as Görres wanted them to do.

Thomas Nipperdey has argued that Athanasius, “with great rhetorical pathos popularized, simplified, sharpened, and polarized the concrete legal questions that established fundamental distinctions between church and state, Catholicism and Protestantism.”¹²⁷ However, I would argue that in order for Görres to succeed he actually also had to do the exact opposite – prove just how connected and critical

¹²⁵ Raymond Anthony Jonas, France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart: An Epic Tale for Modern Times (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000), 86.


¹²⁷ As qtd. in Brophy, 270.
Catholicism could be to the future of the German state. Catholicism was more than the faith of a German minority — it was an essential plank upon which German nationalism could be constructed. “Your tree trunk is one of the central trunks of the German people. It should not be lost but instead must keep for itself other times, while the current confusion passes over it and everyone finds their right place in the improved order of things.” As Josef von Hommer had done, Görres hoped for a better future in which Catholicism could be restored. Görres’s examination of historical myth provided him with the frame of reference to see a much wider historical continuum, one in which the past was inextricably linked with the present. Yet his vision was not just vertical, but also horizontal. This vision across divergent religious and cultural groups allowed Görres to go much further than Hommer in connecting his dreams to something more tangible — the emerging German nation-state.

Though at times in *Athanasius* Görres attempted to argue that what he was doing was not political but religious, he dismissed the notion that the modern state was incompatible with the faith of generations. One could not simply replace the Church with the state or vice versa because the two were bound up together.

The teaching of the complete separation of church and state, as has been erected in modern times, is a through and through invalid, tactless, and completely objectionable false teaching — objectionable in theory because it comes from empty and vain abstractions, objectionable in practice because it was thought up by political and religious revolutionaries who simultaneously sought to ruin the church and the state.

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129 See Schrörs, 561.

Historically each side had protected the other because their ultimate aims were so similar – maintaining peace and societal order. More recently, Prussia and the Catholic Church had confirmed their allegiance to one another through formal treaties that supposedly guaranteed religious freedom. \(^{131}\) Enlightenment thought and the French Revolution could not easily dismantle such a bond. The current antagonistic relationship had to be rewritten to become what Görres labeled “\textit{lebendige Durcheinanderspielen}”\(^{132}\) or lively, back and forth games. The two sides did not always have to agree with one another, but they did have to use the past to rebuild their long-standing connection.

However, what made Görres’s \textit{Athanasius} reverberate with German Catholics, and ultimately receive some recognition from Prussian Protestants, was not just his claims of a historical relationship between the state and the Catholic Church. He was also willing to firmly place the two faiths at the same national table. Catholics and Protestants had to find some grounds for cooperation because they were part of the same national story, he advised. “However, people must try to live with each other and stand with each other, and they can promote this without prejudice to their individuality.”\(^{133}\) If both sides were willing to work together then a strong, modern German identity based on toleration could be established that would bring more people into the national fold. Though Görres’s most obvious target was the inflexible Prussians and their blatant disregard for Catholic religious freedom, he also attacked Catholics for

\(^{131}\) Ibid., 192-5.

\(^{132}\) As qtd. in Schrörs, 162.

\(^{133}\) Görres, “\textit{Athanasius},” 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 160.
their inability to move beyond traditional ways of thinking that kept the faithful constrained and unable to freely think for themselves. “It has become impossible to propel forward the old mischief in the way that it has been done for years.” Just like the Prussians, Catholics had to accept that the world had changed and that older prejudices and hierarchies were no longer viable.

At first glance, *Athanasius* appears to wander drunkenly between past and present, embracing one or the other wherever Görres felt the need to make a point. Sometimes the past provided examples of proper church-state relations or Catholic community. At other times it was an insufferable agent of inertia that was preventing needed change from getting underway through prejudice and old ways of thinking. Ultimately, however, it was this movement between past and present that made Görres’s answer to the mixed marriage crisis so appealing. Though the French Revolution has often been imagined as a breaking marker between the early modern and modern eras, those living through the era did not necessarily see it as such. Instead the culture and language of the age took from past and present simultaneously, rarely seeing a radical conflict between them. Görres drew on these tendencies in suggesting a path for the future.

It did not take long for *Athanasius* to become a critical document underpinning a new direction that German Catholics would pursue for decades. Historians have been loquacious in their praise and analysis of the work’s impact. Heinrich Schrörs labeled *Athanasius*, ‘the actual herald call that made the world listen attentively and who set

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minds into powerful vibration.” A biographer called it, “the last dedicated alleluia of a God-enthused soul,” and to another historian it was “the outbreak of a volcano.” Its popularity was impressive. Only four months after printing began there were already four editions with over 10,000 copies in print – a huge number considering how many hands each copy probably passed between. About a year after Athanasius, Ludwig I of Bavaria ennobled Joseph von Görres for his service to the state. Two elements were key to Görres’s success. One, as James Brophy has suggested, was that Görres’s work did not just appeal to religious Catholics, but to secular ones as well, because of the way in which he combined legal and national concerns in new ways. The other, as his biographer Jon Vanden Heuvel proposes, was his ability to give the local national significance. “Görres invented political Catholicism’s defensive rhetorical tone…the experience of the Rhenish Catholics, a minority in a Protestant state whose time-honored rights had been transgressed, Görres transposed onto the big screen of German and European politics.” He did not have to wait long for the German public to respond to his trumpet blast.

135 Schrörs, 557.
136 Joseph Galland as qtd. in Schrörs, 559.
138 Schrörs, 564. Görres went on to write other pieces in response to Athanasius and the arrest of the archbishop. The most important of these was Joseph von Görres, Zweites Jahresgedächtniß des zwanzigsten Novembers 1837 (Regensburg: G.J. Manz, 1840).
139 Brophy, 271; Vanden Heuvel, 349; and Reardon, 133-4.
140 Vanden Heuvel, 349.
Catholics throughout Europe responded to *Athanasius* enthusiastically, relieved that someone had finally stood up effectively to the Prussian threat. Early newspaper accounts praised it even before taking the time to fully read it. Frankfurt’s *Allgemeine Zeitung* argued that it would “contribute to placing the issue on a broad, scientific foundation” and that people would “have to pay attention to it because it is going to make a big splash.” Görres’s close friend Josef von Giovanelli praised the work for locating the heartstrings of a national community. “What can I say about your *Athanasius*? You have found the right and timely expression for that which for two lifetimes has moved every Catholic breast. What by thousand reasons in sights and wails, in pleading and imagination, in quarreling and angry words you yourself have made known.”

Some saw the work as a true call to arms. Carl Johann Greith, a friend of Görres and later Swiss Catholic bishop, spoke of “Catholic cannons on the embankment” after reading *Athanasius* and suggested an even better title would have been “Thomas Beckett” in honor of the murdered medieval English saint and cardinal.

There were other Catholic leaders who thought that Görres was giving up too much in suggesting that the Church needed to modernize itself. Johannes Theodor Laurent, an Aachen ultramontane cleric who supported Leonhard Nellessen, called

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Athanasius a “prophecy” and said that it would “decide Prussia’s destiny.” In Laurent’s view, however, Görres spoke neither of clerical or papal supremacy and thus, like so many of his fellow Catholics, “still stands with a side of Protestantism.” Yet Laurent’s ultraconservative view was clearly a minority one. Catholics throughout Germany recognized the new possibilities that Athanasius opened for them in their battle over mixed marriages and beyond.

Those on the Prussian side also recognized the importance of Athanasius, if a bit more reluctantly and much more angrily. Karl Varhagen von Ense, an important political Berlin commentator, probably read the work almost immediately after it was published. He wrote bitterly in his diary, “Athanasius from Görres, an adverse whistled writing [Pfaffenschrift] full of bad cunning and lies! Once a hero, Mr. Görres, now an angry old woman! Outdated!...Leibnitz, Kant – what refreshment against it!” Other government agents who were paid to keep on top of any possible disturbances were also quick to read it and report back to their superiors. An anonymous agent in Frankfurt attempted to simultaneously alert his superiors and play down the threat.

The new writing from Görres “Athanasius” will be talked about everywhere but can only be read, that means will be understood, by a small portion of the public. His language is too difficult, too bombastic – but the introduction, for example, is very good, although strong. The name Görres has little resonance still in Germany – it is long since worn out publically.

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145 Ibid., 377.


Others viewed the work in much starker terms. August Hermann Graf Dönhoff, a Prussian diplomat residing in Munich, advised Friedrich Wilhelm III that *Athanasius*, while not being particularly well written, was "revolutionary and inflammatory." In his opinion, Görres had never really changed from his radical youth. "[Görres] has only changed colors and from a demagogue has become a religious fanatic. The purpose stays the same – war on all governments, especially the Prussian. It is because of the outbreak of an accumulated, twenty-year-old, held back hatred that at the moment there exists a new hope for satisfaction." Renowned Leipzig philosophy professor Wilhelm Traugott Krug had already written on the subject of mixed marriages before Görres’s book was published. In a long-winded response, Krug venomously attacked the strong connection that he imagined between Görres and the pope, as well as the entire manner in which Görres presented his case. To Krug, *Athanasius*,

throws with brutal violence, with mistaken stubbornness, with sophisticated whitewash, with absurdities and atrocities, with extreme monstrosities and hideousness, with crude and uncouth eruptions of a rigid skeleton, with an angry ghost that will not stop going around the Prussian state and causing mischief with an enlightened pack of hounds and a doglike, madman’s understanding, so that like other howling, snapping, hunger-whipped beasts…

All of Görres’s efforts to use rationality and basic human rights principles were dismissed by Krug. For many Prussians, to accept *Athanasius* as anything more than

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149 Ibid., 370-1.

the musings of an irrational man who had always sought to stir up controversy would be to accept the legitimacy of a Catholic German identity. To cast aside or vilify Görres was the easiest way to deal with the fury that he had unleashed.

Unluckily for the Prussians, the impact of *Athanasius* was wide and deep. The book clearly furthered the coalescence of a national German Catholic interest. By the end of January 1838, only days after the printing of *Athanasius* began, Joseph von Görres was already hopeful about the direction that German Catholicism seemed to be leaning. In his letter to Josef von Giovanelli, Görres optimistically suggested a brighter future for the faith.

The local Prussian legation has already suggested confiscation three weeks ago but it was properly dismissed [by the Bavarian king]. The king holds himself strongly and protects free discussion so that the war against Gog and Magog is led courageously from here, and as they see, with good results. The best, however, happens in stillness, and the news from the Rhine about it is highly pleasant.

Everything returns to the Church that no one has visited for 40 years, they have found themselves in it, and the angry scabies that has been attached to it for so many years flakes off, and the healthy flesh takes hold once more. In Coblenz alone, which harbors 12000 residents, 1500 more communicants were registered at Christmas than in previous years...These are revolutionary connections of which I speak. In Rome too, the attitude is excellent. In short, everything goes as it should, midnight is gone and the days have in short time already arrived to a rooster’s cry.\(^{151}\)

Of course, even in his enthusiasm Görres probably recognized that a spike in religiosity or church attendance would not necessarily last. Protestants could comfort themselves with the fact that once the furor over mixed marriages subsided, as it was sure to do eventually, keeping up the long-term interest in the Catholic cause would be much more difficult. They would be a bit mistaken.

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\(^{151}\) Görres, *Gesammelte Briefe*, 486.
The mixed marriage crisis did slowly die down, albeit with a few more controversial moments. On April 22, 1839 almost two years after being placed under house arrest in Minden, Droste-Vischering was finally released, ostensibly due to his poor health. He was allowed to remain archbishop in name, yet he was forced to have a coadjudicator to handle the daily affairs of the archdiocese and he remained in practical exile for the rest of his life. In October of the same year, Martin von Dunin, archbishop of Posen-Gnesen, was arrested for six months for his refusal to accept the government’s stand on mixed marriages. Friedrich Wilhelm IV ascended the throne in 1840, signaling a softening of the Prussian attitude toward mixed marriages. By 1841 a legal settlement between the two sides had been reached in favor of the Catholics, and a celebration at the Cologne Cathedral in 1842 officially ended the hostilities over intermarriage.\textsuperscript{152}

However, lessening tension in one arena did not mean that the issue of Catholics within a Protestant Prussian state had really been solved. Instead the Cologne Troubles were the opening salvo in a battle that would rage throughout the nineteenth century. Prussians continued pushing for religious integration, and they had some notable successes. The Civil Marriage Law of 1874 made civic marriages mandatory for all citizens. By 1910, 10% of all German marriages were interfaith and 45% of bureaucratic divisions had religious minorities of 10% or more.\textsuperscript{153} Yet, as the massive turnout for the 1844 pilgrimage to the Holy Coat of Trier revealed, Catholic religiosity


\textsuperscript{153} Hölscher, 42. For more on Prussian reactions to the threat of Catholicism see Michael B. Gross, The War Against Catholicism: Liberalism and the Anti-Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Germany (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2004).
among the masses continued to grow unabated. A small number of Catholic leaders recognized the need to harness that energy. They pushed for new devotion to the pope, became increasingly involved in popular belief culture, and founded a number of Catholic journals and associations to further their cause. Though at times the outlook of the Catholic leadership and the masses diverged, overall they were able to construct a distinctive culture at increasingly sharp odds with the rest of Germany. As industrialization took hold in the later nineteenth century, Catholics put forward an anti-modern position that, though ultimately somewhat ineffective in keeping change at bay, did represent a legitimate challenge to Prussian Protestant national hegemony.

Joseph von Görres continued to be at the forefront of this movement until his death on January 29, 1848. In the national Catholic political cause, Görres had finally found a home in which he could inspire people to action. His old friend Clemens Brentano described him as a, “concert master…who could forge unity out of individual, isolated, or new voices, so that they became conscious of themselves as a whole.” In 1838, shortly after Athanasius was published, Görres founded Historisch-Politische Blätter, a major Catholic political journal that continued long after he was gone. He delighted in the growing popular Catholic piety that he saw emerging around him, contending that it was a means of proving to the government just how powerful the Catholic movement could be politically. His 1845 essay, The Pilgrimage to Trier, was


155 As qtd. in Vanden Heuvel, 346.
another polemical gem that argued crowds had gathered not as an emotional, idol-worshipping mob, but as a movement to conserve the Church and show just how little control the state actually had. To Görres the folk traditions of lower-class Germans were much closer to the real Germany than anything imposed from above. These were the people that could reinvigorate the Church and then the state at large.  

At first glance, the beginning and ending of this chapter might appear to have little to do with one another. How did we get from a Catholic priest advising his nephew about marriage to striking a new, nationalistic path for German Catholics? What is stunningly clear in this story is just how interwoven different spheres had become by the late 1830s. What was an individual dilemma had regional implications and regional dramas played themselves out on national stages. A religious debate was much more than a battle between faiths because questions of law, sovereignty and the composition of a nation were bound up within any question of who could marry whom and why. Josef von Hommer, Heinrich Marx and Joseph von Görres all understood and used these connections to varying degrees in responding to the challenge of a changed world.

All three of these gentlemen could also readily point to the cause of this rapid realignment of societal values and cultural systems – the French Revolution and its aftermath. There were several outcomes of the revolution that they found particularly distasteful. Hommer, Marx and Görres all complained, directly or indirectly, about the ways in which the state was centralizing its power in the nineteenth century. Hommer

disliked the ways in which the state had taken over the religious act of marriage. Marx complained about how politics now influenced the rarified world of law. Görres argued that states now based themselves in competition rather than in the harmony that underlay earlier ages. Political battlefields were also directly linked to burgeoning economic war zones in which, as Jon Vanden Heuvel aptly describes, “the cash nexus of the marketplace was a revolutionary solvent of traditional social relations, an acid that ate away at the bonds of family, Church, community, and nation.” Of course in making this economic argument, Görres and other Catholics sounded remarkably like Heinrich Marx's son, Karl. Though they were clearly not willing to take the path of class warfare and would have preferred a return to the past, Catholic leaders in Germany had similar reasons for desiring change.

However, in rejecting the increasing antagonisms wrought by the French Revolution, Catholics did not shun its accompanying principles of civic equality and individual liberty. Instead they used these ideals to point out the hypocrisy of Prussian politics. This ability to use the values of the age against their purveyors is what made the Catholic party dangerous. They used the issue of mixed marriages to their fullest advantage. Early in the debate a popular pamphlet, The Catholic Brother and Sister League for Pure Catholic Marriages: An Easter Present for Boys and Girls, from Düsseldorf proposed establishing a league in which Catholics would pledge to only marry fellow Catholics. Group prayers argued that Catholics could engage in civil disobedience because they answered to a higher power than the state, hymns urged rebellion against injustice, and sacraments provided "a spiritual shield against civic

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157 Ibid., 353.
law.”\textsuperscript{158} While their message was one of separation from modern values, their tactics were clearly influenced by what radicals had used during the French Revolution. As James Brophy has pointed out the creation of a Catholic political party did not just mean,

a Catholic world retreating behind closed doors, shunning secular influences, and slavishly following clerical wishes….Other influences streamed into the lives of Rhenish Catholics. They sang songs and read texts and participated in festivities that had little to do with religious life…Rhinelanders consciously refashioned religion.\textsuperscript{159}

Along with many other arenas in the nineteenth century, religion became politicized because of the weakened divide between private and public, and between secular and sacred. Yet to see such a large shift in consciousness merely in terms of the defeat of older, worn out values is to miss the wider picture. Catholics purposefully reshaped new ways of thinking to meet their own needs. In the process they created a national threat to Prussian Protestant hegemony.

The Cologne Troubles of the 1830s were only the beginning of long process of Catholic politicization that would not reach its height until the 1870s. By 1874, four out of five German Catholics voted in parliamentary elections for the Center party, the German Catholic political party. In an interesting piece comparing nineteenth-century political German Catholicism and the politicization of Turkish Islam in the 1970s, sociologist Ateş Altinordu asserts that there are three interlocking stages for the politicization of faith: “revival-reaction-politicization.”\textsuperscript{160} One began with a religious

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{158} Brophy, 276-8.
\item \textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 306-7.
\item \textsuperscript{160} Ateş Altinordu, “The Politicization of Religion: Political Catholicism and Political Islam in Comparative Perspective.” \textit{Politics and Society} 38, no. 4 (2010): 518-21. The body of literature on the growth of the
revival that threatened secular political power, whose leaders then oppressed the religious movement. Using the networks established by the revival, religious leaders reacted by creating a political organization to protect their interests. However, though Altinordu recognizes that the events of the 1830s were an important precursor to the politicization of Catholicism after 1848, he dismisses the earlier period as not having enough organization to be really effective. This assessment is no doubt true – the Cologne Troubles were no Kulturkampf. The violence of reactions on both sides of the issue and the amount of people involved in political religious controversy clearly increased after 1848. Nevertheless, all of Altinordu’s sociological elements were present during the Cologne Troubles. Perhaps it would be better to view Catholic politicization more in terms of ever tightening circles of “revival-reaction-politicization.” Catholic leaders like Hommer, Droste-Vischering, and Görres did not necessarily have the clout to rewrite Prussian politics to include Catholicism. But they did start a process of changing how Catholics could locate their identity within a new Germany.


CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

In October 1870 at the height of tensions between France and Germany over the famous Alsace-Lorraine border region, Fustel de Coulanges, a French historian, penned a passionate letter in response to German historian Theodor Mommsen. De Coulanges’ now renowned remarks strike an emotional chord in both the past and present and speak to the challenges of trying to make rational sense of nationality or any other form of identity. “Men feel in their hearts that they belong to a same people when they have a community of ideas, of interests, of affections, of memories and hopes. This is what makes a fatherland.”¹ Living on an ever-changing border, embroiled in the ardor of war and its aftermath, de Coulanges argued in a way Joseph von Görres, Josef von Hommer, Franz von Lassaulx, and Cerf, Samuel, and Heinrich Marx would have understood. They had all watched and participated in the contentious debates about what shape their national community might take next and whether they would be invited to join it. With nationalism, the French historian said, “We are at the very center of the human heart.”² Yet just as the border itself was not an immobile line drawn in the sand, so too were the emotions that nationalism and other forms of identity engendered. Responses to societal structures and historical change were naturally quite individualized and contradictory. The Marxes’ understanding of how the nation might impose itself upon their daily lives or what they might do to become citizens was certainly different than Görres, Hommer or Lassaulx. Görres looked with disdain


² Ibid.
on Hommer’s national community built on compromise and probably never really understood his brother-in-law’s fixation upon legal codes. It is also clear that however they might have defined nation at the beginning of their lives was probably different than how they defined it at the end. Thus we can only understand nationalism as an amalgamation of quite divergent emotional and rational responses that change over time.

Further complicating national identity is that fact that its many forms simultaneously intersect and compete with one another within society and within each individual personality. As Adrian Hastings has convincingly pointed out, the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century cannot be understood apart from the Christian religion from whence it came. Though the modern nation-state in many ways grew in opposition to medieval Christianity, it regularly used both religion’s historical language and its way of thinking. The use of boundary lines is just one example of the ways in which nation and religion mingled:

one wide-ranging context for the religious shaping of nationalism is that of a contested frontier….Whenever a people feel threatened in its distinct existence by the advance of a power committed to another religion, the political conflict is likely to have superimposed upon it a sense of religious conflict, almost crusade, so that national identity becomes fused with religious identity.³

Thus early nineteenth century national border clashes in the Rhineland could easily be transferred linguistically and culturally back to preexisting religious battlegrounds between faiths. Jews and Catholics had not historically been part of a Lutheran Prussian understanding of community. Now that they were to be part of the same

nation and no longer shuttled off into separate ghettos or divided into tiny *cuius regio*, *eius religio* political states, how could these divergent groups come to trust and understand one another? The battle for each individual soul was critical in establishing this new kind of kinship with each other.

In attempting to attract more individuals into the national fold the state was forced to grapple with yet another dilemma. If national identity can be fused with religious identity what does that say about identity in other forms like legal identity, local identity, or revolutionary identity? Are all forms of identity interchangeable despite of, or because of, the boundaries that establish each person’s place within society and culture? The stories told throughout this dissertation strongly suggest that this rather unsettling notion is true. Individuals do indeed mix different forms of identity regularly to create lives that are meaningful to them, especially at unsettling times like the French Revolution. Joseph von Görres was at times the most fervent of nationalists, while at other times the most dedicated of revolutionaries, while at still other times the most passionate of Catholics. Yet such an assertion did not merely mean that he could not make up his mind. All of his identities were quite real to him as he lived in the moment, searching for meaning and truth. Nor was he alone in this ever-evolving existence. Heinrich Marx and both of his brothers had multiple identities that conflicted with one another as they strove to balance their faith, their careers, and their national allegiances. Franz von Lassaulx moved from being a radical trying to bring down the government to someone who fully embraced the rule of law. In imagining his future as a young man, Josef von Hommer probably did not see himself trying desperately to balance political and religious commitments even on his deathbed.
One might claim, as critics of Lassaulx, the Marxes, Hommer and Görres did, that such an amalgamation of belief was not genuine, that such men’s allegiances could not be trusted. Hommer was accused of being too willing to compromise. Lassaulx was considered not German enough to understand that French law codes would not fit a foreign society. Görres’ religious transformation was called disingenuous and self-serving. Heinrich Marx (and most likely his brother Cerf) was never fully accepted as an equal among Christians. Heinrich’s son Karl’s religious legacy proved that such distrust could extend beyond a single generation. In a way, such critique is valid, but not just for the characters discussed here. Commitment to any cause or organization can always be called into question because the reasons behind group membership, as well as how that membership is defined, are so individualized. The ability to cross borders and shift societal boundaries to meet individual needs is what provides us all with the opportunity to undermine society and change its direction. It is what makes each of us dangerous to society’s assertion of control over our allegiances.

Yet to make such claims is not to argue that societal structures are meaningless. At times, people assert older forms of identity in an effort to hold back change that seems frightening in its ability to rewrite what is “known”. Josef von Hommer’s path through the French Revolution and its aftermath could at first glance be viewed as that of a lost soul, struggling against the forces of modern life that were bound to overwhelm his mild-mannered search for compromise. His story, however, was much richer than this cold portrait. Hommer’s hope, and it was a fully possible one, was that structures from the past could be rebuilt to fit the future and identities remolded to create a just world. Joseph von Görres also looked to the past, albeit a much deeper mythological
one, for answers that he was certain would transform the present. For other people, like Franz von Lassaulx and Heinrich Marx, the ability to change one’s identity was welcome because it offered up new ways to imagine what society and individuals themselves might become. However, Lassaulx’s version of the future was based in new law codes and thus was as bound to reformulating societal structures as Hommer’s had been. Marx had to prove his loyalty to society just in order to survive. Society’s influence was persuasive because it provided security and a sense of place that people needed to make sense of their daily lives.

Gene Allen Smith and Sylvia Hilton have suggested another definition of identity that may be more helpful:

Identity is a socially constructed sense of self….Identities express a person’s sense of self in relation to society as a whole and to recognized social groups within the community. This means that membership in any one group depends on both the individual’s acceptance of that identity, and the group’s recognition of that person as a member….Finally, it is in the collective interest of any community to try and know and exert some control over the different personal identities of its members, but individuals may reject socially assigned identities, and sometimes they can try to keep one or more identities partially or wholly hidden.4

Thus the individual and the collective work together in identity creation. By allowing both sides equal weight in defining history, we can better make sense of how history was lived. History cannot exist without biography, and biography cannot be made real without the structures that undergird it. Such a claim does not mean that non-

biographical historical works are necessarily less authoritative. However, in order for the historical discipline to survive and continue to be valid in a rapidly changing world, it must recognize its responsibility to allow individual voices to be heard through the din of post-modern thinking. Readers of history, both academic and non-academic, are in search of meaning, and the people of the past are critical in providing grappling hooks with which one can make sense of the world.

The lives discussed in this dissertation have had much to tell us about how we can reorganize categories and create connections across boundary lines. Many more questions remained to be asked. One particularly challenging hurdle is that of public versus private concerns. Hommer, Lassaulx, Görres and the Marxes wrote down their thoughts for posterity at moments they found particularly troubling, when they believed that their voices might persuade others to change direction. Thus we are left with large gaps in their tales – the times at which their many different competing identities seemed to better balance one another and they were content. These stories all give off the appearance of profound discomfort, of pieces of a puzzle that did not fit together, but it is doubtful that any of these men were completely disenchanted with how their lives ended up. Instead, their daily lives were probably filled with equal amounts of compromise, more mundane issues, and a desire to improve themselves and their world.

The historical record, which survives on influence and chance, also leaves sizeable voids. This situation is particularly dire with the Marx family whose records have only been tediously assembled because of an interest in Karl's upbringing and thus lack some of the depth of my other characters who wrote (and whose thoughts
were preserved) much more regularly. What happened to Cerf Marx and his family in Aachen after they converted? Did they receive the acceptance and the stabilization of their livelihoods that they so desperately needed? What about the stories of women within these families – Katharina von Lassaulx, Franz’s sister and Görres’s wife; Benedikte Korbachs, Franz von Lassaulx’s wife; Maria Anna Gertrud Hommer, the bishop’s sister; and finally Michle Brisac, Henriette Presborg, and Henrietta Medex, wives of the three Marxes? They all profoundly impacted the lives of the men discussed here, yet only their names really remain. In thinking about these women, one soon uncovers other holes in the family stories. We cannot even tell if these gentlemen got along with one another, particularly after they made radical decisions that put them on different paths. When Franz von Lassaulx decided to join the Napoleonic administration how did it alter his friendship with Joseph von Görres who was so opposed to the French? How much could Heinrich Marx talk with his rabbi brother after he converted to Protestantism? The little evidence that we do have suggest that none of these relationships broke down completely, but they were no doubt transformed in important ways that we can no longer fully understand.

One must also ask whether if what has been learned from these cases could be applied to others. It is clear that, despite such a diverse range of experiences, similar concerns over religion, law, marriage, borders, and the openings offered by the French Revolution were vital societal issues in Trier and Coblenz. Other individuals living in these communities engaged these societal changes and spoke out about them, trying to convince others to join them. Yet there were also no doubt other problems that weighed equally heavy on people’s minds like economic concerns, disease, family rivalries, and
scientific/technological growth. Indeed, adding just a few more issues and case studies onto the table would no doubt mean reexamining my characters and uncovering new things about their identities.

If our range of vision expanded slightly either geographically or chronologically, other things might be learned. Just how far did the French/German border really extend? Would there be similar responses if one examined individuals in Bonn, Frankfurt or Munich? While it is difficult to ascertain anything for certain, it is probable that some reactions would be stronger in Trier and Coblenz because of their border positions, particularly those regarding national status, but others would be different. What would happen if one added the Enlightenment or 1848 into the discussion? Again, the French Revolution created and used a certain language that would not be found in other eras, but certain situations and responses were true across time. All of this uncertainty, however, points once again to a key point of this dissertation: boundary lines are porous and not easily demarcated.

The French Revolution was a period of intense instability in which individuals could not escape the fact that they were being given the ability to try something different and change the language through which society had previously been understood. Now they could make laws more equitable, have careers that their fathers could not imagine, change their faith, and become members of a national community. As society shifted, individuals in the Rhineland shifted with it and became members of new communities whose boundaries were especially permeable. The period points out, above all, just how possible it is for people to rewrite the direction of their lives and simultaneously question and possibly redirect the direction of society as a whole.
While other historians have pointed out the ways in which the French Revolution allowed people to rewrite their own life directions and begin remaking society, the stories of this dissertation have revealed a more complicated story. One cannot merely observe one aspect of a life or of society because it is at the intersection of various identities, past and present, that life is lived. We can never entirely make sense of this process because so much of it occurs subconsciously, but in making an effort we can see threads that begin to make patterns. The French Revolution opened an avenue to reidentification and reconfiguration of our beliefs and paradigms that has continued into the present. It attempted to establish new boundary lines between nations, between faiths, and between people that ultimately did the reverse of what their orginators probably envisioned. These new borders brought into question not only the way society had previously been arranged but also the new ways of thinking that everyone was supposed to embrace. This sense of permanent reexamination and doubt, so present in the lives of Joseph von Görres, Josef von Hommer, Franz von Lassaulx, and the Marxes, is the ultimate legacy of the French Revolution.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dawn Lynn Shedden was born on November 29, 1968 in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. She grew up in New Jersey and graduated in 1987 from West Morris Central High School. She received her B.A. in history from Wellesley College in Massachusetts in 1991, graduating *magna cum laude* with honors and elected to Phi Beta Kappa. She then attended the Universität Hannover in Hanover, Germany for one year. She spent several years working as Education Director at the St. Petersburg Museum of History before returning to school. In 1998 she received her M.A. in European History from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has taught since 2000 as an adjunct instructor at Eckerd College while raising three children and working to finish her degree.