

Spring 2017

# God and Revolution: Religion and Power from Pre-Revolutionary France to the Napoleonic Empire

Alexa Weight  
aweight12@wou.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.wou.edu/his>



Part of the [European History Commons](#), and the [History of Religion Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Weight, Alexa, "God and Revolution: Religion and Power from Pre-Revolutionary France to the Napoleonic Empire" (2017). *Student Theses, Papers and Projects (History)*. 64.  
<https://digitalcommons.wou.edu/his/64>

This Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of History at Digital Commons@WOU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Theses, Papers and Projects (History) by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@WOU. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@wou.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@wou.edu).

# God and Revolution: Religion and Power from Pre- Revolutionary France to the Napoleonic Empire

ALEXA WEIGHT  
HST 499W SENIOR SEMINAR

Primary Reader: Dr. Patricia Goldsworthy-Bishop

Secondary Reader: Dr. Elizabeth Swedo

## Introduction

In 1793, thousands of French citizens in Brie yelled, “Long live the Catholic Religion, we want our priests, we want the Mass on Sundays, and Holy Days,” at a meeting of French Revolutionaries.<sup>1</sup> 1793 marked the middle of the French Revolution. The French King, Louis XVI had been executed by guillotine on January 21, marking the end of the Bourbon dynasty of kings and the birth of a new, revolutionary republic. The Catholic Church, once united with the French Monarchy in political power, was replaced by secularized religion as the official religion of France. This secularization of French society resulted in Catholicism losing cultural, political, and social significance as part of a growing dechristianization movement in the country. Rapid changes were happening to France as a nation, to the point that even the official calendar was changed for political reasons, even including the names of the months. 1793 was the new Year One of the French calendar, revolutionaries declared. Regardless of the massive changes to France politically, one main aspect of French political power stayed the same: the use of religious liturgical rites and language was maintained politically for the consolidation of political power.

As indicated by this account, religion was an important political aspect of French society and continued to remain so throughout many different historical periods, under many different governments. Starting from the period of pre-revolutionary France, or the *Ancien Regime*, religion began to take an active role politically. Catholic liturgical rites and ceremonies were especially significant for the use of religion for political power. Under what can be termed as “royal religion,” Catholicism assimilated with the French Monarchy along with its ceremonial

---

<sup>1</sup> William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 261

practices.<sup>2</sup> As a result, Catholicism gave spiritual validity to the French monarch through the use of liturgical rites during a king's coronation. At the same time, the Catholic Church was granted status by the French government. The connection between Church and State was a long lasting political relationship as a result of it lasting several hundred years. However, the Catholic Church's growing unpopularity towards the end of the eighteenth century resulted in a shift in power.

### **Historiography**

July 14, 1989 marked the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the French Revolution as well as the beginning of a renewed interest in the topic by French historians in early modern French history. While religion has been a key topic within the study of the revolution, the examination of religions outside of Catholicism is new for historians. There are marked scholarly transitions regarding religion pertaining to the involvement of previously unrecognized religious groups and religious ideas. These groups include Deists and Jansenists. When examining the consolidation of political power through religion within the periods ranging from the *Ancien Regime* to the Napoleonic Empire, the inclusion of religious ideas outside of Catholicism is important. This historiography will examine different secondary sources examining the religious based ideas within Jansenism and Deism, to show the importance of religion within the historical narrative of three distinct eras of French history.

Historian David Garrioch's *the Making of Revolutionary Paris*, follows the scholarly trend of noting the social and political aspects to the creation of the revolutionary ideals that

---

<sup>2</sup> Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791*. Yale University Press, 1999. 11-12.

were growing in Paris and other French urban areas. Providing a scholarly look at the revolution, within a wide, overall contextual overview, Garrioch's book does note the spread of Enlightenment ideals on French intellectuals as the city of Paris is transformed from a *Ancien Regime* city to a revolutionary one. However, Garrioch follows the more traditional examination of revolutionary history writings, and only briefly looks at religion as a whole. He does, however, provide a chapter on the connection between religion and politics as France undergoes political and social transformations.<sup>3</sup> A source that provides a more specific look at religious intellectual thought from the Enlightenment is Charles A. Gliozzo's *The Philosophes and Religion: Intellectual Origins of the Dechristianization Movement in the French Revolution*. Even though the source was written in 1971, it differentiates itself from other scholarly sources prior to the reemergence of a popular interest in French history. This is because of its primary focus on Enlightenment literature that emphasizes dechristianization in France and the move towards less traditional religious thought by the *philosophes*. Gliozzo notes that other historians have long been "fascinated with the attitudes of the *philosophes* toward religion," but he manages to differentiate himself from other historians because of his examination of these Enlightenment religious ideas being put into political practice. He connects the ideas of Voltaire and Rousseau, not just to philosophical thought, but to how it influenced French political and religious practices. One example of this is his use of the *Civil Constitution of the Clergy* as one of his main primary sources.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris*. University of California Press, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Charles A. Gliozzo "The Philosophes and Religion: Intellectual Origins of the Dechristianization Movement in the French Revolution." *Church History* 40, no. 3 (1971): 273-283

Another historian that specifically examines newly emerging religious thought is Christopher J. Betts, in his book, *Early deism in France: From the so-called 'déistes' of Lyon (1564) to Voltaire's 'Lettres philosophiques*. Like Gliozzo, Betts focuses on the Deism movement. In his book, he notes the great importance placed on Deism, attributing the intellectual religious idea heavily with French philosophy. He also mentions the transformation that Deism created for religion, changing already existing political structures in French society. Betts uses Voltaire as a source as well, using Voltaire's ideas on religion to explain political change in France in the late 1700s. However, Betts splits his book sections to focus much more on Enlightenment thought. Interestingly, Voltaire's *Social Contract* is cited as an example of acceptance of another important form of new religious thought, Jansenism by French *philosophes*. Showing the direct connection that Jansenism has with Deism in terms of intellectual support. Jansenism is not often attributed to Deism directly when looking at secondary sources, so the inclusion of one of Voltaire's writings mentioning support of the movement is a new idea to religious sources.<sup>5</sup>

Another source that notes the importance of Jansenism in studying French religious history is Wallace K. Ferguson's *The Place of Jansenism in French History*. The source itself is one of the few that focuses primarily on Jansenism's political challenging of the Catholic Church, because of its incorporation of traditional Catholic ideas with other less traditional forms of religious thought. The theological writings of St. Augustine of Hippo, were the main influence of this movement. Jansenism is often only attributed to French history as a minor footnote, however, Ferguson makes a distinction by stating that the Catholic Church's control and

---

<sup>5</sup> Christopher J Betts. *Early deism in France: From the so-called 'déistes' of Lyon (1564) to Voltaire's 'Lettres philosophiques' (1734)*. Vol. 104. Springer Science & Business Media, 1984.

regulation of Jansenism is one of the key aspects of the advent of the French revolution as well as the growing social perception of the corruption of the Catholic Church at the time.<sup>6</sup> Although these sources may address Deism and Jansenism, two distinctively different religious ideas: one being a form of intellectual religious thought and the other a religious movement, these sources are examples of the changing emphasis of scholarly sources towards forms of religion other than Catholicism when examining French history.

### **Ancien Regime**

Many factors played into the growing unpopularity of the Catholic Church during the *Ancien Regime*. Within the *Ancien Regime*, the Catholic Church was a dominant political figure and the Catholic clergy were granted exemptions from paying many taxes to the French monarchy due to Catholicism's position as the official religion of France. The Church was allowed to "collect its own tax, the tithe," from the French population.<sup>7</sup> As a result, the Catholic Church began to gain special political and social status in France in exchange for its support of the monarchy. With the privileges granted to the Catholic Church economically, its political power grew because of the taxation money allowing the Catholic Church 10% of France's territory. This ownership of large amounts of French property also led to "seigneurial duties," of overlooking property and those who reside on it for the Monarchy.<sup>8</sup> Because of this, The French nobility and clergy became intertwined in association. Both groups began to hold equal wealth and status, while the highest positions within the Catholic Church were reserved for members of

---

<sup>6</sup> Wallace K. Ferguson, "The Place of Jansenism in French History." *The Journal of Religion* 7, no. 1 (1927): 16-42.

<sup>7</sup> Jeremy D. Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution*. (Routledge, 2016), 8-9

<sup>8</sup> Popkin, 8-9.

the nobility.<sup>9</sup>This power structure became unpopular with the Third Estate, part of the French political voting system, which made up of 97% of the French population. The Third Estate was constantly outvoted by the Catholic Church and the nobility, which made up a small part of the population, but held the most voting power.<sup>10</sup>The French public grew tired of the power that the Catholic Church was holding and the political corruption it created. Though supported by the nobility and monarchy, the general distaste for the Catholic Church's political power over voting rights, land, and taxation became its downfall, making distaste for the church one of the key components for the advent of the French Revolution.

With the fall of the Catholic Church, religion still continued to be maintained in revolutionary France. Importantly, structures for liturgical rites and language were sustained by the revolutionary government for political ceremonies.<sup>11</sup> The French Revolution brought about great religious changes to France, but these traditionally held Catholic structures were kept in place through the use of secular religion. The secularized religion of the revolution sought to transform the power and position that the Catholic Church originally had to its own revolutionary government. Secular religion, in this particular case, means beliefs and activities that have no religious connotations. Some of the original religious structures of liturgical rites, ceremonies, and language continued to be maintained, even after Catholicism was abolished. As France began to transition out of its revolutionary government in 1799 to the Napoleonic Empire in 1804, the use of liturgical rites and language for political power was continued by Napoleon. Napoleon, with the political support of the Catholic Church, preserved the progression of

---

<sup>9</sup> Popkin, 8-9.

<sup>10</sup> Popkin, 10-11.



different French political governments in using religion for political power. Despite the existence of three very different and distinct political entities from pre-revolutionary France to the Napoleonic Empire, the French state depended upon religion and its liturgical structures for the consolidation of political power through the use of religious ceremonies and language.

Within the *Ancien Regime*, religion was key to creating new political power in France through the use of liturgical rites and language. Yet, while there were many changes to the structuring of religion in France from the time of the Revolution up to the Napoleonic Republic, each era of French history used power differently. Nonetheless, religion is important to the governing of political power due to its connection with the French State. Furthermore, in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary France, politics and religion were closely tied concepts needed to maintain power. The intellectual movement of the Enlightenment was a main influence in the transition from traditional Catholic religion in the *Ancien Regime* to new religious thought. The use of religious language by Enlightenment figures, in particular, was a main aspect of the Enlightenment. Another main influence to the shifting of religious power was the Jansenism movement, a religious reform movement that was derived from Catholicism and used its liturgical structures. With the Enlightenment's emergence of the intellectual religious movement of Deism, as well as the spread of the Jansenist reform movement, these religious ideas grew in popularity with the French public. As a result, France created a new form of political power using religious language in intellectual writings and new religious movements.

Eighteenth century France consisted of a highly structured society. It was said to be "divided into as many different bodies as there are different groups in the kingdom. The clergy, nobility, the sovereign courts (of law), the lower courts, the officials attached to these tribunals,

universities, academies, the financial companies, all represent, throughout every part of the state.”<sup>12</sup> This hierarchical list does not even take into account the hundreds of others who made up French society at this time. Nonetheless, this social hierarchy that made up *Ancien Regime* France followed the liturgical rituals of the Catholic Church as well as the political rituals of the State. Overtime, the diverse population of Eighteenth century France began to create new forms of religious thought and language as the idea of having an individual religious belief outside of the Catholic Church began to emerge.<sup>13</sup> One important example of new religious thought was the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment was an intellectual movement, which occurred across Europe at various different times and places from about the 1600s to the 1800s. The timeline of this movement is often debated by historians.<sup>14</sup> The Enlightenment as a whole was influential in the spread of the idea of the importance in gaining knowledge in the Arts and Sciences. For France, the Enlightenment began around the early 1700s. The French Enlightenment promoted the spread of revolutionary ideas and attitudes regarding religion. The emphasis on religious thought and language during the French Enlightenment was important to changing other aspects of *Ancien Regime* society.<sup>15</sup> French philosophers, or *philosophes*, believed “reason” was the main ideal surrounding political and religious thought.<sup>16</sup> Religious tolerance was a key concept of the movement as a result. Most *philosophes* practiced, or were influenced by the religious

---

<sup>12</sup> David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris*. (University of California Press, 2002.) 7-10.

<sup>13</sup> Garrioch, 7-10.

<sup>14</sup> Ira O. Wade *The Structure and Form of the French Enlightenment, Volume 1: Esprit Philosophique*. Vol. 1. (Princeton University Press, 2015.) XI-XIII.

<sup>15</sup> Wade, XI-XIII.

<sup>16</sup> Charles A. Gliozzo “The Philosophes and Religion: Intellectual Origins of the Dechristianization Movement in the French Revolution.” *Church History* 40, no. 3 (1971): 273-283. p. 272-273.

intellectual idea of Deism. Deism was an active part of the French Enlightenment in particular. Deism is the belief that God created the Universe, but allows humans active free will in decisions.<sup>17</sup> Deism is also the philosophical and theological belief that though God exists, God is independent from the natural world, creating it, but not taking an active role. Deism originally was a non-defined form of religious heterodox, meaning that it took its structures from Catholicism, but moved away from Catholicism because of the Deist's idea of a God that is not involved in humanity.<sup>18</sup> Deism became part of Enlightenment thought around 1715, when Deism "compromised a combination of Christianity and rationalism, "it mixed religion with contemporary intellectual ideas".<sup>19</sup> This mixture of religious and scholarly ideas is what made Deism into a formal phase of religious philosophy that was an active part of the French Enlightenment movement and influential to French politics.

Deist ideas within the early writings of the French *philosophes*, such as Francois-Marie Arouet, popularly known as Voltaire, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, marked their first appearance during the French Revolution. The Deism based beliefs of both Voltaire and Rousseau marked the importance of Deism in *Ancien Regime* France. There was a shift in the original perception of Deism as a movement that was originally attacked by traditional Catholic theologians for being considered as an unorthodox verging on the heretical form of religion that "denies the sanctity of Christ."<sup>20</sup> Instead, Deism became a popular movement in French intellectual society. The growth of the printing press allowed for the mass spread of Enlightenment *philosophe* pamphlets and

---

<sup>17</sup> S.G. Hefelbower. "Deism Historically Defined." *The American Journal of Theology* 24, no. 2 (1920): 217-23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3155405>. 217-223.

<sup>18</sup> Gliozzo, 272-273.

<sup>19</sup> Christopher J Betts. *Early deism in France: From the so-called 'd istes' of Lyon (1564) to Voltaire's 'Lettres philosophiques' (1734)*. Vol. 104. Springer Science & Business Media, 1984. 235-359.

<sup>20</sup> Betts, 1984. 235-359.

intellectual *salons*, that were often run by women, were gaining traction. The spread of the concept of “public opinion” began to grow around 1750, this exchange of ideas led to the “rapidly growing number of periodicals,” which contributed to the communication network of all things political and social.<sup>21</sup> Both Voltaire and Rousseau were *philosophes* who were known for their use of Deist themes within their writings that criticize religion.<sup>22</sup>

Within Voltaire’s writings, the influence of Deism is apparent. Themes of Voltaire’s Deist views are especially notable when examining his work, *Candide: or, Optimism*. The novel, *Candide*, is the story of a Baron’s illegitimate nephew, Candide, who along with his tutor, Pangloss, live under the life philosophy of everlasting optimism as they face a series of misfortunes including; a shipwreck, cannibalism, and a number of other disasters. Throughout *Candide*, Voltaire satires religion, as well as previous traditional ideas about religion.<sup>23</sup> Within the novel, the Catholic Church and priests, in particular, are portrayed as corrupt. Religious leaders in the novel are shown to be hypocritical in the face of their own beliefs. Examples of this is when Candide meets a Priest’s daughter and a Franciscan monk who steals jewels. Even the ideal of paradise is depicted as “without priests,” within *Candide*, in the form of the legendary city of Eldorado.<sup>24</sup> This follows Deist beliefs of the Catholic Church and clergy being untrustworthy. At the same time, Deists did not believe all forms of religion were corrupting forces, this is indicative of the character of Jacques. Jacques is described as an Anabaptist, while being one of the most trustworthy and kind characters within the novel. Another example of Voltaire’s Deist beliefs is

---

<sup>21</sup> Popkin, 45-46.

<sup>22</sup> Betts, 1984. 235-359.

<sup>23</sup> Voltaire, *Candide*, 1759. Electronic Scholarly Publishing Project, 1998. 1-3. Retrieved from <http://www.esp.org/books/voltaire/candide.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Voltaire, *Candide*, 1759. Electronic Scholarly Publishing Project, 1998. 48-53. Retrieved from <http://www.esp.org/books/voltaire/candide.pdf>

shown in the recurring idea of optimism in the novel. Pangloss, Candide's tutor, teaches traditional religious philosophical ideas supporting the idea of optimism because "everything is for the best in this best of all worlds."<sup>25</sup> The philosophical idea of optimism within the novel correlates with what non-Deist *philosophes* believed, that since God is perfect then He must have created a perfect world. In the end of the novel, Candide denounces optimism as a whole. As Candide turns away from the religious philosophical idea of optimism, in a conversation about the negative state of the world with a Turkish dervish, the dervish tells him "What signifies it... whether there is evil or good? When His Highness sends a ship to Egypt does he trouble his head whether the rats in the vessel are at their ease or not?" In this metaphor, His Highness is God, the rats are humans, and the ship is the world; a very Deist view of the world being left to its own devices, though created by God. Thus, *Candide* indicates the appearance of Voltaire's Deist religious beliefs and perspectives of the Catholic Church within the novel.<sup>26</sup>

Voltaire was not the only writer to show religious themes during the *Ancien Regime*, the writer, Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, also features religious themes within his novel, *Paul and Virginia*. The novel takes place on the French colony of Ile de France, where the two title characters, Paul and Virginia, are childhood friends who grow up and fall in love.<sup>27</sup> The novel is yet another example of changing religious beliefs from the influence of the Enlightenment. Following with the Enlightenment idea that God can be found in nature, the wilderness of the island's jungle creates an earthly paradise, free from the influence and immorality of the outside world. Paul and Virginia are described as "never being frightened by a

---

<sup>25</sup> Voltaire, *Candide*, 1759. Electronic Scholarly Publishing Project, 1998. 1-58.  
Retrieved from <http://www.esp.org/books/voltaire/candide.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Voltaire, *Candide*, 1759. Electronic Scholarly Publishing Project, 1998. 92-97.  
Retrieved from <http://www.esp.org/books/voltaire/candide.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Ile de France is the French colonial name for the island of Mauritius.

punishing God, but rather, what they had been taught of religion made them love it: and if they did not make lengthy prayers in church, no matter where they were...at home, in the fields or in the woods-they lifted up to heaven innocent hands.”<sup>28</sup> While the natural world provided Paul and Virginia a sanctuary, religion held a rightful place in nature, outside of a place of political authority. In another scene, while Paul and Virginia are lost in the jungle as young children, rather than worrying, they place their uttermost faith into God to provide for them. They pray to God for guidance, only to receive all their needs, such as food. Their pet dog, Fidele, even shows up to find them after Virginia states: Let us pray, brother, and God will have pity on us,” to Paul.<sup>29</sup> However, it is noted within the novel that the church on the island is not a place that Paul and Virginia or their mothers go, by going there they are susceptible to the negative behaviors of the outside world. In examining the novel, *Paul and Virginia*, nature can be seen to represent new religious thought, like Deism, for its resistance to the negative influences of religious structures.

Though these examples of new religious thought in *Ancien Regime* literature give the impression of an all-consuming corruption of the French Church and State, it is an incorrect notion often attributed to Catholic power structures that the Catholic Church during the *Ancien Regime* held absolute power under the idea of absolutism. Absolutism is the idea that a person or institution holds total power and that they are only accountable to God, who is the one who gave them that power. This theory supports the idea that the French Monarchy and Catholic Church held uncontested power. It was originally believed that a governing body (in this case, the Catholic Church) holds absolute power within a society, and the French King was chosen by

---

<sup>28</sup> Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint- Pierre. *Paul and Virginia*, trans. John Donovan. (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 2005). 47-48.

<sup>29</sup> Bernardin de Saint- Pierre, 53-55.

God.<sup>30</sup> However, Absolutism is a myth. During the Seventeenth Century, checks to the power of both the French Monarchy and Catholic Church existed. The idea of absolutism is a “deceptively attractive explanatory concept: all power flows from the king.”<sup>31</sup> In actuality, the *Ancien Regime*’s political system was created in a way that no one institution could hold power. The French Monarchy was kept in check by the political structures of the royal council and parliament, as well as the Catholic Church. Alternatively, the Catholic Church was balanced by these structures as well.<sup>32</sup> This system, by its very existence, shows how Absolutism as a concept does not work. Absolutism, in theory, is autocratic. Autocracy does not rely on other entities for support or consultation, it “monopolizes power.”<sup>33</sup> Since both the Catholic Church and French Monarchy used the other for the consolidation of power, this makes Absolutism impossible. Therefore, Absolutism is a myth and common misconception within French history. However, having this knowledge is important to understanding historical pre-revolutionary power structures.<sup>34</sup> Consolidation of political power did exist for the foundation to the power of the Catholic Church, it just worked in unison with the French monarchy to gain and maintain its power. The liturgical rites and language used for the keeping of political power just helped with this political relationship.

Instead of Absolutism, when discussing the existing power dynamics of the *Ancien Regime*, moral authority (from religion) can be considered to be a resource for the maintaining of

---

<sup>30</sup> This idea was supported by the Catholic Church, who gained economic benefits from this support.

<sup>31</sup> David Parker, “Sovereignty, Absolutism and the Function of the Law in Seventeenth-Century France.” *Past & Present*, no. 122 (1989): 36-74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/650951>. 37-38.

<sup>32</sup> David Parker, "Sovereignty, Absolutism and the Function of the Law in Seventeenth-Century France." *Past & Present*, no. 122 (1989): 36-74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/650951>. 37-40.

<sup>33</sup> Nicholas Henshall, *The Myth of Absolutism: Change & Continuity in Early Modern European Monarchy*. Routledge, 2014. 1-3.

<sup>34</sup> Nicholas Henshall, *The Myth of Absolutism: Change & Continuity in Early Modern European Monarchy*. Routledge, 2014. 1-6.

religious power and authority. This moral authority was maintained through economics and politics. Chretien-Francois de Lamoignon stated that “the sovereign power in his Kingdom belongs to the king alone,” for “he is accountable only to God for the exercise of Supreme Power.”<sup>35</sup> The French monarchy’s connection to the Catholic Church helped create spiritual validation for the existence of the Monarchy. By stating that the French Monarchy ruled with the approval of the Church, it meant from a contemporary standpoint that the Monarchy had God’s approval. This was further validated by the presence of Catholicism within court ceremonies, the French King was crowned by a priest within a Catholic church, making the very political presence of the Monarchy being backed by the Catholic Church from the start of a king’s reign. This political connection between Church and State is important to know for understanding religious thought and criticism during the *Ancien Regime*. Through this comparison of Deism with traditional Catholic thought, Voltaire’s critiques on the power of the Catholic Church (as seen in *Candide*) and Deist beliefs during the *Ancien Regime* are more apparent. To the *philosophes*, progress for society was more important than the traditional viewpoint of the power of the Catholic Church and the French Monarchy, making those institutions the main figures of authority.<sup>36</sup> Within pre-revolutionary France, there was growing political discontentment and anticlericalism towards the Catholic Church.<sup>37</sup> During the *Ancien Regime*, France was ruled by the French Monarchy with the support of the Church, making both a focus of criticism by the *philosophes* due to their power.

---

<sup>35</sup> The French Revolution and Napoleon: A Sourcebook, *Lamoignon on the principles of the French monarchy*, edited by Philip G. Dwyer and Peter McPhee (New York: Routledge, 2002). 1-3.

<sup>36</sup> Charles A. Gliozzo. "The Philosophes and Religion: Intellectual Origins of the Dechristianization Movement in the French Revolution." *Church History* 40, no. 3 (1971): 273-283. 272-273.

<sup>37</sup> Anticlericalism can be defined as opposition to religion, both socially and politically.



*Philosophe* Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Deist ideas also became popular with the advent of the French Revolution, while remaining critical of the Catholic Church's power. Rousseau's Deist ideas, some of the more recognized and well known of his philosophical ideals, followed similar writings of the French *philosophes* within the Eighteenth Century. "The philosophes, the leading representatives of this movement of the Age of Enlightenment, applied to religious and social issues the rational approach to the world developed by scientists studying the natural world in the seventeenth century."<sup>38</sup> Rousseau's *Social Contract*, discusses his views on civic religion. In this document, Rousseau uses the Roman Empire as an example for the connection between theological and political practices going hand in hand regarding governance. Rousseau states the connection between religion with royal and civic laws caused a problem in terms of jurisdiction, making it difficult for good governance over a population. Rousseau sees the power of the Church as a problem in French society. This idea influenced Enlightenment perceptions of the Catholic Church as a result, and thus revolutionaries were influenced by Rousseau.<sup>39</sup>

Lesser known religious groups were more closely linked to religious reform in the Eighteenth Century as well. One such influential religious reform movement was the Jansenist movement. Jansenism was created by the Flemish theologian, Cornelius Jansen. Originating from the Catholic Church, Jansenism was originally an active part of Catholic theology when its doctrine was published as part of Jansen's manuscript, *Augustinus*. The religious group was considered a form of religious heterodoxy, a religion that comes from another religion, but does not follow the original religion's beliefs completely. Jansenism follows Catholicism almost completely, except for its ideas of humans having free will and belief in predestination.

---

<sup>38</sup> Jeremy D. Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution*. (Pearson, 2014.) 14-17.

<sup>39</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The social contract*. trans. Maurice Cranston. (Penguin Classics, 1968). 149-192.

Jansenism was influenced by the theology written by Augustine of Hippo, a Catholic theologian, who supported the belief in both these ideas of free will and predestination. Jansenism's status as originally part of the Catholic Church turned religious reform movement is shown in its description as "a revival of Augustinian theology, an opposition to formal religion and to the papal control of the national church, and an insistence on a high standard of morality-yet it is essentially an independent movement."<sup>40</sup> This changed, however, when changing religious reforms began to turn against the Jansenism's idea of predestination and lack of emphasis on communion.<sup>41</sup> Jansenism would be influential to the shifting of power in French society, alongside Deism, from the Church and State to the French people themselves. This can be especially seen when looking at the Jansenist religious movement's, "struggle of dissenting Catholics (Jansenists) against the orthodox Catholic Church and state was often conceived as a struggle not only for at least a limited form of religious toleration, but also against perceived Bourbon despotism".<sup>42</sup> However, Jansenism was much more rooted in religion than Deism would ever be. Though Jansenism "exercised very little influence on the development of Christianity in France," it was influential in the shifting of the power of the Catholic Church to one influenced by new religious thought.<sup>43</sup> Though it "left no lasting impression on French theology;" on paper and the movement appears to be simply a minor footnote in the theological narrative of French history, Jansenism was one of the main components for the downfall of the *Ancien Regime*.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Ferguson, 16-42.

<sup>41</sup> Dale K Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791*. (Yale University Press, 1999.) 59-62.

<sup>42</sup> Stephen J. Barnett, *The Enlightenment and religion: The myths of modernity*. (Manchester University Press, 2004.) p. 5-7.

<sup>43</sup> Wallace K. Ferguson, "The Place of Jansenism in French History." *The Journal of Religion* 7, no. 1 (1927): 16-42.

<sup>44</sup> Ferguson, 16-42.

To contemporary pre-revolutionary France, Jansenism was an extremely popular movement with the French that was emerging with more and more support as there was a growth in the movement of ideas and in social tensions within the urban setting of Paris. It was through this rise in sociability in French society that the Jansenists emerged. Blaming the papacy for the corruption of the Catholic Church created a controversy as the French Monarchy, alongside the Catholic Church began to abolish the movement. This conflict came to a head in 1715, when King Louis XIV allied himself with the Catholic Church as he feared the growth of the Jansenist movement would lead to a threat against the Monarchy and the Church's existing social and political orders. As a result, a papal bull, *Unigenitus Dei Filius* (1713) was issued. The papal bull, *Unigenitus*, was created and issued by Pope Clement XI to condemn the Jansenist movement in France. The document condemned the "101 'Jansenist propositions' extracted from the *Réflexions morales*," the leading document written by Jansenist theologian, Fr. Pasquier Quesnel as theological commentary on the New Testament from a Jansenist perspective. By condemning the document and Jansenist practices, it made the Jansenist movement heretical and therefore, illegal under French law. At the behest of the Catholic Church in as early as 1695, the French Monarchy was pushed to action against the movement by the Church. King Louis XIV had desired "religious uniformity" within his realm, an idea that Jansenism threatened from a political perspective.<sup>45</sup> The creation of this political document resulted in for "the next sixty years, the French Government and Catholic hierarchy tried to root out Jansenist dissidence of the parlements."<sup>46</sup> The conflict between the Catholic Church and the Jansenist movement resulted in not just the unpopularity of the Monarchy, but the unpopularity of the Catholic Church. The

---

<sup>45</sup> Jacques M. Gres-Gayer, "The Unigenitus of Clement XI: a fresh look at the issues." *Theological Studies* 49, no. 2 (1988): 259-282.

<sup>46</sup> Ferguson, 16-42.

attempts to eradicate the movement by both, harmed the political image of both entities and resulted in the involvement of Enlightenment figures giving support against both.<sup>47</sup>

Voltaire was in agreement with the Jansenist movement and its efforts to go against the structures of the Catholic Church. Voltaire's writings were highly influenced by the Jansenist movement, connecting both the intellectual movement of Deism and the religious reform movement of Jansenism together, not just as socially influential to French Society. Voltaire's work, *A Treatise on Toleration* is also a key philosophical work of his that addressed the ideals of Enlightenment thought in connection with Deist thought and his critique on religion. Voltaire even goes as far as to directly give his support to the Jansenist movement, when he notes in the section, "Whether it is Useful to Maintain People in their Superstition," that "Those we call Jansenists contributed greatly to rooting out gradually from the spirit of the nation the greater part of the false ideas which dishonored the Christian religion."<sup>48</sup> Voltaire's *Treatise on Toleration*, notes the influence that new religious thoughts and movements had on the power of the Catholic Church, making it a political authority that needs to be questioned, with his support of the Jansenists. Within this document, Voltaire exemplifies the shift from orthodox Catholicism as the foundation of power within pre-revolutionary French society into the emerging views of Deism and Jansenism.<sup>49</sup>

With the combined efforts of both the Jansenism and Deism movements, Catholicism lost its place of power after centuries of political control. Thus, marked the end of traditional religion

---

<sup>47</sup> Jacques M. Gres-Gayer, "The Unigenitus of Clement XI: a fresh look at the issues." *Theological Studies* 49, no. 2 (1988): 259-282.

<sup>48</sup> Voltaire, *Toleration and Other Essays (1755)*. trans. Joseph McCabe. (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1912). Accessed <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/349>

<sup>49</sup> Voltaire, *Toleration and Other Essays (1755)*. trans. Joseph McCabe. (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1912). Accessed <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/349>

in France and the beginning of nontraditional secular religion as the center of political power.<sup>50</sup> Voltaire refers to the Jansenists in his *Treatise*, which commended them for their active rebellion from the authority of the Catholic Church, who was a main factor of corruption in Voltaire's eyes. In Voltaire's *Treatise*, he wrote, "those we call Jansenists contributed greatly to rooting out gradually from the spirit of the nation the greater part of the false ideas which dishonored the Christian religion. People ceased to believe that it was sufficient to recite a prayer to the Virgin Mary for thirty days so that they could do what they wish and sin with impunity the rest of the year."<sup>51</sup> Part of Voltaire's agreement with Jansenism was due to his own personal ideas of religion being a solid concept at a very basic level, but also as a corruptive force that used superstition within its consolidation of power. The use of saints and relics by the Catholic Church were a way of controlling the masses and maintaining a high hierarchical position. Only "reason" could prevail in keeping logic in check in this situation. Religious theological structures, such as excommunication, were simply ways of keeping French society under the Catholic Church's thumb. Therefore, Voltaire was in agreement with the Jansenist movement and its efforts to go against the structures of the Catholic Church. The discontentment with the Catholic Church over the years led to the foundation of a new religious political structure to French society, influenced by a mixture of Deist intellectual ideas mixed with the Jansenist movement being popularized by the French public. The importance of religion is highlighted in the repression of other religions besides Catholicism by the *Ancien Regime*, which led to the

---

<sup>50</sup> Clement XI (September 8, 1713) Unigenitus from *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Trans. Theodore Alois Buckley. London: George Routledge and Co., 1851. 345-358.

<sup>51</sup> Voltaire, *Toleration and Other Essays (1755)*. trans. Joseph McCabe. (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1912). Accessed <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/349>

Catholic Church's political downfall as it fell with the French Monarchy. New religious reforms were born out of revolutionary ideas, different from Catholicism, but resulting in the advent of secularized religion within French society.

### **Revolutionary**

As the popularity and political status of Catholicism diminished within French society towards the end of the eighteenth century, the use of religion for political power remained. Regardless of the change of government and the depleting position of the Catholic Church, liturgical rites and language continued to be used by the newly developed revolutionary government.

Beginning in 1789, the French Monarchy and Church, as a result of their intertwined status, began to be questioned by French society, including newly emerging political factions. With the growth of new religious intellectual ideas, political clubs began to form around France. Starting in Paris, the creation of various political clubs led to the creation of a network all across France. Of these various political clubs, two main political factions originated out of the public's discontentment with the existing political structure, the Jacobins and the Girondins. The Jacobins, originally known as the "Society of Friends of the Constitution," would later on become the largest of these political groups. The Girondins were a smaller, more politically moderate political faction compared to the Jacobins more radical political approach that would occur later on in the Revolution.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, both groups would play a large role in challenging the authority of the Catholic Church, and the French Monarchy by association.

---

<sup>52</sup> Michael L. Kennedy. *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution, 1793-1795*. Vol. 3. (Berghahn Books, 2000). 1-5.

One key document that the Jacobins and Girondins used for the consolidation of political power against the Catholic Church was the creation of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* in 1789, a foundational political document for the French Revolution. A political document passed by the National Assembly, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, under the political support of the Jacobins and Girondins, established civil rights and liberties within 17 different articles. It inspired revolutionary ideals as a result of Article I declaring that there exist inviolable rights to French citizens by stating that all “men are born and remain free and equal in rights.”<sup>53</sup> Other articles within the document mention the right to participate in legislation, the right to property, and freedom of speech. Though it included only male, landholding French citizens, the document’s creation made the French political structure more accessible for more of the population.<sup>54</sup>

However, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* not only served to increase political liberties, it also served as a critic of the *Ancien Regime* political structure, especially the Catholic Church and the French Monarchy. The addressing of the ideas of Freedom of Religion and Freedom of Speech are two main political ideals particularly mentioned in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*. In Article 10, both ideas are emphasized together as liberties that did not exist under the Catholic Church and the French Monarchy’s influence because of the dominance of Catholicism is addressed.<sup>55</sup> The article states that “no man may be harassed for his opinions, even religious ones,” the emphasis on religion in having the freedom to speech

---

<sup>53</sup> The French Revolution and Napoleon: A Sourcebook. *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*. Edited by Philip G. Dwyer and Peter McPhee. (Routledge, 2002). 26-28.

<sup>54</sup> The French Revolution and Napoleon: A Sourcebook. *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*. Edited by Philip G. Dwyer and Peter McPhee. (Routledge, 2002). 26-28.

<sup>55</sup> The French Revolution and Napoleon: A Sourcebook. *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*. Edited by Philip G. Dwyer and Peter McPhee. (Routledge, 2002). 26-28.

opinions is notable in this article because of the significance that religion is given over other forms of opinions.<sup>56</sup> The creation of this document and its stress laid on religion within Freedom of Speech indicates the importance of religion politically by the Jacobins and Girondins.

During the same timeline for political change, great religious changes were happening too under the influence of the Jacobins and Girondins. Due to the church's rank as a wealthy landowner and having high status under the *Ancien Regime*, on July 12, 1790, the *Civil Constitution of the Clergy* was passed by the National Assembly. This led to the confiscation of church lands and the collection of tithes, as well as limited the church's power by causing a rift between the Catholic Church and the new French government. The *Civil Constitution of the Clergy*, limited clerical power by reducing priests and bishops, making clergy government employees, and making clergy swear allegiance to the French State.<sup>57</sup> This change resulted in the reversing of political power, where the state was once accountable to the Catholic Church, the Catholic Church is now held accountable to the French State. All of the wealth and status of the Catholic Church that it had gained in its association with the French State during the *Ancien Regime* was being taken away by the same sort of political entity that the Catholic Church had once validated power for. With the occurrence of this law came a growing wave of dechristianization within French society as a religious schism occurred between those in support of the Revolution and those against. The clergy began to lose its privileges and status that was afforded to them by the *Ancien Regime*. Even though the connection and control of the Church over political matters was loosening by the 1780s, the connection between politics and religion

---

<sup>56</sup> The French Revolution and Napoleon: A Sourcebook. *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*. Edited by Philip G. Dwyer and Peter McPhee. (Routledge, 2002). 26-28.

<sup>57</sup> The Civil Constitution of the Clergy, July 12, 1790 J.H. Robinson, ed., *Readings in European History* 2 vols. (Boston: Ginn, 1906), 2: 423-427. Hanover Historical Texts Project.



in France became intertwined within public perception.<sup>58</sup> The historian, Michel Vovelle, notes that the spread of dechristianization began in the French provinces, much like how the spread of paranoia, known as, “The Great Fear” occurred. The “Great Fear” was a period in 1789 of mass paranoia and panic that the French king desired to overthrow the Third Estate from political power, thus leaving a majority of the French population without political representation. Due to the spread and creation of many different political clubs, dechristianization spread due to the influence of anti-Catholic political ideals. This dechristianization movement is tracked through, “municipal conformism, “such as the removal of church bells and silver plates from Catholic churches, and other forms of much more dramatic breaks. Much more dramatic examples included the closure of churches and *autos-da-fe*. *Autos-da-fe* are masquerades in the form of iconoclastic demonstrations, where people would celebrate processions in the streets by wearing priests’ robes and setting fire to religious paintings, statues, and confessionals in a form of celebration.<sup>59</sup> While the revolutionary government maintained the tradition of Catholic festivals and events, these new, secularized festivals used violence towards clergy and desecration of religious items in order to make a political power move as an act of discrediting the Catholic Church. Violence against priests and other clerical members of the Catholic Church grew rapidly as well.

One such mass act of violence against priests was the 1792 “September Massacres.” The “September Massacres,” were a direct result of the Jacobins who called for and actively participated in them. Though the National Convention did not support the massacres, nor did it

---

<sup>58</sup> Aston, Nigel. *Religion and Revolution in France, 1780-1804*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000. 103-122.

<sup>59</sup> Michel Vovelle, *The revolution against the Church: from reason to the Supreme Being*. The Ohio State University Press, 1991. 1-30.

order them, the government did support these violent actions once they were underway. “On September 2, 1792, with the growing spread of the dechristianization and anticlericalism, revolutionaries and those in support of the new government began to grow suspicious of counterrevolutionaries<sup>60</sup> With the fall of Verdun from counterrevolutionary Prussian forces, clergy in particular were blamed for the political crisis. <sup>61</sup>Revolutionary militants as a result stormed Paris prisons holding counterrevolutionary prisoners. They ended up killing over 1,300 people, among them 240 priests, all of who were non-juring priests that refused to take the oath created by *the Civil Constitution of the Clergy*. Over the course of several days from September 2-5, with the support of the revolutionary government. <sup>62</sup> An account of the massacre was retold by Restif de la Bretonne, a witness to the massacres at the” priests’ prison” San-Firmin. At San-Firmin, de la Bretonne witnesses the killing of his parish priest, Abbe Gros, who, when asked “So, why have you retracted your oath?”<sup>63</sup> replied by turning his back to the mob. Abbe Gros, as a result, was thrown out the window by his attackers, a noted “gentle death” by de la Bretonne. <sup>64</sup> These acts of violence towards clerical members shows the shift in politics and towards Catholicism in France as a result of radical, anti-clerical norms leading to the subjugation of violence as a way of political dominance over the Catholic Church. These violent events suggest that Catholicism was viewed as a political threat by the revolutionary government because of the extent of the violence by the Jacobins towards clergy. The dechristianization movement was no supported by all in revolutionary France, in the French countryside, where there was a wave of

---

<sup>60</sup> Anyone who does not support the revolutionary government, in particular, clergy and nobility.

<sup>61</sup> Philip G. Dwyer and Peter McPhee. *The French Revolution and Napoleon: A Sourcebook*. Psychology Press, 2002. 66-67.

<sup>62</sup> Jeremy D Popkin. *A Short History of the French Revolution*. Routledge, 2016. 58-59.

<sup>63</sup> Referring to his oath of loyalty to the French Nation under the Civil Constitution of the Clergy

<sup>64</sup> “Restif de la Bretonne. “The September Massacres, 1792.” *Les Nuits de Paris*, part XVI (Paris, 1963), 277-84.

support for the Catholic Church and the existence of a counterrevolutionary movement.<sup>65</sup> It has been noted that even lay French villagers were known to support the sanctity of the Catholic Church, which remained popular in more rural areas of France throughout the Revolution. Nevertheless, there were also more non-violent forms of dechristianization that existed under the revolutionary government.

As there began a political shift through the establishment of political clubs and the creation of legislature, such as the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, the atmosphere began to shift towards more revolutionary and anti-clerical ideas. France was in the middle of a creation of a new political era. However, the French King, Louis XVI, though heavily associated with the Catholic Church, was not viewed as a corrupting force. Rather, it was popularly believed by the French public that the Catholic Church was an exploitative figure of authority over King Louis XVI, controlling him from behind the throne. The idea of corrupt Catholic Church control did not dissipate until the King's attempted flight from France. On June 21, 1791, a man named Jean-Baptiste Drouet, recognized the King, Queen Marie-Antoinette, and the rest of the royal family as they attempted to escape France in fear of their lives as political upheaval of the institution of a new political government grew. Spotted and caught in the town of Varennes, in an attempt to make it to Austria, the royal family were swiftly returned to Paris.<sup>66</sup> The French public was outraged by this attempted escape. The King's flight is noted to have "forced supporters of the Revolution to consider the possibility that France might be better off

---

<sup>65</sup> Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791*. (Yale University Press, 1999.) 171-173.

<sup>66</sup> Timothy Tackett. *When the king took flight*. (Harvard University Press, 2009.) 6-10.

without a monarch.”<sup>67</sup> The king was arrested on August 13, 1792 and on September 21, 1792, France was declared a Republic. The political component of King Louis XVI’s unpopularity, because of his attempted escape as well as of fear of a Prussian invasion in retaliation for the abolishment of the French Monarchy led to the king being put on trial.

In what was a trial for show, King Louis XVI was found guilty for, “attempts against liberty and of conspiracy against the general security of the state.”<sup>68</sup> A political vote was made by the revolutionary government about the king’s fate. Though the Girondins advocated for the French public to vote to decide on the King’s fate and were heavily against the King’s execution, the Jacobins supported the King’s execution, winning the vote by a small majority. On January 21, 1792, King Louis XVI, now known as Louis Capet, was executed by guillotine in front of a large crowd at the Place de la Concorde, marking a birth of a new, radical political government.<sup>69</sup>

The death of Louis XVI resulted in not only change to political structure, but changes to the keeping of time itself. While *Ancien Regime* France was under a Christian calendar, which focused on the feast days of saints and other religious events, the French revolution began a new revolutionary calendar in 1793, that officially was recorded to have begun on September 21, 1792 with the establishment of the New Republic. Known as the French Republican Calendar,” the year was divided into twelve months of thirty days each, with five complementary days and a sixth every leap year in order to maintain the coincidence with the solar year. Each month was divided into three ten-day periods called decades and the week was abolished. <sup>70</sup> The first year

---

<sup>67</sup> Popkin, 48.

<sup>68</sup> Popkin, 64-65.

<sup>69</sup> Popkin, 63-65.

<sup>70</sup> George Gordon Andrews. "Making the Revolutionary Calendar." *The American Historical Review* 36, no. 3 (1931): 515-32. doi:10.2307/1837912.

of the Revolution was referred to as the “First Year of the Republic, or *Moniteur*” making the revolutionary calendar start the recording of dates and seasons from the very beginning, in order to reflect the new beginnings of the Revolutionary government. The calendar used festivals as a way of marking time and replacing religious dates. Much like the Saints’ feast days were considered sacred within French society, these new celebration days in the calendar represented the perceived sacredness of revolutionary ideals with the creation of philosophical ideas in replacement of religious ones, examples being festivals celebrated for the ideals of "Virtue, Genius, Labor, Opinion, Rewards"<sup>7172</sup> Rather than have Saints associated with the calendar for Feast Days however, the revolutionary calendar days were named in association to nature and rural life, including "grains, fields, trees, roots, flowers, fruits, plants."<sup>73</sup> The intention for the revolutionary calendar was to reduce and destroy the influence that the Catholic Church had on everyday life.<sup>74</sup> By replacing religious events with secular ones, this insured secularized political power in its stead. At the same time, the king’s death and the disappearance of Catholic religious dates are indicative of the growing dechristianization movement that was occurring in France also during the early period of the French Revolution.

By 1794, Catholic liturgical rites and other forms of celebrations had evolved into the “Cult of the Supreme Being.”<sup>75</sup> As Catholicism was replaced with “the Cult of the Supreme Being,” Catholic feast days were abolished in favor of festivals in honor of Reason and other

---

<sup>71</sup> George Gordon Andrews. "Making the Revolutionary Calendar." *The American Historical Review* 36, no. 3 (1931): 515-32. doi:10.2307/1837912.

<sup>72</sup> Mona and Alan Sheridan Ozouf, *Festivals and the French revolution*. (Harvard University Press, 1991). 21-30.

<sup>73</sup> George Gordon Andrews. "Making the Revolutionary Calendar." *The American Historical Review* 36, no. 3 (1931): 515-32. doi:10.2307/1837912.

<sup>74</sup> George Gordon Andrews. "Making the Revolutionary Calendar." *The American Historical Review* 36, no. 3 (1931): 515-32. doi:10.2307/1837912.

<sup>75</sup> Michel Vovelle, *The revolution against the Church: from reason to the Supreme Being*. (The Ohio State University Press, 1991). 1-30.

Enlightenment ideals by new revolutionary political policies. This abolishment was the result of a series of laws created by the influence of revolutionaries and the National Assembly.<sup>76</sup> These festivals, as a result, helped in the creation of the revolutionary government's own historical narrative, which is emphasized with the creation of the revolutionary calendar itself. New festivals were created in reflection of political changes and to show the equality of the revolution in contrast to the values of the *Ancien Regime*. These new secular forms of religious organization were important to revolutionary culture as a whole.<sup>77</sup>

The extent of the political influence of politics on the new "secular religion," is evident with Maximilien Robespierre's involvement with the "Cult of the Supreme Being" and the celebration of secular religious festivals, as a revolutionary political figure. Maximilien Robespierre was a famous French revolutionary who was leader of the Jacobins, as well as a member of the Committee of Public Safety. Under by authority of the National Convention in 1793, the Committee of Public Safety was specifically set up with the intention of stopping "anti-revolutionary" behaviors and treason. The formation of the Committee lead to a chaotic period of violence known as "The Terror."<sup>78</sup> "The Terror" lasted from 1793-1794, resulting in the deaths of thousands of members of the *Ancien Regime* nobility and clergy. Robespierre contributed to the theology of the French Revolution politically with his support of the transition from Catholicism to the secular religion of the "Cult of the Supreme Being", as a political and "pro-

---

<sup>76</sup> The elected legislature of revolutionary France.

<sup>77</sup> Mona, and Alan Sheridan Ozouf, *Festivals and the French revolution*. (Harvard University Press, 1991). 1-14; 20-35.

<sup>78</sup> Lynn Avery Hunt *Politics, culture, and class in the French Revolution*. Vol. 1. University of California Press, 2004. 19-52.

revolutionary move.”<sup>79</sup> The “Cult of the Supreme Being” was both a political and pro-revolutionary based secular religious concept because of its emphasis on revolutionary ideals of Justice and Reason being the highest forms of intellectual reasoning. The “Supreme Being” in Robespierre’s decree is shown to exemplify these ideals based upon the morality of which the religion is stated to be based upon. Being considered of moral character is stated by Robespierre as being opposite of the immoral nature of the Catholic Church. While the Catholic Church is referred to as a “Church of priests,” with only the desires and greed of priests existing, the “Cult of the Supreme Being,” is a “church of Nature” aimed at the needs of the French people <sup>80</sup>

With the passing of Robespierre’s *Decree Establishing the Cult of the Supreme Being*, on May 7, 1794 (Floreal in the revolutionary calendar), the secular religion was politically approved by the National Convention, replacing Catholicism as the official religion of France. Within this decree, the language addressing the “Supreme Being” is highly religious. The “Supreme Being,” is the metaphorical concept of Justice personified. The “Supreme Being” is referred to and personified as “He” following the religious Catholic tradition of addressing God as masculine. Robespierre starts by mentioning, “the day forever fortunate has arrived, which the French people have consecrated to the Supreme Being.”<sup>81</sup> Robespierre then goes on to create the revolutionary concept of the “Supreme Being,” as a mythic figure that brings wisdom, justice, and equality to the people of France after years of these revolutionary concepts in the guise of a

---

<sup>79</sup> Lynn Avery Hunt *Politics, culture, and class in the French Revolution*. Vol. 1. University of California Press, 2004. 19-52.

<sup>80</sup> Maximilien Robespierre, “Decree Establishing the Cult of the Supreme Being.” Harrison Fluss, *Revisiting the Cult of the Supreme Being*. Jacobin Magazine, 2016. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/01/robespierre-rousseau-religion-separation-church-state-kim-davis/>

<sup>81</sup> Maximilien Robespierre, On the Cult of the Supreme Being. ed. R.R. Palmer. *History of the Modern World*, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition. Fordham University.

secular religious form being a “slave” to tyranny.<sup>82</sup> The tyrants referred to in the text being the King and the Church. Although Robespierre mentions many religious allusions within the text, it features a lot of anti-clerical language as well, such as referring to priests as “like animals, to the chariots of kings and to give to the world examples of baseness, pride, perfidy, avarice, debauchery, and falsehood.”<sup>83</sup> This source indicates the heavy presence of the attitude of anti-clericalism during the Revolution as well as shows the usage of religious language and rituals for political power. By using religious language against the clergy, this suggests that it was a way for the revolutionary government to take political power from the original source and transform it to fit newly forming political structures.<sup>84 85</sup>

Robespierre gave a speech to the National Assembly in support of the “Cult of the Supreme Being”, which led to a political decree by the National Convention in 1794. The *Decree Establishing the Cult of the Supreme Being* established fifteen articles that declared the official status of the “Cult of the Supreme Being” under the French government and detailed its observances. Article I declares, “The French people recognizes the existence of the Supreme Being, and the immortality of the soul.” Article V also introduced secular religious festivals of the “Cult of the Supreme Being”: “These festivals shall be named after the glorious events of our Revolution, the virtues which are most dear to men, and most useful, and the chief blessings of

---

<sup>82</sup> Maximilien Robespierre, On the Cult of the Supreme Being. ed. R.R. Palmer. *History of the Modern World*, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition. Fordham University.

<sup>83</sup> Maximilien Robespierre, On the Cult of the Supreme Being. ed. R.R. Palmer. *History of the Modern World*, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition. Fordham University.

<sup>84</sup> Maximilien Robespierre, On the Cult of the Supreme Being. ed. R.R. Palmer. *History of the Modern World*, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition. Fordham University.

<sup>85</sup> Maximilian Robespierre, “The Festival of the Supreme Being,” trans. Mitchell Abidor. *Receuil d’hymnes Républicaines*. Paris, Chez Barba, Year 2 of the Republic [1793].



nature.”<sup>86</sup> A clear political undertone appears in the document with a reference to the “Committee of Public Safety,” indicating in Article VIII that the functionality of these festivals and observances are in actuality much more of a political statement. Mandates required that, “The Committees of Public Safety and of Education are instructed to present a scheme for the organization of these festivals.”<sup>87</sup> The significance of the existence of these Committees is that by creating organizations that are created for the protection of revolutionary culture and ideals alongside revolutionary festivals, with secular religion being kept in mind, this created a unique form of religion. It legitimizes the revolutionary government, because though many changes were made to French society, traditional Catholic ceremonial structures and language were maintained as a way to popularize and validate these new political structures. Within the document, because of the presence of prominent revolutionary organizations such as the Committee of Public Safety and the Committee of Education, both of which enforced revolutionary beliefs, the source indicates that there is a definite political influence in French revolutionary secularized religion.

The political functionality of The “Cult of the Supreme Being” is also apparent in political propaganda of the festivals. The French revolutionary artist, Jacques-Louis David was hired by Robespierre in 1790 to positively depict revolutionary political ideals into artwork.<sup>88</sup> Hired as Robespierre’s “unofficial minister of the arts,” David created neoclassical paintings

---

<sup>86</sup> Maximilien Robespierre, “Decree Establishing the Cult of the Supreme Being.” Harrison Fluss, *Revisiting the Cult of the Supreme Being*. Jacobin Magazine, 2016. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/01/robespierre-rousseau-religion-separation-church-state-kim-davis/>

<sup>87</sup> Maximilien Robespierre, “Decree Establishing the Cult of the Supreme Being.” Harrison Fluss, *Revisiting the Cult of the Supreme Being*. Jacobin Magazine, 2016. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/01/robespierre-rousseau-religion-separation-church-state-kim-davis/>

<sup>88</sup> Jacques-Louis David, National Gallery of Art Biography, 2016. *National Gallery of Art*. <https://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/artist-info.1212.html>

with politically revolutionary undertones. One famous example is David's neoclassical themes in his paintings appears in the painting, *The Death of Marat*. Within the painting, it depicts the assassination of Jean-Paul Marat, a high ranking member of the Jacobins. In the painting, Jean-Paul Marat is depicted as dead in a bathtub after being killed by Charlotte Corday, a Girondin supporter, Marat is shown painted in David's familiar neoclassical painting style, a style that he mixes with the idea of Marat as a revolutionary martyr.<sup>89</sup> These sorts of artistic works inspired other revolutionary artists, like Pierre-Antoine Demachy, to depict these secular religious festivals positively.<sup>90</sup> An example of this form of political propaganda using a festival of the *Supreme Being* is in Demachy's, *The Festival of the Supreme Being*. The painting depicts large crowds of French citizens with hints of neoclassical features that were popular symbolically during the French Revolution. Crowds of men, women, children, and even some dogs appear to be relaxing on near a hill decorated with a statue of the "Supreme Being." The vast crowd suggests the popularity of the secular religion, while the naturalness of the event can be perceived by the appearance of people of all sorts who are sitting and standing in groups as if they are attending a picnic surrounded by a hill and trees leading to the altar as if in a park. The constructed temple is neoclassical bringing imagery that subtly compares the event to one of the Roman Empire. Religious festivals were also considered social events and during the revolutionary period from 1789-1799, the two ideas were often compared. The painting also features many people waving revolutionary flags.<sup>91</sup> This painting indicates the extent of the

---

<sup>89</sup> Jacques-Louis David, "Death of Marat, 1793," Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium.

<sup>90</sup> Jacques-Louis, David. National Gallery of Art Biography, 2016. *National Gallery of Art*. <https://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/artist-info.1212.html>

<sup>91</sup> Pierre-Antoine Demachy, "Festival of the Supreme Being," 1794. *Musee Carnavalet*.

influence of revolutionary ideas about religion by showing a revolutionary festival that is heavy with religious symbolism.

The discontentment with the Catholic Church led to the foundation of a new religious political structure to French society, influenced by a mixture of religious intellectual ideals mixed with new religious groups being popularized by the French public. The importance of religion is highlighted in the fact that the repression of other religions besides Catholicism by the *Ancien Regime* led to the Catholic Church's political downfall the French Monarchy. Another example is that already preexisting religious liturgical rites and structures were maintained even after religion was not. In 1794, Robespierre's ordering of the deaths of fellow revolutionaries, Georges Danton and Camille Desmoulins in a bid for maintaining political power led to his eventual downfall. This decision was hugely unpopular with French citizens, leading to The National Convention deeming Robespierre a tyrant for his actions. He was executed by guillotine on July 28, 1794, marking the end of "The Terror" as well as the "Cult of the Supreme Being." Thus began a political shift in France that replaced the National Convention with a new political entity known as "The Directory," which governed France from 1795 to 1799. Consisting of a five-member committee, it remained in control as economic problems and the aftereffects of revolutionary violence occurred, consisting of the last four years of the Revolution, it ended in 1799 when General Napoleon Bonaparte established himself as leader of France.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup> Howard G. Brown, *Ending the French Revolution: Violence, justice, and repression from the Terror to Napoleon*. (University of Virginia Press, 2007.) 1-47.

## Napoleonic Section

With the fall of the French Republic's secular religious structures came the establishment of the Napoleonic Empire. When Napoleon came to power in 1799 by a coup d'état, it was unknown exactly what the politico-religious structures would be within Napoleon's Empire. Napoleon can be considered to be a "product of the Enlightenment."<sup>93</sup> Napoleon's political rule would continue the role held by French religion as part of a continuing narrative of gaining popular support among the French population through religious rites and language. This form of political action was consistent with the *Ancien Regime* and revolutionary governments because of the continuation of Catholic based practices. Though how religion was utilized for the consolidation of power changed with the fall of previously existing political structures, Napoleon used religion as a form of political validation through his association with more than one religion during his reign. Even as Napoleon's religious policies changed throughout his regime, religion and power remain interconnected as a recurring theme within his eventual alliance with the Catholic Church and his use of religion during his military campaign in Egypt.

Napoleon used religion in connection to power by changing his viewpoints to fit his political needs. Due to Napoleon's precarious political position of making himself Emperor, he sought out political support.<sup>94</sup> In 1801, Napoleon Bonaparte and Pope Pius VII signed an agreement referred to as the *Concordat of 1801*, which was an agreement between the French secular Government and the Catholic Church that gave Napoleon a powerful alliance with the Catholic Church. He made an alliance with the Catholic Church in order to gain and maintain

---

<sup>93</sup> Frank J. Coppa, *Controversial concordats: The Vatican's relations with Napoleon, Mussolini, and Hitler*. CUA Press, 1999. p. 7-10.

<sup>94</sup> Coppa, p. 7-10.

political power in France rather than due to having any religious personal sentiments.<sup>95</sup> Napoleon was “willing to use the church to support order and morality among his subjects and to solidify his reign. He regarded it as an institution of his empire and the Pope as an imperial officer.”<sup>96</sup> In order to ensure political stability, Napoleon at the beginning of his reign portrayed himself publicly as an ideal Christian in support of the Catholic Church. Napoleon was quoted as stating that “Paris was to be a metropolis of Christendom.”<sup>97</sup> With this political vision, Napoleon sought to not only make France the political capital of the world, but the religious capital of the world as well. This indicates that Napoleon as a political leader recognized religion as an equally important aspect to politics in the consolidation of power.<sup>98</sup>

The Concordat between Napoleon and Pope Pius VII in 1801 indicates Napoleon’s alliance with the Catholic Church as a way of achieving political ambition. The political agreement saw the synthesis of Church and State in France with the “mutual recognition” of each party with one another. Pope Pius VII was allowed to reintroduce bishops and other clergy to France as well as reinstate religious institutions previously abolished during the French Revolution. In exchange for this agreement, Napoleon was granted, as stated in Article 1, “The Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion shall be freely exercised in France: its worship shall be public, and in conformity with the police regulations which the Government shall deem necessary for the public

---

<sup>95</sup> Hosack, Kristen A. "Napoleon Bonaparte’s Concordat and the French Revolution." *Constructing the Past* 11, no. 1 (2010): 5.

<sup>96</sup> Hans Kohn. "Napoleon and the Age of Nationalism." *The Journal of Modern History* 22, no. 1 (1950): 21-37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1875877>.

<sup>97</sup> Hans Kohn. "Napoleon and the Age of Nationalism." *The Journal of Modern History* 22, no. 1 (1950): 21-37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1875877>.

<sup>98</sup> Hans Kohn. "Napoleon and the Age of Nationalism." *The Journal of Modern History* 22, no. 1 (1950): 21-37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1875877>.

tranquility.”<sup>99</sup> This document ensured Napoleon’s approval for provisions made towards religions in France, ensuring that he maintained control over the running of the French government, while giving himself leeway over the Catholic Church. At the same time, this gave Napoleon support from the French Catholic population, thus giving his rule more validity.

Napoleon even expanded upon the *Concordat of 1801*, with the creation of the document *The Imperial Catechism* in 1806. Napoleon’s extent of power and how he wanted to be viewed by the French public is evident within the text. In this document, it states that the French public is essentially honor bound as Christians to being loyal to Napoleon, for he is a “Christian Prince.”<sup>100</sup> In a form of a Q&A response, Napoleon interconnects religion to himself as a ruler, citing how “Christians owe the princes who govern them.” Using the idea of the Divine Right of Kings, the idea of a ruler being chosen by God to rule over a kingdom, Napoleon attaches his political goals to his subordination of religion. As a Christian ruler, Napoleon states that he is owed “love, respect, obedience, loyalty, military service, taxes ordered for the preservation and the defense of the Empire and his throne.”<sup>101</sup> This shows how Napoleon mixed his own politically secular ambitions with religious ones for the consolidation of power over the French Empire. The creation of this document also shows how Napoleon created authority for his rule, even over the Catholic Church itself. Pope Pius VII disapproved of the original draft for the document, however, the Papal Legate to Paris, Cardinal Caprara, gave his approval regardless of

---

<sup>99</sup> Jean-Baptiste Jeangéne Vilmer, "Comment on the Concordat of 1801 between France and the Holy See", *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 102: 1, 2007, p. 124-154

<sup>100</sup> *The Imperial Catechism*, from J.H. Robinson, *Readings in European History, Vol. II*, New York: Ginn and Company, 1906, pp. 509-510.

<sup>101</sup> *The Imperial Catechism*, from J.H. Robinson, *Readings in European History, Vol. II*, New York: Ginn and Company, 1906, pp. 509-510.

the disapproval of the Pope.<sup>102</sup> This approval outside of the sanction of the Pope is in part due to Napoleon's ability to elect clergy as Emperor of France.<sup>103</sup> The document, *The Concordat of 1801* because of its approval by the Catholic Church, allowed Napoleon to have this political autonomy from the Catholic Church during his reign as a result of the Catholic Church granting Napoleon ecclesiastical power over the Catholic clergy. The status of the Catholic clergy as part of the French State under Napoleon's laws made Napoleon's power over the Church possible.

Throughout his rule, Napoleon used religion as a form of control over his political power and religion was heavily featured within his political propaganda. In a political move that can be deemed incongruous given his later political actions as Emperor, in 1800, Napoleon even declared the Catholic Church the best religion for the maintaining of democracy. In a speech to Milan priests he states, "the Roman Catholic religion is the only one able to procure real happiness to a well-ordered society and to strengthen the bases of good government. . . . The philosophers told the French people that the Catholic religion was unsuitable for democratic government. The people are now undeceived."<sup>104</sup> This statement means that regardless of the influence of the Enlightenment movement and the *philosophes* upon French society, the French population resisted and were against their philosophical ideas relating to religion as a corrupting force at the hands of the Catholic Church. Not only does Napoleon here connect Catholicism to his political regime, but he denounces the treatment of the Catholic religion by the French *philosophes*. This indicates the beginning of the reliance of the Catholic Church with the French

---

<sup>102</sup> The French Revolution and Napoleon: A Sourcebook. *The Imperial Catechism, April 1806*. Edited by Philip G. Dwyer and Peter Mcphee. (Routledge, 2002) 159-160.

<sup>103</sup> Jean-Baptiste Jeangéne Vilmer, "Comment on the Concordat of 1801 between France and the Holy See", *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 102: 1, 2007, p. 124-154

<sup>104</sup> Robert B. Holtman, "The Catholic Church in Napoleon's Propaganda Organization." *The Catholic Historical Review* 35, no. 1 (1949): 1-18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25014991>

State under the Napoleonic Empire, but within a form of political power that separates the two powers in a way that places Napoleon's subtly secular government as the one that is truly in power.<sup>105</sup> Despite Napoleon's public denouncement of the *philosophes'* treatment of Catholicism, he did admire them and their Deist ideals. Napoleon's political nationalism was inspired by Enlightenment thought, despite a definite connection with the Catholic Church politically. He especially admired Rousseau for his connection to Corsican culture.<sup>106</sup> Regardless of Napoleon's personal viewpoints of Enlightenment thought, however, he did view religion as a tool to power more than anything.

What is perhaps most interesting about Napoleon's Empire in connection to the use of religion as a way of gaining and keeping political power was the spread of the use of religion for the consolidation of power outside of France itself and for France's benefit. Napoleon used religion as a form of colonial control over those he conquered. Regardless, it is not until Napoleon's Egypt campaign that these ideas of religious validation for military conquest were put into action. His experiences in Egypt before he even came to power, as part of his military campaign in 1798 also encompassed this idea. In order to gain more ground with Muslim leaders, he built up accord with Egyptian Muslim clerics.<sup>107</sup> The use of religion as a way of ensuring Napoleon's persona of a Christian ruler and using it for the expansion of French territory would later become key components to his rule. Military force was also yet another way that Napoleon shows his political power. Napoleon's military campaign in Egypt saw Napoleon

---

<sup>105</sup> Robert B. Holtman, "The Catholic Church in Napoleon's Propaganda Organization." *The Catholic Historical Review* 35, no. 1 (1949): 1-18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25014991>

<sup>106</sup> Kohn, 20-22

<sup>107</sup> Juan Cole. *Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. p. 242-245.



using Islamic religion as a way of having authority over the Egyptian population. This can be seen when Napoleon states that he is the enemy of the Pope to the Egyptian people.

This political campaign is indicative of how Napoleon did not just use Christianity as a religion for his personal power, but he also used Islam. In a proclamation written in Arabic to the Egyptian people, Napoleon states that he too is a Muslim. The proclamation stated that the reason for the French's military presence was due to not wanting to replace Islam with Christianity, but rather to support Egyptian Muslims as a fellow Muslim with their conflict against the Mumlaks, a group that was part of the Ottoman Empire that controlled Egypt at that time. He mentions in the proclamation that his goals are in "restoring your rights from the hands of your oppressors," and to "serve God-may He be praised and exalted-and revere His Prophet Muhammad and the glorious Qur'an."<sup>108</sup> Napoleon even went as far as to semi-integrate himself into Egyptian culture as part of his show of authority. He is noted to have established an institute of the arts and sciences in Cairo as well as being alleged as taking part in Muslim worship and ceremonies. It is however noted regarding Napoleon that it "could not be said that he *celebrated* the festivals of overflowing of the Nile and the anniversary of the Prophet." This indicates that much like how Napoleon utilized the Catholic Church, he utilized Islam during his Egypt military campaign.<sup>109</sup> This use of different religions by Napoleon in the form of religious festivals and language indicates that Napoleon used religion as his main form of political power,

---

<sup>108</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jabartī. *Napoleon in Egypt: Al-Jabartī's chronicle of the French occupation, 1798*. (Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004).24-26.

<sup>109</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jabartī. *Napoleon in Egypt: Al-Jabartī's chronicle of the French occupation, 1798*. (Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004).174-175.  
150-152.

because of the importance of religion culturally in both France and Egypt. This is not unlike how religion was politically utilized in the *Ancien Regime* and revolutionary period.

Napoleon's validation for his invasion of Egypt was religious itself, because Napoleon's campaign to Egypt led to his use of Islam for political authority. After being in Egypt, Napoleon, after his campaign, once again portrayed himself as a proper, Christian ruler. By 1804, after Napoleon's Egypt campaign, Napoleon and his troops continued on to the city of Jaffa in Syria, where, after Napoleon had recoiled with the Catholic Church, he would use as a setting for his propaganda campaign. It was after this exhibition that *the Concordat of 1801* was established as part of his reconciliation with the Church. Once again from the European perspective, Napoleon was an exemplification of the perfect Christian ruler, this is shown in the contemporary painting, titled, *Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa*.<sup>110</sup>

This painting was created by Antoine-Jean Gros in 1804, after Napoleon's return from his Egypt campaign. The painting is a fictional portrayal of Napoleon in Jaffa. The scene depicted is portraying a fictitious event for French propaganda, showing Napoleon as a Christ-like figure, who is touching the wounds of a plague victim. As other French soldiers in the painting look disgusted by this action, Napoleon is a calm, centralized figure. He is shown as a French military figure, who is within an Orientalism inspired building, that in appearances is like a mosque, but with the French flag waving in the background landscape.<sup>111</sup> Here, French colonial ideals of Orientalism and French values attached to French perceptions of Egyptian culture are

---

<sup>110</sup> Antoine-Jean Gros, "Bonaparte Visits the Plague Stricken in Jaffa." Louvre Museum, 1804. Accessed <http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/napoleon-bonaparte-visiting-plague-stricken-jaffa>

<sup>111</sup> Antoine-Jean Gros, "Bonaparte Visits the Plague Stricken in Jaffa." Louvre Museum, 1804. Accessed <http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/napoleon-bonaparte-visiting-plague-stricken-jaffa>

shown.<sup>112</sup> Napoleon primarily used religious symbolism in this propaganda piece, appearing in a way that lends to French approval.

Another case of Napoleon's idea of using religion for controlling French colonies is with his planning of an Algeria campaign. In 1808, this military campaign was conceptualized, but never actually occurred and was based upon the goal of the French conquering Algiers. Napoleon used the excuse of creating a "civilizing mission" for his planned invasion of Algeria. He changes his portrayal of Islam, using the social and religious theory of the religion as a less civilized religion that could "benefit" from Christian influence. Under the theory of religion being the only component in the way of unification amongst humanity, Islam from the post-Egypt exhibition Napoleonic perspective, stood in the way of human progress. Napoleon first sought to gain power through religion by referring to himself as the "Great Sultan" and the "restorer of faith"<sup>113</sup> Thus, this is an example of Napoleon planning to use Christianity as part of his idea towards possible colonization of Algeria. This serves as another example of Napoleon's wanting to use Islam as a factor for political control as the main component of his military campaigns. However, this differs from this Egypt campaign in that it was a plan simply theorized by Napoleon. Though this campaign never occurred, it serves as another example of Napoleon using religion for power.

Napoleon's use of religion for political power is also noted in his transformation into a persona of a "perfect, Christian ruler" over the course of his rule. As the idea of Freedom of

---

<sup>112</sup> 'Abd al-Rahmān Jabartī. *Napoleon in Egypt: Al-Jabartī's chronicle of the French occupation, 1798*. (Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004). 174-175.

<sup>113</sup> Ben Hardman. *Islam and the Métropole: a case study of religion and rhetoric in Algeria*. Vol. 276. (Peter Lang, 2009.)

Religion became popularized by political documents such as the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, during the revolution, this popularity transferred these ideas into the Napoleonic Empire. Napoleon was known for using religion if it benefitted his rule, as seen by his alliance with the Catholic Church for political legitimacy as well as his military campaigns in Algeria and Egypt, later in Napoleon's rule, this theme of using religion for power continues throughout the Napoleonic period. An example of this is Napoleon's laws regarding religious freedom, Napoleon would go on to allow Judaism to be publicly practiced.<sup>114</sup> In 1802, Jews were the "sole religious group in France without a legally recognized structure."<sup>115</sup> From 1806-1808, Napoleon, who recognized the use of religion for creating power for the French state, recognized Judaism as a French religion. Part of this recognition of French Jews was a plan by Napoleon that by acknowledging them as a religious group, Jews could actively participate in all the components of French citizenship, including serving in the French military. By assimilating Jews into French society, there would no longer be as Napoleon stated, "a nation within a nation." Thus, Napoleon would have a better hold upon all aspects of French society.<sup>116</sup> With Napoleon's recognition of different religious groups within French society, even if for political reasoning, this completed a cycle of three different political eras in French history using religion as a key concept for political power.

---

<sup>115</sup> Paula E. Hyman. *The Jews of Modern France*. Vol. 1. (University of California Press, 1998.) 37-40.

<sup>116</sup> Paula E. Hyman. *The Jews of Modern France*. Vol. 1. (University of California Press, 1998.) 37-40.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, though the timeline of this paper spans three different and very distinctive eras of French history, religion is the main form of methodology used for the keeping of political power within all three French governments. Regardless of the difference in the three periods of French history ranging from the *Ancien Regime* through the Revolution to the Napoleonic Empire, all being different socially and politically, religion remains a main, reoccurring theme throughout. Most notably, the use of religion for the consolidation of power made religion a main concept within early modern French history. The use of religion politically was done primarily in two different ways: the use of liturgical rites and religious language. Within the *Ancien Regime*, the Catholic Church had been intertwined politically with the French Monarchy. By supporting the Monarchy, the Catholic Church had created validity for the monarchy's rule through spirituality. Catholic ceremonies were also incorporated into French lay society within the French calendar in the form of Saints' days and the presence of the Church economically through taxation and landownership. Most importantly, the advent of the Enlightenment led to new religious thought and movements within French society through the concepts of Deism and Jansenism. because of the repression of Jansenism by the Catholic Church, the Church's unpopularity led to the creation of secularized religious.

With the occurrence of the French Revolution, secularized religion became engrained within revolutionary politics. The death of the French King and the dismantling of the Church's power resulted in the creation of a new secular religion, *the Cult of the Supreme Being*, mixing Enlightenment religious thought with Catholic liturgical rites and language into new political setting. The creation of the *Cult of the Supreme Being* and a new revolutionary calendar in

replacement of the old, Catholic calendar led to a new religious, political environment that though was not anti-religious, was anti-clerical. This anti-clerical sentiment resulted in mass dechristianization of French society. As dechristianization grew, so did reoccurring violence against the clergy. This was because of fear of the Catholic Church regaining political power because the movement was unpopular with counterrevolutionary groups who wanted Catholicism maintained.

With the fall of the Revolutionary government, the Napoleonic Empire emerged, creating a new way of using religion politically. Napoleon made an alliance with the Catholic Church in order to create and keep political authority as the Emperor of France. As a result, Napoleon created legislature such as the *Concordat of 1801*, that established his place not only as the leader of France, but as the representative of the Catholic Church in France. Even with political tensions between Napoleon and the Pope over the connotations of Napoleon appointing clergy as in France as the head of state, Napoleon's use of religion for political power continued.

Napoleon's use of religion can also be seen in his idea of an Algerian conquest and his military exhibition to Egypt. During his time in Egypt, he declared himself the protector of Islam and actively participated in religious festivals. Napoleon's political policies towards religion indicate how the exact religion utilized politically did not matter as long as it connected back to his own political power. As can be seen, regardless of the massive changes to France politically, one main aspect of French political power stayed the same: the use of religious liturgical rites and language being maintained for the consolidation of political power. Though the paper only shows a portion of French religious history in connection with the French state, it shows the importance of the connection between religion and politics within French history.



## Bibliography

- Andrews., George Gordon "Making the Revolutionary Calendar." *The American Historical Review* 36, no. 3 (1931): 515-32. doi:10.2307/1837912.
- Aston, Nigel. Religion and Revolution in France, 1780-1804. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000.)
- Barnett, Stephen J. *The Enlightenment and religion: The myths of modernity*. (Manchester University Press, 2004.)
- Bernardin de Saint- Pierre, Jacques-Henri. *Paul and Virginia*, trans. John Donovan. (London: Peter Owen Publishers,2005).
- Bretonne, Restif de la "The September Massacres, 1792." *Les Nuits de Paris*, part XVI (Paris, 1963), 277-84.
- Betts, Christopher J. *Early deism in France: From the so-called 'déistes' of Lyon (1564) to Voltaire's 'Lettres philosophiques' (1734)*. Vol. 104. (Springer Science & Business Media, 1984)
- Brown, Howard G. *Ending the French Revolution: Violence, justice, and repression from the Terror to Napoleon*. (University of Virginia Press, 2007.)
- The Civil Constitution of the Clergy, July 12, 1790 J.H. Robinson, ed., *Readings in European History* 2 vols. (Boston: Ginn, 1906), 2: 423-427. Hanover Historical Texts Project.
- Frank J. Coppa, *Controversial concordats: The Vatican's relations with Napoleon, Mussolini, and Hitler*. (CUA Press, 1999.)
- Clement XI (September 8, 1713) Unigenitus from *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Trans. Theodore Alois Buckley. London: George Routledge and Co.,1851)
- Cole, Juan *Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.)
- Doyle, William. *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989)
- Ferguson, Wallace K. "The Place of Jansenism in French History." *The Journal of Religion* 7, no. 1 (1927): 16-42.
- David, Jacques-Louis National Gallery of Art Biography, 2016. *National Gallery of Art*. <https://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/artist-info.1212.html>
- David, Jacques-Louis "Death of Marat,1793," Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium.
- Garrioch, David. *The Making of Revolutionary Paris*. (University of California Press, 2002.)
- Gliozzo, Charles A. "The Philosophes and Religion: Intellectual Origins of the Dechristianization Movement in the French Revolution." *Church History* 40, no. 3 (1971): 273-283
- Gros, Antoine-Jean "Bonaparte Visits the Plague Stricken in Jaffa." Louvre Museum, 1804. Accessed <http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/napoleon-bonaparte-visiting-plague-stricken-jaffa>
- Gres-Gayer, Jacques M. "The Unigenitus of Clement XI: a fresh look at the issues." *Theological Studies* 49, no. 2 (1988): 259-282.



- Hardman, Ben. *Islam and the Métropole: a case study of religion and rhetoric in Algeria*. Vol. 276. (Peter Lang, 2009.)
- Hefelbower, S.G. "Deism Historically Defined." *The American Journal of Theology* 24, no. 2 (1920): 217-23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3155405>.
- Hosack, Kristen A. "Napoleon Bonaparte's Concordat and the French Revolution." *Constructing the Past* 11, no. 1 (2010): 5.
- Henshall, Nicholas. *The Myth of Absolutism: Change & Continuity in Early Modern European Monarchy*. (Routledge, 2014.)
- Hunt, Lynn Avery *Politics, culture, and class in the French Revolution*. Vol. 1. (University of California Press, 2004.)
- Holtman, Robert B. "The Catholic Church in Napoleon's Propaganda Organization." *The Catholic Historical Review* 35, no. 1 (1949): 1-18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25014991>
- Hyman, Paula E. *The Jews of Modern France*. Vol. 1. (University of California Press, 1998.)
- Jabartī. 'Abd al-Rahmān *Napoleon in Egypt: Al-Jabartī's chronicle of the French occupation, 1798*. (Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004).
- Kennedy, Michael L. *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution, 1793-1795*. Vol. 3. (Berghahn Books, 2000)
- Kohn, Hans. "Napoleon and the Age of Nationalism." *The Journal of Modern History* 22, no. 1 (1950): 21-37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1875877>.
- Popkin, Jeremy D. *A Short History of the French Revolution*. (Routledge, 2016)
- Parker, David. "Sovereignty, Absolutism and the Function of the Law in Seventeenth-Century France." *Past & Present*, no. 122 (1989): 36-74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/650951>.
- Ozouf, Mona and Alan Sheridan *Festivals and the French revolution*. (Harvard University Press, 1991).
- Robespierre, Maximilien "Decree Establishing the Cult of the Supreme Being." Harrison Fluss, *Revisiting the Cult of the Supreme Being*. Jacobin Magazine, 2016. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/01/robspierre-rousseau-religion-separation-church-state-kim-davis/>
- Robespierre, Maximilien On the Cult of the Supreme Being. ed. R.R. Palmer. *History of the Modern World*, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition. Fordham University.
- Robespierre, Maximilien "The Festival of the Supreme Being," trans. Mitchell Abidor. *Recueil d'hymnes Républicaines*. Paris, Chez Barba, Year 2 of the Republic [1793].
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques *The social contract*. trans. Maurice Cranston. (Penguin Classics, 1968). 149-192.
- Tackett, Timothy *When the king took flight*. (Harvard University Press, 2009.)
- The French Revolution and Napoleon: A Sourcebook, *Lamoignon on the principles of the French monarchy*, edited by Philip G. Dwyer and Peter McPhee (New York: Routledge, 2002).

*The Imperial Catechism*, from J.H. Robinson, *Readings in European History, Vol. II*, (New York: Ginn and Company, 1906.)

Van Kley, Dale. *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791*. (Yale University Press, 1999.)

Vilmer, Jean-Baptiste Jeangéne, "Comment on the Concordat of 1801 between France and the Holy See", *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 102: 1, 2007.

Voltaire, *Candide, 1759*. (Electronic Scholarly Publishing Project, 1998.)

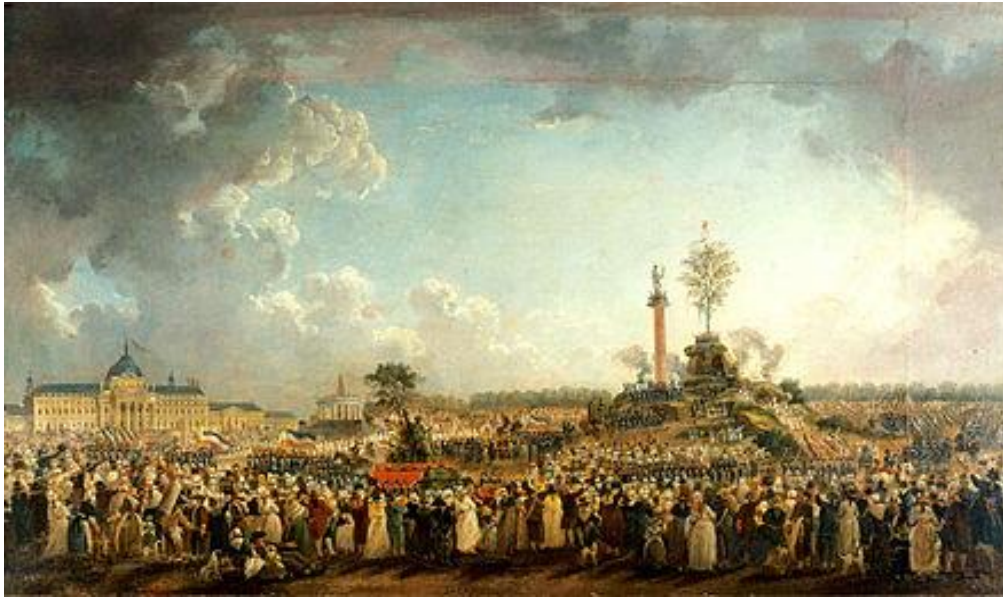
Voltaire, *Toleration and Other Essays (1755)*. trans. Joseph McCabe. (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1912). Accessed <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/349>

Michel Vovelle, *The revolution against the Church: from reason to the Supreme Being*. (The Ohio State University Press, 1991).

Wade, Ira O. *The Structure and Form of the French Enlightenment, Volume 1: Esprit Philosophique*. Vol. 1. (Princeton University Press, 2015.)

## Appendix

Pierre-Antoine Demachy, "Festival of the Supreme Being," 1794. *Musee Carnavalet*.



Gros, Antoine-Jean "Bonaparte Visits the Plague Stricken in Jaffa." Louvre Museum, 1804. Accessed <http://www.louvre.fr/en>



