

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## The French Revolution and Its Impact on Religion and the Catholic Church

### Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. Before the Revolution, the Catholic Church played a dominant role in French society. It held immense wealth and power, owning vast land and collecting tithes from the population. The Church's influence extended beyond religious matters as it controlled education, was involved in the administration of justice, and enjoyed tax exemptions. It was closely tied to the monarchy and supported the old feudal system, which was marked by inequality.

The Church became a target for revolutionary reforms because its privileges and wealth were seen as contributing to the financial crisis in France. The Church's close association with the monarchy and its opposition to revolutionary ideals of liberty and equality also made it a symbol of the old regime's authority. As a result, the revolutionary government sought to reform or replace the Church's role in society, leading to measures like the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.

2. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy, passed in 1790, aimed to reform the Catholic Church in France. Its major provisions included the nationalization of church property, the requirement for clergy to take an oath of loyalty to the state, and the election of bishops and priests by the people. This constitution had a significant impact on the clergy:
  - Many clergy refused to take the oath of loyalty to the state, leading to a division within the Church. Those who took the oath became known as "constitutional clergy," while those who refused were labeled as "non-juring" or refractory clergy.
  - The constitution's provisions challenged the traditional hierarchy and authority of the Church, as it reduced the Pope's influence in the appointment of clergy.
  - The division within the Church led to tensions and conflicts, as some clergy and parishioners supported the revolutionary government's reforms, while others remained loyal to the Pope and the Church's traditional structure.
3. During the Reign of Terror, de-Christianization efforts were part of a broader attempt to create a secular republic. Measures taken to secularize French society included:



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- The removal of religious symbols from churches and the renaming of streets and places with religious connotations.
- The promotion of secular alternatives to traditional religious practices, such as the Cult of the Supreme Being.
- The persecution of clergy and the closure of churches.

These efforts aimed to eliminate the influence of the Catholic Church and religious practices from public life. Consequences for religious practices included the suppression of traditional religious celebrations and the substitution of new ceremonies. Many clergy were persecuted or went into hiding to avoid arrest, and religious practices were disrupted.

4. The Concordat signed by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1801 was a significant agreement that reshaped the relationship between the state and the Catholic Church. It recognized Catholicism as the majority religion in France and allowed the Church to regain some of its properties. The key significance of the Concordat includes:

- It ended the de-Christianization efforts of the French Revolution and restored the Catholic Church as an important institution in France.
- The agreement established a framework for the Church's role in the post-revolutionary French state, granting it religious freedom while recognizing state control over appointments and finances.
- The Concordat contributed to social stability by reconciling the Catholic Church with the state, and it helped legitimize Napoleon's rule.

In post-revolutionary France, the Concordat played a crucial role in regulating the relationship between the state and the Church. While it preserved the Church's presence, it also placed it under state control, ensuring that it would not regain the power and privileges it had before the revolution. The Concordat remains a significant historical document in understanding the post-revolutionary period in France.

