

The regeneration of the French people and the establishment of the Republic has necessarily led to the reform of the vernacular era. We could no longer count the years during which kings oppressed us as an era during which we had lived. The prejudices and lies of both the throne and the church sullied each page of the calendar we were using. You have reformed this calendar and replaced it with another where time is calculated in exact and symmetrical measurements. This is not sufficient. Long usage of the Gregorian calendar has filled the people's memory with a considerable number of images that they have long revered, and which today remain the source of their religious errors. It is therefore necessary to replace these visions of ignorance with the realities of reason, and this sacerdotal prestige with nature's truth. We understand nothing except through images. In the most abstract analysis, in the most metaphysical combination of ideas, our understanding only progresses by means of images, our memory uses and depends only on them. Therefore, if you want the methodology and cohesion of this calendar to easily be understood by the people, and to engrave itself rapidly in their memory, you must use images in your new calendar. . . .

What if at each moment of the year, the month, the decade, and the day, the glances and thoughts of the citizens fell upon a picture of farming, or nature's bounty, or an aspect of the rural economy? You could not doubt the fact that this would be a big step in moving the nation toward a system of agriculture, and that each citizen would feel nothing but love for the real and true gifts of nature he enjoys. For centuries, the people felt this love for imaginary objects, alleged saints whom they could not see, let alone know. I will go even further and say that priests could only give substance to their idols by attributing to each of them direct influence over matters of tangible interest to the people: This is how Saint John came to grant harvests while Saint Mark protected the vineyards.

If arguments were required to demonstrate the irresistible power that images have on human intelligence, I would not need to enter into metaphysical analyses. I would find adequate proof in the theory, doctrine, and practice of priests.

Take, for example, priests, whose universal and definitive goal is, and always will be, to subjugate mankind and enslave it under their dominion, instituted the practice of commemorating the dead. They did so to inspire disgust in us for earthly and worldly riches so that they could enjoy more of these riches themselves, and make us dependent on them through the myth and imagery of purgatory. You can see here their skill in seizing upon men's imagination and controlling it to suit their purposes. But they didn't choose to act out this farce in a pleasant setting, one joyous and fresh, which would have made us cherish life and its pleasures. Instead they chose November 2nd to lead us to the tombs of our fathers. They chose a time when the nice days are over, the sky is sad and gray, the earth's colors are fading and the falling leaves fill our soul with melancholy and sadness. At that time of year, making use of nature's farewells, they took hold of us, to lead us through Advent and their endless number of so-called holy days, through all that they had insolently conjured up that was meant to be mystical for the predestined (in other words, for imbeciles) and terrifying for the sinner (in other words, for the clear-sighted).

Priests, these men who appeared to be enemies of human passion and its sweetest sentiments, wanted to turn these to their own advantage. . . .

The Commission that you named to make the new calendar more sensible and easier to learn, therefore believed that it could achieve this goal if it succeeded in using names to strike the imagination and using nature and a succession of images to teach.

The main idea upon which we have based our proposal is to use the calendar to consecrate the agricultural system, to lead the nation back to it, highlighting periods and times of the year with clear or tangible signs taken from agriculture and the rural economy.

The more the memory is presented with fixed points of reference, the more easily it remembers. We have therefore developed the idea of giving each month of the year a characteristic name that depicts its unique temperature and the types of agricultural produce in season at that time.

And that would, at the same time, suggest to which of the four seasons that make up the year it belongs.

This latter effect is achieved by four endings, each given to three consecutive months, that produce four different sounds indicating the seasons in which they belong. . . .

Thus the names of the months are:

#### AUTUMN

Vendémiaire (Vintage)

Brumaire (Fog)

Frimaire (Frost)

#### WINTER

Nivôse (Snow)

Pluviôse (Rain)

Ventôse (Wind)

#### SPRING

Germinal (Buds)

Floréal (Flowers)

Prairial (Meadow)

#### SUMMER

Messidor (Harvest)

Thermidor (Heat)

Fructidor (Fruit)

As I have mentioned, the effect of these names is such that by merely saying the name of the month one will clearly feel three things and how they are connected: the type of season; the temperature; and the state of vegetation.