

327

RELIGIOUS CRITICISM
IN VOLTAIRE'S L'INGENU

RELIGIOUS CRITICISM IN VOLTAIRE'S L'INGENU

by

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: An examination of Voltaire's religious views as expressed in L'Ingénu (1767) with some reference to the development of these views in other writings of the author before and after this work.

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Critical analyses and rational discussions concerning religion need not be interpreted as a penchant towards disbelief. Those who accept Church dogma without questioning it, and those for whom religious belief is a private, personal and indiscutable matter, should at least be tolerant of those who submit faith to the test of reason, resulting in what is for them as well, a very personal and meaningful faith though it may not conform with the current belief of a particular sect of the Church.

T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I - SACRAMENTS	8
CHAPTER II - FAITH AND HETERODOXY	21
CHAPTER III - PORTRAYAL OF THE CLERGY	44
CHAPTER IV - CHURCH AND STATE	59
CONCLUSION	77
BIBLIOGRAPHY	87

Il prit pour sa devise: "Malheur est bon à quelque chose". Combien d'honnêtes gens dans le monde ont pu dire: "Malheur n'est bon à rien!"

(Ingénu, 58).

INTRODUCTION

While L'Ingénu may not be one of the most widely read or studied of Voltaire's tales, it surely merits our attention as a provocative and most interesting piece of literature. However, the author's intention is not just to relate a delightful story for our enjoyment. He wants to arouse our sympathy and concern for the causes for which he is presently fighting. Indeed, Voltaire aptly describes L'Ingénu in a letter to his Protestant friend, Pastor Moulton, during the autumn of 1766:

Ne pourrait-on point faire quelque livre
qui pût se faire lire avec quelque plaisir,
par les gens mêmes qui n'aiment point à
lire, et qui portât les coeurs à la com-
passion? (Best. D 13641).

A careful reading of the tale reveals that Voltaire is deeply concerned with victims of injustice and oppression. During the same time as he was writing L'Ingénu (1766-67), Voltaire was also revising his historical work Le Siècle de Louis XIV. It may be that he saw in the latter years of Louis' reign with its political and religious strife, an excellent setting for a tale whose purpose was to expose injustice with a view to correcting it. At any rate, the setting is France in 1689, only four years after the tragic Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

The controversial nature of the work is shown in the hasty attempts on the part of the authorities to have it suppressed. While L'Ingénu may seem harmless to the modern reader, such a reaction in eighteenth century France is not surprising. It was a country ruled by an absolute monarch. The only officially recognized religion was Roman Catholicism and anyone who challenged or criticized orthodox belief was considered not only heretical but dangerous to the state as well. Consequently, Voltaire refused to acknowledge authorship of L'Ingénu in his letter to d'Alembert on August 3, 1767:

Il n'y a point d'Ingénu; je n'ai point fait d'Ingénu; je ne l'aurai jamais fait; j'ai l'innocence de la colombe et je veux avoir la prudence du serpent (Best. D 14330).

Of course, the tone of the letter is mock-serious and Voltaire fooled no one with this disavowal. In August 1767, the month of publication, an unnamed critic wrote:

There is much discussion about a new novel entitled L'Ingénu. It has more than 200 pages and piques one's curiosity all the more since it is difficult to obtain and is obviously the work of a writer who is customarily much in demand. People compare it with Candide; it is from the same author. It would be difficult for him to retain his anonymity; he has a style and characteristic wit which easily betray him.¹

¹Célestin Hippeau, Le Gouvernement de Normandie au XVII^e et au XVIII^e siècle. (1863-1869), (Caen, 1864), IV, 36; quoted by V. W. Topazio, Voltaire. A critical study of his major works. (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 59.

L'Ingénu was written at Ferney, a few miles from the Genevan border where Voltaire lived from 1759 until 1778. While this may have been a refuge from the authorities who were unreceptive to his views, it certainly was no hiding place. From this retreat, the author continued his campaign for toleration and justice and he intensified his attacks on orthodoxy.

Baumer suggests that the distinguishing marks of religious sceptics of the Age of Enlightenment are anti-clericalism, antidogmatism and anti-Christianity.² He judiciously points out that anti-religion is not included. These sceptics, whose prototype is Voltaire, exhibit a repugnance for a system which rests on miracles and mysteries irreconcilable with reason, for a belief in a supernatural God who communicates to man by some mysterious form of revelation, and for what men believed to be true religion which the Christian God taught in His Word. In short, it is a rejection of a dogmatic religion which tends to assume an exclusive and superior attitude toward other religions.

We shall see that Voltaire's is a sincere religious belief unencumbered by dogma which divides and gives

²F. L. Baumer, Religion and the Rise of Scepticism, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1959), p. 23.

rise to opposing Christian sects, each with its own rites and ceremonies, each interpreting the Bible in its own peculiar manner and absolutely certain that it possesses the only valid interpretation. This view is evident in L'Ingénu. Unlike the other characters in L'Ingénu, the Huron is unaccustomed to the religious conventions of late seventeenth century France. Upon closer examination, he finds that many of their beliefs and ceremonies have no biblical justification whatever, but rather that they are of human origin and are retained out of habit.

The central character is the Ingénu, also referred to as the Huron. However, he is not really an Indian, but a Frenchman who was raised in Canada amongst the Hurons. When he arrives in Lower Brittany, he is uninhibited by the social and religious conventions which he finds there. Voltaire subtly criticizes the religious, social and political institutions of seventeenth century France by focusing attention on the inconsistencies and absurdities which were taken for granted and accepted without question.

During his acclimatization to French society, the Huron, accustomed to the simple life, is amazed and shocked at the injustices which he observes and which he suffers from himself. He is arbitrarily thrown into

the Bastille because he instinctively sympathized with a group of persecuted Protestants. As such, he represents to some extent any number of victims of injustice of Voltaire's own day such as Calas and Sirven. The author is clearly very concerned with recent tragic happenings in France, blatant cases of fanaticism and miscarriages of justice. In the final section of the tale, Mlle de Saint-Yves frees the Huron from the Bastille at the cost of her own honour. She dies, tragically and unnecessarily, a victim of her own conscience, believing that love and marriage cannot survive her betrayal.

Although L'Ingénu is not as well known as the classic Candide, surely further study of it is justified in the light of Voltaire's own comparison of the two tales in this letter to Gabriel Cramer during the summer of 1767:

L'Ingénu vaut mieux que Candide en ce qu'il est infiniment plus vraisemblable. (Best. D 14279).

During our examination of the tale, we shall frequently make reference to other works by Voltaire, especially the Dictionnaire philosophique which was first published in 1764 but was expanded and re-issued in the years that immediately followed. Quotations from the Dictionnaire and other contemporary works as well as from the Correspondence of Voltaire will enable us to

give greater precision to comments which the author makes in L'Ingénu.³

³All page references to L'Ingénu are to the following edition, unless otherwise specified: Voltaire, L'Ingénu and Histoire de Jenni, edited by J. H. Brumfitt and M. I. Gerald Davis, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960).

Notes on the Text

In order to incorporate into the main body of the text references to the most often quoted works, the following abbreviations will be used:

- Best.: Voltaire's correspondence. Ed. Theodore Besterman. Geneva. 1953-1965.
- Best. D: Les Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire. Ed. Theodore Besterman. Toronto and Oxfordshire. 1968-in progress.
- Candide: Candide. Ed. André Morize. Paris. 1931.
- Dp.: Dictionnaire philosophique. Ed. de Etienne. Paris. 1967.
- Ingénu: L'Ingénu in L'Ingénu and Histoire de Jenni. Ed. Brumfitt and Davis. Oxford. 1960.
- Lp.: Lettres philosophiques. Ed. Raymond Naves. Paris. 1964.
- M.: Voltaire, Oeuvres complètes. Ed. L. Moland. Paris. 1877-1885.
- Siècle: Le Siècle de Louis XIV in Oeuvres historiques. Ed. René Pomeau. Paris. 1957.

The spelling in all quotations has been modified so as to conform with current usage.

CHAPTER I

SACRAMENTS

Upon his arrival in Lower Brittany, the Huron is met by the abbé de Kerkabon and his sister. It is not long before the young man is identified as the son of their long-lost brother and sister-in-law who had set out for Canada years ago and had never been heard of since that time. It is inevitable that one of the first subjects of conversation centres on religion. For his instruction, the Huron is given a copy of the New Testament. After he has read it carefully, he assumes that in order to become a Christian, he will have to be circumcised following the precedent set by the early Church since the original form of baptism was circumcision.

This being the case, the Huron summons the village doctor. He is astounded to learn that the doctor has never before performed such an operation. The abbé de Kerkabon explains that this practice is no longer fashionable. Voltaire's attitude to the matter is suggested ironically in the reaction of Mlle de Kerkabon:

La bonne Kerkabon trembla que son neveu qui paraissait résolu et expéditif, ne se fît lui-même l'opération très maladroitement, et qu'il n'en résultât de tristes effets auxquels les dames s'intéressent toujours par bonté d'âme (Ingénu, 10).

Such criticism of the ancient ceremony of circumcision is lighthearted and deceptively lacking in vigour unlike Voltaire's observations in the Dictionnaire philosophique. In the article "Circoncision", (Dp., 138-142), first published in 1764, Voltaire notes that it is actually a pre-Christian ceremony which has varied in form across the ages. He cites evidence from Herodotus to prove that it is an ancient Egyptian custom practised long before the Jewish nation came into being. Here, as in L'Ingénu, Voltaire shows that the sacraments of the Church change with the times. The Huron assumes that he will be introduced into the new religion by means of the original form of initiation which was circumcision but he learns that this form of the sacrament is no longer popular. If a religion has its basis in Scripture, surely its adherents should follow its teachings precisely. The Huron finds that there is frequent inconsistency between biblical precedent and contemporary practice.

The Huron abandons his resolve to be circumcised and agrees to be baptized instead. Since Christ was baptized by total immersion in a river, the Huron assumes that he will receive the sacrament in a similar way. When he learns that this is not so, he protests as follows:

Montrez-moi dans le livre que m'a donné
mon oncle, un seul homme qui n'ait pas été
baptisé dans la rivière et je ferai tout ce
que vous voudrez (Ingénu, 12).

He is again amazed to learn that customs have changed. Indeed, they have changed so radically that Mlle de Kerkabon even doubts that one can even become a Christian if one persists in wanting to be baptized in running water. In other words, she suggests that if one follows biblical precedent, one cannot become a Christian. It is not surprising that the Huron cannot comprehend this kind of logic.

The attempts of the abbot and the prior to convince the Huron of the validity of their arguments concerning the acceptable way of administering the sacrament of baptism are so weak that they practically have to resort to blackmail to have him agree to be baptized in the currently accepted fashion. The Ingénu has become very fond of a young woman called Mlle de Saint-Yves and on her request, he yields to their demands. Members of the clergy as well as the royal court as we shall see later are well aware that nothing is denied a beautiful lady.

Voltaire's mockery of infant baptism is seen when he compares it to the baptism of the twenty-two year old Huron:

Mais il n'en était pas d'un grand Huron de vingt-deux ans comme d'un enfant qu'on régénère sans qu'il en sache rien (Ingénu, 8).

Here the tone is light-hearted and harmless but Voltaire would agree that it is the height of folly to baptize an infant who does not even realize what is happening. In a 1770 addition to the article "Baptême" (Dp., 468-69), Voltaire quotes with evident approval the view of the Anabaptists:

Les anabaptistes...ont cru qu'il ne fallait baptiser, initier personne qu'en connaissance de cause. Vous faites promettre, disent-ils, qu'on sera de la société chrétienne. Mais un enfant ne peut s'engager à rien.

Voltaire had already expressed lively criticism of the sacrament of baptism in the letters on the Quakers some thirty years earlier in the Lettres philosophiques. When asked if he has been baptized, the Quaker replies in the negative. Voltaire facetiously asks:

Comment, morbleu, vous n'êtes donc pas chrétiens! (Lp., 2).

Here Voltaire is mocking the common notion of equating baptism with Christianity. The Quaker continues:

Nous sommes chrétiens et tâchons d'être bons chrétiens, mais nous ne pensons pas que le christianisme consiste à jeter de l'eau froide sur la tête avec un peu de sel (Lp., 2).

It is interesting to note that some of Voltaire's strongest criticisms of the sacrament of baptism are

found in the 1767 additions to the article "Baptême". He describes the ceremony as "absolument inutile" and "tout à fait indifférent", then adds derisively:

Quelle étrange idée, tirée de la lessive,
qu'un pot d'eau nettoie tous les crimes
(Dp., 49).

In the addition made to the same article in 1770, Voltaire quotes John the Baptist:

Je baptise par l'eau, mais celui qui vient
après moi baptisera par le feu (Dp., 468).

He playfully asks whether a Christian in the deserts of Arabia could be baptized with sand. The answer is an emphatic negative. Only pure water may be used, Voltaire concludes ironically:

On voit aisément que toute cette discipline
a dépendu de la prudence des premiers pas-
teurs qui l'ont établie (Dp., 48).

In short, baptism is a sacrament of human origin with no biblical foundation. Christ baptized no one although he was himself baptized. The sacrament was given prominence by the early Christians and has been maintained and adapted ever since although it has no divine origin.

In the ceremony of baptism itself, Voltaire subtly shows that people give greater attention to their outward appearance than to their inner state:

Mlle de Saint-Yves, en bénissant Dieu, mit
sa plus belle robe et fit venir une coif-
feuse de Saint-Malo pour briller à la
cérémonie (Ingénu, 11).

The brevity of "en bénissant Dieu" contrasts sharply with the great detail of her preparations for the ceremony. This underlines that which is of greater importance for her--the sacrament of baptism has in fact become a social event.

For her part, Mlle de Kerkabon views baptism differently and it is with an air of militancy and pride that she exclaims:

Nous le baptiserons, nous le baptiserons...
Ce sera une cérémonie bien brillante; il en
sera parlé dans toute la Basse-Bretagne et
cela nous fera un honneur infini (Ingénu, 6).

A clearly selfish motive is seen as Mlle de Kerkabon and her family pride themselves in baptizing "un Bas-Breton huron et anglais" (Ingénu, 11). They feel that the act will bring them honour. In other words, it is those who are administering the sacrament, or arranging for its administration, who seem to be the beneficiaries rather than the recipient of baptism. At any rate, too much emphasis has been put on the ceremony and the spiritual nature of the sacrament has been set aside. For those who wish to follow Christ, it is surely more important to act in a moral way than receive the sacrament of baptism.

The tale also contains mockery of confession. Before the actual baptism takes place, the Huron is informed that the necessary prerequisite for baptism is

confession. He cannot accept this view because he is unable to find justification for it in the Bible:

L'Ingénu avait toujours en poche le livre
que son oncle lui avait donné. Il n'y
trouvait pas qu'un seul apôtre se fût con-
fessé, et cela le rendait très rétif
(Ingénu, 10-11).

The abbé de Kerkabon convinces him that confession is indeed taught in the Bible and he quotes this injunction:

"Confessez vos péchés les uns aux autres" (Ingénu, 11).

The literal meaning never crosses the prior's mind but the Huron is more perceptive. He confesses to a priest and then attempts to force the priest to confess his sins in turn. Such procedure is unheard of and parishioners who hear the protests and cries of the reluctant priest come to his rescue.

Criticism of the confession is much more poignant in the article "Catéchisme du curé" (1764). Here Voltaire portrays an honest priest who admits that confession does have drawbacks. There are many indiscreet confessors; some, Voltaire claims, could even teach young girls more mischief than could all the boys in a village. Voltaire continues his censure of confession in these terms:

Point de détails dans la confession: ce
n'est point un interrogatoire juridique,
c'est l'aveu de ses fautes qu'un pécheur
fait à l'Etre suprême entre les mains d'un
autre pécheur qui va s'accuser à son tour.
Cet aveu salutaire n'est point fait pour con-
tenter la curiosité d'un homme (Dp., 87).

In spite of his militant actions in trying to force the priest to confess, the Huron's behaviour is forgiven and the theologians are once again able to persuade each other that confession is not a strict necessity since baptism will in effect take its place. Though it is not stated, Voltaire's criticism is implicit. That which was initially seen as a vital prerequisite to conversion, abruptly loses all sense of importance and can be sacrificed. It is the lack of rigour on the part of the clergy which is criticized here by implication. Unable to oblige the Huron to confess, they are satisfied to baptize him.

After the ceremony of baptism, the inquisitive bailli asks the Huron if he will be faithful to the promises which he has just made. The Huron is taken aback by the question which suggests that breaking these promises is a common practice. If this is so, the importance of the sacrament is again undermined. Unlike others, who merely repeat the words without thinking of their significance, the Huron recognizes the seriousness of his promises. He replies:

Comment voulez-vous que je manque à mes promesses, puisque je les ai faites entre les mains de Mlle de Saint-Yves? (Ingénu, 14).

Honesty and fidelity to his word are important traits in the character of the Huron. Since lawyers, contracts and

papal dispensations are necessary, he can only conclude that in France, people must be very dishonest:

Vous êtes donc de bien malhonnêtes gens, puisqu'il faut entre vous tant de précautions (Ingénu, 17).

The Huron is particularly incensed when he learns that the teaching of this new religion will prevent him from following his natural desire to marry Mlle de Saint-Yves who also happens to be his godmother. When he learns that consent for the marriage will have to be granted by her guardian, the abbé de Saint-Yves, he is affronted and considers it to be completely ridiculous that the consent of a third party should be required for such a personal matter between two people. He protests to Mlle de Saint-Yves:

Je ne consulte personne quand j'ai envie de déjeuner, ou de chasser ou de dormir: je sais bien qu'en amour il n'est pas mal d'avoir le consentement de la personne à qui on en veut; mais, comme ce n'est ni de mon oncle ni de ma tante que je suis amoureux, ce n'est pas à eux que je dois m'adresser dans cette affaire, et, si vous m'en croyez, vous passerez aussi de M. l'abbé de Saint-Yves (Ingénu, 15).

He is told that "les lois divines et humaines" forbid marriage with one's godmother. Of course, the Huron has read no such thing in the Bible and he once more protests strongly at the inconsistency between biblical teaching and Church regulations:

Je n'ai point vu dans le livre que vous m'avez donné qu'il fût mal d'épouser les filles qui ont aidé les gens à être baptisés. Je m'aperçois tous les jours qu'on fait ici une infinité de choses qui ne sont point dans votre livre et qu'on n'y fait rien de tout ce qu'il dit: je vous avoue que cela m'étonne et me fâche (Ingénu, 16).

In these few words, Voltaire summarizes the entire case against established Church custom.

Voltaire would put marriage under the control of the state rather than the Church, since, as he points out in the article "Tolérance" (1765), it is only a ceremony of human invention, not a sacrament of divine origin:

Jésus n'a point fait un sacrement du mariage ni du diaconat et chez nous le diaconat et le mariage sont des sacrements (Dp., 407).

Voltaire also shows his preference for civil marriage and criticizes the failure of the Church to recognize Jewish and Protestant marriages in the article "Mariage" (M. XX, 29). This clearly infringes on the personal freedom of these individuals and such a refusal is clearly discriminatory. In L'Ingénu, the sanction of marriage to one's godmother is a lesser but nonetheless similar interference with one's personal liberty.

However, all hope is not lost since there is a possibility that a papal dispensation can be granted for the marriage. This affords Voltaire the opportunity to satirize the papacy. The Huron asks:

Quel est donc cet homme charmant qui favorise avec tant de bonté les garçons et les filles dans leurs amours? Je veux lui parler tout à l'heure (Ingénu, 16).

Upon reflexion, he cannot recall having read about him in the Bible. He considers it to be the height of folly that, in order to marry the woman he loves, he must travel through France and Italy to ask the permission of a man who lives four hundred leagues away: "Cela est d'un ridicule incompréhensible" (Ingénu, 16). The Huron says sarcastically that even if he did go to see the Pope, he would not be able to understand him since he speaks a different language. Voltaire once again seizes the opportunity to emphasize the relative modernity of the power of the Pope but does so in a harmless manner. Nevertheless the basic question is posed: Why should a person living outside of France have jurisdiction within France?

In the article "Tolérance", Voltaire asks what is entailed when one recognizes the supremacy of this "maître étranger". In his answer, he speaks not only of the temporal power of the Pope, but also of his spiritual power, notably in matters of marriage:

N'oser juger en dernier ressort un procès entre quelques-uns de ses concitoyens que par des commissaires nommés par cet étranger: n'oser se mettre en possession des champs et des vignes qu'on a obtenus de son propre roi sans payer une somme considérable à ce maître étranger; violer les lois de son pays qui

défendent d'épouser sa nièce, et l'épouser
légitimement en donnant à ce maître étranger
une somme encore plus considérable (Dp., 350).

The Huron has no use for papal dispensations. He is determined to become the husband of Mlle de Saint-Yves without a lot of pomp and ceremony and, if necessary, without the blessing of the Church. As far as he is concerned, he is merely keeping his word and fulfilling his obligations. In other words, he looks to what is essential rather than to what he regards as a meaningless ceremony. He had promised to marry her and he felt bound to do so in spite of the rules of the Church. Indeed, he would have accomplished his mission had the cries of his beloved not reached the ears of the abbé de Saint-Yves who came to her rescue. When he is asked what he is doing, the Huron replies innocently:

Mon devoir, je remplis mes promesses qui
sont sacrées (Ingénu, 17).

He is lectured concerning one's duty to obey the laws, and once again he gives in to flattery and false hopes:

On l'adoucit par des paroles flatteuses.
On lui donna des espérances: ce sont les
deux pièges où les hommes des deux hémis-
phères se prennent (Ingénu, 18).

Nevertheless, the Huron is denied the right of marrying the woman of his choice. Those who are responsible for Mlle de Saint-Yves decide to protect her from this over-eager and supposedly uncivilized and dangerous lover by

having her sequestered in a convent.

Hence it is seen that the sacraments of the Church, many without basis in the Bible but firmly established through the years, are clearly challenged in the early chapters of L'Ingénu, although it must be admitted that the religious criticism is not harsh or biting as we find it in the Dictionnaire philosophique. In the article "Tolérance", Voltaire sharply contrasts Christ's teachings with those of the modern Church:

Jésus s'abstenait de porc...nous mangeons hardiment du porc: Jésus était circoncis, et nous gardons notre prépuce. Il observait le sabbat et nous l'avons changé; il sacrifiait, et nous ne sacrifions point...La religion catholique est dans toutes ses cérémonies et dans tous ses dogmes l'opposé de la religion de Jésus (Dp., 406-7).

Voltaire concludes that the modern Church is far removed from its founder. The teaching of the Church is based on the Bible as well as on the traditions of the Church. Voltaire underlines the inconsistency in interpretation of the Bible, the conflict between tradition and the Bible, as well as the distance between church practices and its ostensible beliefs.

CHAPTER II

FAITH AND HETERODOXY

We have already seen that Voltaire had little use for the sacraments of the Church. As far as the body of orthodoxy of the Church was concerned, he concluded that it was at best unnecessary and, at worst, potentially harmful and hence should be sacrificed. In this chapter we shall consider Voltaire's position in relation to orthodox faith and those who in L'Ingénu do not accept such belief, namely the Protestants and the Jansenists.

The tale begins with a light-hearted parody of a miracle:

Un jour saint Dunstan...partit d'Irlande
sur une petite montagne qui vogua vers les
côtes de France, et arriva par cette voiture
à la baie de Saint-Malo. Quand il fut à
bord, il donna la bénédiction à sa montagne,
qui lui fit de profondes révérences et s'en
retourna en Irlande par le même chemin
qu'elle était venue (Ingénu, 1).

The historical Saint Dunstan was a tenth-century English monk who became Archbishop of Canterbury but had nothing to do with the evangelization of Brittany. Here the fictional character establishes Notre-Dame de la Mon-

tagne after his miraculous voyage. Conversion and evangelism are unknown to the Huron who remarks:

Dans son pays, on ne convertissait
personne (Ingénu, 5).

The evangelical spirit and ardent desire to convert others is seen in the question posed by Mlle de Saint-Yves concerning the Hurons:

Est-ce que les RR. PP. jésuites ne les ont
pas convertis? (Ingénu, 5).

While this parody of a miracle seems quite harmless, it does reflect a more serious preoccupation on the part of Voltaire with fantastic and irrational beliefs which were part of orthodox Christianity. Voltaire's concern is that beliefs in such absurdities remain as prerequisites for acceptance into the Christian faith. In an age when great scientific progress was being made, it seemed unreasonable to him that belief in incredible miracles should be necessary for a person to be regarded as a Christian. He found the story of Noah's ark unbelievable and concluded, in the article "Inondation" (1764), that if one believed it, one did so by faith certainly not by reason (Dp., 251).

Another story which defies human understanding is that of the tower of Babel. Voltaire alludes to it in L'Ingénu:

On disputa un peu sur la multiplicité des langues, et on convint que, sans l'aventure de la tour de Babel, toute la terre aurait parlé français (Ingénu, 4).

Here Voltaire satirizes the narrow-mindedness of people who presumptuously conclude that everyone would now speak French had the incident of the Tower of Babel not occurred.

When Voltaire subjected the Bible to critical examination, he found innumerable contradictions and inconsistencies, as well as many stories which were contrary to reason. In the Questions de Zapata, published in the same year as L'Ingénu, Voltaire points out that in St. Matthew Joseph is said to be the son of Jacob whereas St. Luke suggests that he is the son of Heli. Voltaire argues that antiquarians deny that a census of the whole earth took place as St. Luke suggests (M. XXVI, 173-190). Such errors in historical fact and such discrepancies had far-reaching effects. Either the Bible was divinely inspired or it was not. If it was not, as reason seemed to indicate, the very foundations of the Christian religion were false, for the Bible was part of the rule and canon on which orthodoxy rested. Although the book could not be changed, it could be interpreted in different ways, hence the development of differing bodies of dogma and of distinct sects, each espousing

different interpretations. Voltaire had no use for such dogma which he believed produced only disputes and persecution. In the article "Du juste et de l'injuste" (1765), he writes:

De quoi servent à la vertu des distinctions théologiques, des dogmes fondés sur ces distinctions, des persécutions fondées sur ces dogmes? La nature, effrayée et soulevée avec horreur contre toutes ces inventions barbares, crie à tous les hommes: "Soyez justes, et non des sophistes persécuteurs" (Dp., 270).

When the Huron is imprisoned in the Bastille, his companion Gordon, the Jansenist, is amazed at his natural common sense and he even confesses that he, unlike the Huron, is guilty of simply strengthening the existing prejudices of accepted dogma:

J'ai consumé cinquante ans à m'instruire,
et je crains de ne pouvoir atteindre au bon
sens naturel de cet enfant presque sauvage!
Je tremble d'avoir laborieusement fortifié
des préjugés; il n'écoute que la simple nature
(Ingénu, 31).

In the article "Secte" (1765), Voltaire suggests that quarrels over dogma result in the formation of opposing sects, all of which are the rallying point of doubt and error (Dp., 385). Since the basic teachings of all sects are the same in Voltaire's view, one should be tolerant of the beliefs of others. A definite lack of toleration is exemplified by Mlle de Kerkabon in a somewhat comic manner. When she learns that her nephew

has never heard of the Bible, she immediately curses the entire English nation:

Voilà comme sont ces maudits Anglais; ils feront plus de cas d'une pièce de Shakespeare, d'un plum-pudding, et d'une bouteille de rhum que du Pentateuque. Certainement ils sont maudits de Dieu (Ingénu, 9).

The ingenuous sectarianism of Mlle de Saint-Yves is seen when she expresses her surprise that all Hurons are not Catholic:

Eh! mon Dieu, comment se peut-il que les Hurons ne soient pas catholiques? (Ingénu, 5).

Intolerance has its roots in superstition which Voltaire defines as follows in the article "Superstition" (1764):

Presque tout ce qui va au-delà de l'adoration d'un Etre suprême et de la soumission du coeur à ses ordres éternels est superstition (Dp., 394).

Superstition in turn leads to fanaticism of which the most detestable example in France was the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre on August 24, 1572 when Catherine de Medici and her son Charles IX of France organized the slaughter of French Protestants. The only crime of the Protestants was that they did not share the sectarian beliefs of their executioners. This massacre, "le plus détestable exemple de fanatisme" (Dp., 197), had such a profound effect on Voltaire that two hundred years later as its anniversary approached, he wrote:

Tu reviens après cent ans,
 Jour affreux, jour fatal au monde;
 Que l'abîme éternel du temps
 Te couvre de sa nuit profonde (M. VIII, 494).

It was this very fanaticism and intolerance which was the cause of the suffering of so many Protestants in France. References to their plight are not numerous in L'Ingénu but they are significant. For example, a Jesuit offhandedly asks the abbé de Kerkabon if his nephew has the misfortune to be a Huguenot:

Mais, votre neveu n'aurait-il pas le malheur d'être huguenot? (Ingénu, 35).

More important is the case of the bailli who is impressed with the fluency of the Huron in a supposedly foreign language. He learns that the Ingénu has been taught French by one who was forced to leave his native land because of his religious beliefs. The Huron explains:

J'ai trouvé en arrivant à Plymouth un de vos Français réfugiés que vous appelez huguenots, je ne sais pas pourquoi; il m'a fait faire quelques progrès dans la connaissance de votre langue (Ingénu, 4).

It seems curious that his teacher told him nothing about the religious disputes in his homeland, but such seems to be the case since the Huron knows nothing of the plight of the Protestants when he meets a group of them at Saumur on his way to the royal court.

It was by no means necessary for the Huron to

pass through Saumur en route from Saint-Malo to Versailles. Voltaire causes him to go noticeably out of his way in order to visit Saumur which was a town of great importance to the Huguenots. It had been one of their strongholds and was the seat of an academy of higher learning which attracted large numbers of Huguenots. What had been a town of fifteen thousand before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, now had slightly more than one-third of its former population. Voltaire describes it as being "presque déserte" (Ingénu, 21), and this is not an exaggeration, as the following excerpt from the article "Saumur" in the Encyclopédie supports Voltaire's claim:

Duplessis-Mornay, nommé gouverneur en chef de la ville par Henri IV, fit fleurir le calvinisme à Saumur, et y forma une académie de toutes les sciences. Cette ville n'est plus que l'ombre de ce qu'elle était alors; il y reste à peine cinq mille âmes; cette grande diminution vient de la suppression des temples, du collège et de l'académie, qui y attiraient beaucoup de religionnaires,¹ étrangers, la population et le commerce.

At Saumur, a Protestant minister speaks of the grievances of the Huguenots. He claims that the Revocation has made fugitives of fifty thousand families from

¹Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts, et des métiers (1751-1765); éd. par Diderot et d'Alembert, XXX, pp. 154-56.

the entire region and that another fifty thousand have been forced to renounce their religion. His words evoke from the Huron genuine tears of sympathy. He instinctively sympathizes with the Huguenots and, as a result of the presence of a Jesuit spy, he is arbitrarily imprisoned for having had compassion for these victims of religious oppression. Unaware of the presence of the spy and hence of his own impending fate, the Huron sets out for Versailles to plead on their behalf:

Je verrai le roi. Je lui ferai connaître
la vérité; il est impossible qu'on ne se rende
pas à cette vérité quand on la sent (Ingénu, 23).

The date of the setting of the tale is critical in the history of Protestantism in France. The tale takes place only four years after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Voltaire's portrayal of the plight of the Protestants leads one to ask if in fact it is an accurate picture of the situation in 1689. It is also interesting to consider their fate at the time the tale was published, namely, in 1767.

It is true that the persecution of the Huguenots was at its height in the years immediately following the Revocation. Shortly after 1685, protest movements began under the leadership of Claude Brousson. He was broken on the wheel in 1689 and became a Protestant martyr who sparked a new flame of enthusiasm amongst the Huguenots.

From 1702-1705 the Insurrection of the Camisards took place, led by Jean Cavalier. The Camisards, poor peasants of the Cévennes, were ultimately overpowered by the forces of the King.

Huguenots were barred from many professions and so many became small farmers, manufacturers and traders. Protestant marriages were illegal and their children had to be baptized Catholic or they risked being taken to a convent or monastery for indoctrination. Financial pressure was applied to enforce conversion: Huguenots were granted a three year period to pay debts if they converted to Catholicism. Another form of oppression was the dragonnades--the free billeting of soldiers in Protestant homes where they beat and insulted the so-called heretics and subjected them to every outrage and insult imaginable. Informers, often loyal Catholics, were rewarded with half of the confiscated property of the victim. What is more, all of these atrocities were blessed by the clergy. Such persecution was carried out in the name of the law, aided and abetted by the Church.

When Louis XIV died in 1715, it seemed that he had freed France of heresy but in 1729 there were 200,000 secretly organized Protestants in the Languedoc

region alone.² The years 1730-62 saw activities of the Huguenots as well as persecution increase sporadically. If troops were not at war, they were often in search of Protestants. These years saw the destruction of many places of worship, the burning of books, the pillage of Protestant homes and the taking of many lives.

A number of philosophes, amongst them Voltaire, championed the claims of humanity and denounced these cruelties practised in the name of religion. The suffering of the Huguenots gives rise to this protestation against persecution after the Huron and Mlle de Saint-Yves have been reunited with their relatives in Brittany:

Comment se trouve-t-il tant d'hommes qui,
pour si peu d'argent, se font les persé-
cuteurs, les satellites, les bourreaux des
autres hommes? Avec quelle indifférence
inhumaine un homme en place signe la
destruction d'une famille et avec quelle joie
plus barbare des mercenaires l'exécutent
(Ingénu, 50).

One wonders why a monarch would impose such unreasonable restrictions on an oppressed minority. Surely he must have realized that he would risk a major crisis such as civil war or at least rebellion. But Louis XIV foresaw none of these eventualities. He sought to crush the heretics and free France of them once and for all. He

²S. Smiles, The Huguenots in France, (London: Routledge and Sons, 1903), p. 234.

wanted a France under one King and one religion, regardless of the cost. The minister at Saumur cites this desire for religious uniformity when he is asked by the Huron to explain the reasons behind the Revocation:

On lui a fait croire que, dès qu'il aurait dit un mot, tous les hommes penseraient comme lui, et qu'il nous ferait changer de religion comme son musicien Lulli fait changer en un moment les décorations de ses opéras (Ingénu, 22).

The Revocation was especially gratifying to the Catholic Church. The hymn Te Deum was sung in Rome in thanksgiving for the forced conversion of so many Huguenots. Apart from humane considerations, Voltaire condemned the measure because of the economic harm which it caused the country through the loss of so many skilled workers. In addition, Louis was simply furnishing his enemies with useful subjects and soldiers. Indeed, entire companies of Huguenot refugees had been formed in Holland and in 1689, many of them were fighting in William III's army:

Non seulement il perd déjà cinq à six cent mille sujets très utiles, mais il s'en fait des ennemis; et le roi Guillaume, qui est actuellement maître de l'Angleterre, a composé plusieurs régiments de ces mêmes Français qui auraient combattu pour leur monarque (Ingénu, 22).

Furthermore, the act failed dismally in its objective-- that of reuniting the Calvinists with the Catholic

Church. In a letter of 1752, Voltaire adds that in this matter Louis should have consulted his conscience rather than priests and Louvois:

Il faut bien regretter qu'un roi qui avait des sentiments si grands et des principes si sages n'ait pas consulté son propre coeur au lieu d'écouter des prêtres et Louvois quand il s'agissait de perdre quatre ou cinq cent mille sujets utiles (Best. D 4961).

Thus Voltaire saw the Revocation as a mistake not simply from an economic and military point of view, but also because of the human suffering which it caused. The vivid portrait of human misery at Saumur evokes genuine sympathy from the reader.

Amongst the victims of religious intolerance was Jean Calas who in 1762 was accused and executed for allegedly having murdered his son to prevent him from converting to Catholicism. There was, too, Sirven who was held responsible for the death of his daughter whose body was found in a well in 1762 after she had escaped from a convent. Voltaire became directly involved in both cases. Calas was vindicated in 1765 and Sirven was exculpated of guilt in 1771, both thanks to the efforts of Voltaire. It is interesting to note that Voltaire might have had the Huron in mind when he wrote the following in the Avis au public sur les parricides imputés aux Calas et aux Sirven (1766). In the chapter

entitled Causes étranges de l'intolérance, he writes:

Je suppose qu'on raconte toutes ces choses à un Chinois, à un Indien de bon sens, et qu'il ait la patience de les écouter; je suppose qu'il veuille s'informer pourquoi on a tant persécuté en Europe, pourquoi des haines si invétérées éclatent encore, d'où sont partis...tant de lettres de cachet qui sous Louis XIV ont rempli les prisons et les déserts.³

In his compassion for victims of injustice and religious fanaticism, Voltaire became the antagonist of intolerance upheld in the name of religion. But it was certainly not from any affection for the Protestants as a group that Voltaire undertook to defend these cases. Indeed, he saw that he was facing two forms of intolerance, one by the Catholics who happened to be in control, and the other by the equally intolerant Protestants. While he had sympathy for individual victims of persecution in spite of their religion, Voltaire had no sympathy for Protestants as a group. His attitude is clearly seen in Pot-Pourri (1765) where he is in conversation with a Huguenot whom he aptly names M. Boucacous, a word which suggests a billy goat--an animal which is noted for charging at anything which crosses its path. Voltaire satirizes the excessive demands of the Protestants as follows:

³Voltaire, Mélanges, éd. E. Berl, (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 838.

Nous ne pouvons nous assembler en pleine campagne quatre ou cinq mille seulement, avec des psaumes à quatre parties, que sur-le-champ, il ne vienne un régiment de dragons qui nous fait rentrer chacun chez nous. Est-ce là vivre? Est-ce là être libre?⁴

Before concluding our examination of the plight of the Protestants, it is necessary to consider their situation in 1767 and how this may have affected L'Ingénu. The following letter of September 26, 1766 to M. Vernes indicates that Protestants were gaining some protection at that time:

M. le duc de Choiseul nous protège; il m'écrit ces propres mots de sa main, dans la dernière lettre dont il m'honore: 'Le jugement des Calas est un effect de la faiblesse humaine, et n'a fait souffrir qu'une famille; mais la dragonnade de M. de Louvois a fait le malheur du siècle' (Best. D 13592).

When the Huron states the qualities of an ideal Minister of War (Ingénu, 51-52), Voltaire may have had Choiseul in mind as a prototype. Brumfitt suggests⁵ that in this portrait contemporaries did recognize Choiseul who was Minister of War until 1770. He was "de la plus haute naissance"; he had a distinguished career in the army and he was noted for his generosity. It may well be

⁴Voltaire, Romans et Contes, ed. H. Benac, (Paris: Garnier, 1960), p. 413.

⁵see Ingénu, pp. 128-29, footnote 127.

that Voltaire used this subtle means of thanking the Minister for the protection which the Protestants were receiving and in doing so, perhaps he hoped that Choiseul would be sufficiently flattered to continue such protection and eventually obtain for Protestants the freedom to practise their religion.

In fact, the very year of the publication of L'Ingénu marked the first tentative moves by the government to grant Protestants limited civil rights and some relief from persecution. On October 30, 1767, an edict was passed allowing non-Catholics to practise their trade or profession, but a second edict to legitimize non-Catholic marriages was withdrawn.

Voltaire's Correspondence reveals that he was aware of the impending legislation. The following was written on April 24, 1767 to Paul Claude Moulton:

Voilà deux grandes nouvelles, mon cher philosophe; voilà une espèce de persécuteurs bannie de la moitié de l'Europe⁶ et une espèce de persécutés qui peut enfin espérer de jouir des droits du genre humain que le révérend père de La Chaise et Michel Le Tellier leur a ravis (Best. D 14140).

Voltaire's optimism is seen in this letter to a Protestant minister on December 18, 1767:

⁶The Jesuits had just been expelled from Spain.

L'édit pour légitimer leurs mariages a été quatre fois sur le tapis au conseil privé du roi. A la fin, il n'a point passé pour ne pas choquer le clergé trop ouvertement; mais on a écrit secrètement une lettre circulaire à tous les intendants du royaume. On leur recommande de traiter les protestants avec une grande indulgence (Best. D 14598).

Optimism is also seen in a letter to Moulton on September 20, 1767 in which Voltaire makes the laconic but significant remark:

Je commence à croire que vous serez libres
(Best. D 14431).

The relief which came in October 1767 was slight with no concessions on marriage or freedom of conscience, but it was the first official move by the authorities to improve conditions for the Protestants since 1685. The important part which Voltaire played is attested to in this letter written by Rabaut to Moulton on February 29, 1768:

Si la main qui nous accablait s'est relâchée, si nous jouissons de quelque tranquillité dans notre patrie, c'est à ce grand homme que nous en sommes redevables...Il est heureux pour nous que cet homme célèbre soit en liaison avec des personnages en place dont la façon de penser peut avoir la plus grande influence sur notre sort à venir (Best. D 14784).

In light of the impending legislation, Voltaire undoubtedly underplayed the theme of persecution in L'Ingénu lest he prejudice the cause of the Protestants by indiscretion. But he was not cautious enough because the work was suppressed on September 17, 1767. In his

Correspondance littéraire, Grimm writes:

Il est vrai que la publicité de L'Ingénu n'a pas été de longue durée: les prêtres et leurs suppôts ont crié, et l'on vient d'en défendre le débit très sévèrement.⁷

However, it is more probable that the tale was banned because of the criticism which it contained of the sacraments and orthodox belief rather than because of Voltaire's sympathy for the cause of the Protestants.

Protestants were not the only group who did not share the orthodox beliefs of the Catholic Church. The Jansenists too were persecuted for their religious beliefs. Voltaire's attitude toward and relationship with the Jansenists is complex. While he applauded their efforts to have the Jesuits suppressed, once they succeeded in doing so, he expressed great apprehension of the Jansenists. In a letter to La Chalotais on November 6, 1762, he writes:

C'est une belle époque que l'abolissement des jésuites. La raison fait de grands progrès parmi nous; mais gare qu'un jour le jansénisme ne fasse autant de mal que les jésuites en ont fait. Que me servirait d'être délivré des renards si on me livrait aux loups?
(Best. D 10795).

Throughout L'Ingénu, Voltaire playfully mocks certain beliefs of the Jansenists, namely their notion of

⁷D. Grimm, Correspondance littéraire, (Paris: Garnier, 1879; Kraus Reprint, 1968), VII, p. 417.

providence and divine grace. When the abbé de Saint-Yves learns of the identity of his nephew, Voltaire remarks:

Ils admiraient tous la providence, et
l'enchaînement des événements de ce monde
(Ingénu, 8).

When the Huron decides to be converted to Christianity, Voltaire playfully concludes: "Enfin la grâce opéra" (Ingénu, 10). In prison, the Huron can hardly believe his ears when Gordon says: "Adorons la providence qui nous y a conduits" (Ingénu, 28). The Huron's immediate reaction to his woes is to assume, as had Martin in Candide, that it is the devil himself who is responsible for his misfortune. There seems to be no reason for his suffering and this seems to him to be an effect without a cause in contrast to Gordon's acceptance of the belief that he is in prison by the efficacious grace of God.

The Huron's position on such metaphysical questions as providence and grace is that discussion concerning them is idle speculation and a waste of time. These are matters which cannot be rationally proven or denied. In prison, the Huron remarks to Gordon:

A l'égard de votre grâce efficace, je vous
avoue que je n'y entends rien (Ingénu, 27).

But before suspending judgment on the question, he makes the astute observation that this belief makes God

the author of evil:

Votre grâce efficace ferait Dieu auteur du péché aussi: car il est certain que tous ceux à qui cette grâce serait refusée pécheraient; et qui nous livre au mal, n'est-il pas l'auteur du mal? (Ingénu, 28).

Gordon struggles in vain to convince the Huron of the validity of the Jansenist doctrine concerning the problems of evil. He resorts to all the traditional solutions: Pandora's box, the egg of Ormuzd which Ahriman pierced, the enmity between Typhon and Osiris and even original sin, but to no avail. It is all a "nuit profonde" and a "roman de l'âme" for the Huron.

But the picture is not entirely black. The Huron is not alone in his suffering, as he remarks to Gordon:

Je regarde comme une grande grâce que Dieu m'a fait trouver dans mon malheur un homme comme vous, qui verse dans mon coeur des consolations dont je me croyais incapable (Ingénu, 27).

These remarks have led a recent critic, Richard Brooks, to conclude:

The result of the discussion between the Ingénu and the Jansenist on the problem of evil is that (1) neither deism nor traditional Christianity seems to be able to solve the enigma effectively in detail; (2) suspension of judgment seems a better approach than reliance on dogma; and (3) evil is still a definite reality facing humanity. At the end of their conversation, both the Ingénu and the Jansenist abandon their previous conceptions on the subject. Gordon rejects the efficacy of Jansenism in providing a

solution, but the *Ingénu* also abandons his naive innocence and comes to look upon humanity as "trop méchant et trop misérable"⁸.

While there is, then, a degree of ridicule of Jansenist belief in the tale, Voltaire does not deride Gordon's notion of providence nearly as scornfully as he had ridiculed the abbé Pluche's notion that the shape and position of the nose was a provision by God that man might one day have to use his nose to support eye-glasses (M. XVIII, 103-4). Nevertheless, Voltaire's Correspondence reveals that ridiculing Jansenists was one of his preoccupations at this time, as he remarks in a letter of April 4, 1768:

Il ne reste plus que le jansénisme et le
quiétisme sur lesquels il faut se contenter
de jeter le ridicule qu'ils méritent
(Best. D 14919).

As we have already seen, Voltaire's concern for victims of injustice knew no religious bounds. Hence in L'Ingénu, he violently protests the unjust imprisonment of Gordon even if he is a Jansenist, a member of a group which was persecuted by both Louis XIV and Louis XV who strove to bring about religious conformity in the state. The Paix de l'Eglise (1668) had brought a temporary cessation to hostilities between Jesuits and Jansenists

⁸Richard A. Brooks, Voltaire and Leibniz,
(Genève: Librairie Droz, 1964), pp. 122-124.

and it had officially halted the persecution of the Jansenists. But persecution began again towards 1679 and became intense by 1694. During this time, some forty to fifty people were put in the Bastille because of their Jansenist beliefs.⁹ Gordon, then, may be seen as a representative of any one of these victims. Although Voltaire had no sympathy whatsoever for the fanatical Jansenists as a group, and even though he does satirize some of their beliefs in the tale, nevertheless Gordon is clearly a sympathetic character.

During his term in prison, Gordon becomes a changed person. Voltaire clearly marks the change that he undergoes:

L'âpreté de ses anciennes opinions sortait
de son coeur: il était changé en homme
ainsi que le Huron (Ingénu, 48).

Voltaire suggests that during his Jansenist days, Gordon would have condemned Mlle de Saint-Yves' infidelity but since he has become "sage", he admires her (Ingénu, 54). When the Huron claims that he should have the right to take his own life if such is his desire, Gordon does not recite the traditional arguments against suicide (Ingénu, 56). He renounces his former Jansenist beliefs:

⁹ see L'Ingénu, p. 120, footnote 63.

Il oublia pour jamais la grâce efficace et le concours concomitant (Ingénu, 58).

Faced with the loss of his freedom because of his religious beliefs, he sees the futility of metaphysical speculation:

Je suis bien plus sûr de mon malheur que de la grâce efficace. J'ai consumé mes jours à raisonner sur la liberté de Dieu et du genre humain; mais j'ai perdu la mienne; ni saint Augustin, ni saint Prosper ne me tireront de l'abîme où je suis (Ingénu, 38).

He takes as his motto: "Malheur est bon à quelque chose". This is a positive assertion implying an effort to make the best of hardship rather than to accept it passively as the divine will of God. It is unusual that such a transformation of an individual should take place in a prison. The agent of his conversion is also ironical, as Voltaire points out:

Enfin pour dernier prodige, un Huron convertissait un janséniste (Ingénu, 39).

Voltaire's ambivalent attitude to the Jansenists is summarized by Varloot:

Tantôt il les attaque à fond, surtout lorsque dans les parlements, ils condamnent au supplice des innocents comme Calas. Tantôt il les flatte, quand ils peuvent aider les philosophes, par exemple dans la lutte contre les jésuites. Il a, d'ailleurs, des amis personnels parmi eux.¹⁰

¹⁰Voltaire, L'Ingénu, éd. Varloot, (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1955), p. 11.

CHAPTER III

PORTRAYAL OF THE CLERGY

A varied gallery of clerics is portrayed in L'Ingénu. As we move from Brittany to Paris, the corruption becomes more and more evident. We shall consider the portrayal of the provincial clergy in the characters of the abbé de Kerkabon and the abbé de Saint-Yves, and the Paris clergy as represented by père de La Chaise, the Archbishop of Paris, Bossuet and père Tout à Tous. In addition, we shall discuss certain clerical attitudes as well as their use of people outside the clergy as intermediaries for their own purposes.

Voltaire wastes no time in starting to mock the clergy. His reference to sainthood as a profession in the very first sentence of the tale is emphatic. He describes Saint Dunstan, the reputed founder of the prieuré de la Montagne, as "Irlandais de nation et saint de profession" (Ingénu,1).

The goodness of the abbé de Kerkabon is stressed throughout the narrative and serves as a vivid contrast with the incontinence and immorality of the Paris clergy. He is presented as a man of some self-restraint who is still capable of walking steadily after dining with his fellow clergymen. Surely such moderation is to be ex-

pected in a man of the cloth. On the contrary, Voltaire shows that the abbé de Kerkabon is the exception to the rule:

Ce qui lui avait donné surtout une grande considération, c'est qu'il était le seul bénéficiaire du pays qu'on ne fût pas obligé de porter dans son lit quand il avait soupé avec ses confrères (Ingénu,1).

However, Voltaire subtly suggests that he has not led a life entirely without fault:

Le prieur était un très bon ecclésiastique, aimé de ses voisins, après l'avoir été autrefois de ses voisines (Ingénu,1).

He won the affection of his parishioners not just from his knowledge of theology but also because of his humane outlook, as was evident from the books he read:

Il savait assez honnêtement de théologie; et quand il était las de lire Saint Augustin, il s'amusait avec Rabelais: aussi tout le monde disait du bien de lui (Ingénu,1).

It is natural that parishioners would have sympathy for a man who occasionally enjoyed the unrefined comic of Rabelais as they undoubtedly did themselves. The abbé de Kerkabon may have a few faults but he was not condemned for reading Rabelais and, in days gone by, for having been affectionate with some of his neighbours' wives. His weaknesses are human, comprehensible to his parishioners and apparently not harmful to them.

One day while strolling along the shore near

Saint-Malo, the Huron, in despair since his beloved has been locked up in a convent, comes upon an invading force from England. He helps to ward off the attack and is advised that he should go to Versailles to receive a reward for his services. After a considerable lapse of time during which the Huron fails to return from his journey, the abbé de Kerkabon and his sister set out to search for him. It is because they are genuinely concerned for his welfare that they do so and in this way Voltaire emphasizes another positive element in the character of the abbot. He is a kindly man and is not the cause of public scandal as we shall find with the Paris clergy which will be examined after the provincial clergy.

The abbé de Saint-Yves is also treated in an indulgent manner, even though he may be rather narrow-minded in thinking that anyone who was not born in France could not have any common sense:

...l'abbé de Saint-Yves supposait qu'un homme qui n'était pas né en France n'avait pas le sens commun (Ingénu, 8).

He may be seen as being cruel in locking up his sister in a convent in order to keep her from marrying the Huron and in being prepared to issue a lettre de cachet for her arrest after she left the convent as she was later to learn from M. de Saint-Pouange (Ingénu, 40).

But the abbé de Saint-Yves is not entirely malicious. At the end of the tale, he regrets his actions and asks his sister's pardon:

L'abbé de Saint-Yves pleurait ses torts aux
pieds de sa soeur qui lui pardonnait
(Ingénu, 47).

We shall find no such redeeming aspects in those characters who represent the Paris clergy.

When the abbé de Kerkabon and his sister arrive in Paris in search of the Huron, they attempt to obtain an audience with the king's confessor, père de La Chaise. Unfortunately, they are not able to see him immediately since he is otherwise occupied, as we are told:

Le prieur se présenta chez le révérend père
de La Chaise: il était avec mademoiselle
du Tron, et ne pouvait donner audience à
des prieurs (Ingénu, 34).

By using the full title "le révérend père", Voltaire strikingly contrasts the nature of the man's vocation with the less than virtuous activities in which he is engaged when the abbot arrives. It seems that père de La Chaise had a sufficiently compromised reputation to be the object of numerous attacks including an anonymous Histoire secrète des amours du P. de La Chaise which appeared in 1702. In a letter to the Duc de Richelieu on October 28, 1766, Voltaire mentions that he has just received a copy of a new edition of this book. Thus

Voltaire's charge of corruption in this cleric can be largely substantiated.

Next, the abbé de Kerkabon and his sister try to see the Archbishop of Paris but he, too, is inaccessible. He is "enfermé avec la belle madame de Lesdiguières". Voltaire ironically adds that their business is "affaires de l'Eglise" (Ingénu, 34). This man, who can be identified as Harlay, was well known for his amorous adventures, especially his liaison with Mme de Lesdiguières, as the Mémoires of Saint-Simon illustrate.¹ In a letter to Chamfort, Voltaire later refers to him as débauché.² Voltaire chose him to illustrate corruption of the clergy since he was the leading prelate of the Church in France.

The Kerkabons next attempt to speak with Bossuet, the celebrated Bishop of Meaux. Voltaire's incrimination of the clergy in Paris is complete. Bossuet is studying madame Guyon's doctrine of mystical love with mademoiselle de Mauléon. It is significant that Voltaire chose to single him out for criticism since he was adviser to Louis XIV in religious matters. His liaison with Mlle de Mauléon was made public when the secretary to Bossuet's successor, J. B. Denis, published his Mémoires secrets de

¹Saint-Simon, Mémoires, (Paris: Sautetlet and Co., 1829-30), vol. II, p. 350.

²Best. 14936.

la cour et du clergé de France in 1712. Voltaire accepts the validity of the story and refers to it in the Siècle de Louis XIV (Siècle, 1005, 1141). This and other charges cannot be dismissed as being purely fictional, invented to serve the author's polemical purpose. They can be documented as has been seen.

Moral corruption of the clergy is indeed a great evil but an even greater vice exists when the clergy permit officials of the state to abuse their position for personal advantage, especially when it causes innocent victims to suffer. Such is the lot of Mlle de Saint-Yves who goes to Saint-Pouange, an assistant to Louvois, the Minister of War, to plead for the freedom of her beloved. Saint-Pouange seizes the opportunity for personal pleasure:

Elle était si belle que le Saint-Pouange,
perdant toute honte, lui insinua qu'elle
réussirait si elle commençait par lui
donner les prémices de ce qu'elle réservait
à son amant (Ingénu, 40).

She is in moral torment because she does not know how to answer Saint-Pouange's demand that she submit to his advances in return for the Huron's freedom. In order to escape her dilemma, she seeks advice from a confessor père Tout à Tous, whom she assumes to be a man of propriety.

Voltaire delights in describing the interview between Mlle de Saint-Yves and the Jesuit confessor. As long as he does not know the identity of the man demanding

such behaviour, he calls him "un abominable pécheur". When he learns that it is M. de Saint-Pouange who made the request, the first reaction of the Jesuit is to deny that this could be the case. He suggests that there has been a misunderstanding:

Monseigneur de Saint-Pouange! Ah, ma fille, c'est tout autre chose; il est cousin du plus grand ministre que nous ayons jamais eu, homme de bien, protecteur de la bonne cause, bon chrétien; il ne peut avoir eu une telle pensée: il faut que vous ayez mal entendu (Ingénu, 42).

Such inconsistency is blatantly hypocritical. The casuistry which he uses to justify her submission is detailed. First of all, he tells her not to refer to her beloved as "mon amant" lest that should offend God; instead, she should refer to him as "mon mari" even though they are not yet married. Having said this, père Tout à Tous contradicts himself in advising that she would not be guilty of adultery since she in fact is not yet married. He goes on to reassure her that since her intentions are pure, for she wishes to obtain the freedom of the Huron, the act itself cannot be considered entirely malicious or culpable (Ingénu, 42). Finally, he assures her that the Scriptures offer many examples to justify her actions, and he goes so far as to cite Saint Augustine in support of his view. In the end he hypocritically concludes:

Je ne vous conseille rien, vous êtes sage; il est à présumer que vous serez utile à votre mari. Monseigneur de Saint-Pouange est un honnête homme, il ne vous trompera pas: c'est tout ce que je puis vous dire (Ingénu, 42-3).

In doing so, he absolves himself of any responsibility. Such a priest is not only useless but also dangerous because he blinds her conscience while at the same time insinuating that she yield to M. de Saint-Pouange. It is the final blow in Voltaire's criticism of the clergy that actions such as M. de Saint-Pouange's should take place with the implicit sanction of the Church. Unlike M. de Saint-Pouange who has no scruples, Mlle de Saint-Yves has such a high set of morals that she is tormented by her infidelity and this in turn causes her death. Apparently she was not convinced by the attempts made by père Tout à Tous to rationalize her behaviour.

There are other anti-clerical remarks in L'Ingénu. Gordon correctly conjectures that it is some religious hypocrite who is responsible for his imprisonment. He speaks to the Huron as follows:

C'est un tartuffe qui m'a plongé dans ce cachot et peut-être ce sont des tartuffes qui ont fait votre malheur (Ingénu, 32).

He is right. It is indeed a religious hypocrite and a member of the clergy who is responsible for the Huron's imprisonment--père de La Chaise and his Jesuit spy.

Such conduct on the part of the clergy may be more easily understood, though by no means condoned, when one recognizes that, at times, one could enter the ranks of the Church after fulfilling the most perfunctory requirements. The abbé de Kerkabon asks the Huron if he would like to become a sub-deacon. Even though he has no idea whatsoever what a sub-deacon is, or what the position entails, the Huron readily agrees to accept, provided that he gains the hand of Mlle de Saint-Yves in return:

Je ne sais pas ce que c'est que d'être un sous-diacre ni que de résigner; mais tout me sera bon pourvu que j'aie mademoiselle de Saint-Yves à ma disposition (Ingénu, 15).

The Huron is eager to be with his beloved, whatever the cost. Here Voltaire implies that little other than baptism is required for admission into the lower orders of the Church. Again we must ask if Voltaire is exaggerating in order to enhance his attack on the clergy. Evidence shows that some bishops were actually contemptuous of Christian beliefs or were even atheists. When Loménie de Brienne was suggested to Louis XIV for the archbishopric of Paris, the king exclaimed:

Il faudrait au moins que l'archevêque de Paris crût en Dieu.³

³Ernest Lavisse, Histoire de France depuis les origines jusqu'à la révolution, 9 vol. (Paris: Hachette, 1900-11), IX, p. 150.

Since the abbé de Kerkabon is no longer young, he is eager to have a member of his family enter holy orders so that the direction of the parish might remain in the family. The idea of nepotism is taken for granted by the clergy and Voltaire here challenges their uncritical acceptance of this favoured position.

The clergy are not only portrayed as being corrupt but they are ignorant as well. While studying the New Testament, the Huron asks questions which the abbé de Kerkabon cannot answer. The abbé de Saint-Yves is summoned to come to his aid but he is no more better informed:

Il (l'Ingénu) proposait quelquefois des difficultés qui mettaient le prieur fort en peine. Il était obligé souvent de consulter l'abbé de Saint-Yves qui, ne sachant que répondre, fit venir un jésuite bas-breton pour achever la conversion du Huron (Ingénu, 10).

The name Hercules was given to the newly-baptized Huron. The Bishop of Saint-Malo has never heard the name before and wonders who this saint can be:

On avait donné le nom d'Hercule au baptisé. L'évêque de Saint-Malo demandait toujours quel était ce patron dont il n'avait jamais entendu parler (Ingénu, 14).

It was hardly appropriate for a recently baptized Christian to be named after the man whose thirteenth labour was that of transforming fifty maidens into women in a single night.

Although Voltaire chooses a frivolous example of clerical ignorance, his criticism can be substantiated to a certain extent. Some bishops actually knew very little concerning religious matters. The marquis d'Argenson recounts this episode concerning the king's chaplain, cardinal de La Tour d'Auvergne, archbishop of Vienne. When he was called upon to say public prayers, he stumbled through his Pater and his Ave and confused the Credo with the Confiteor.⁴

The corruption of the Paris clergy goes so far as to implicate others outside of the clergy in their schemes. This is the case of the woman in Versailles who arranges for Mlle de Saint-Yves to see père Tout à Tous. She is presented as being one of the priest's most trustworthy penitents. She becomes the constant companion of Mlle de Saint-Yves and finds lodging for her. Whenever she weakens in her resolve to plead the case of the Huron, this woman encourages her to continue. She leads Mlle de Saint-Yves to the tragic encounter with M. de Saint-Pouange and waits in the antechamber studying Outreman's Pédagogue chrétien, a book which Voltaire describes in the Dictionnaire philosophique as "un excellent livre pour les sots" (M. XVIII, 548). She

⁴Argenson, Journal et mémoires ed. Rathery, (Paris: Renouard, 1859-1867), I, p. 287.

tries to convince her that M. de Saint-Pouange's request is nothing out of the ordinary, as she explains:

Les places les plus médiocres et les plus considérables n'ont souvent été données qu'au prix qu'on exige de vous (Ingénu, 43).

She confides that her own husband obtained his present position in a similar manner. She advises Mlle de Saint-Yves that it is her sacred duty to free her lover at any price and that no one will censure her action:

On n'a point blâmé les belles et grandes dames dont je vous parle; on vous applaudira, on dira que vous ne vous êtes permis une faiblesse que par un excès de vertu (Ingénu, 43).

Voltaire graphically states that this representative of the clergy was actually twisting the dagger in her companion's heart:

...cette brave personne augmentait ainsi les perplexités de cette âme désespérée et enfonçait le poignard dans son coeur... (Ingénu, 44).

She persuades Mlle de Saint-Yves, despite her evident repugnance, to keep her rendez-vous with M. de Saint-Pouange. It is this woman who deals the final blow when she arrives in Brittany with the diamonds from M. de Saint-Pouange. Voltaire emphatically shows that she is in fact the agent of death for he has Mlle de Saint-Yves say to her:

Ah! madame...vous m'avez perdue. Vous me donnez la mort (Ingénu, 49).

The clergy clearly used this supposedly pious and devout woman to gain their ends. She is an example of the corrupting influence of the clergy.

While it must be admitted that there were undoubtedly many dedicated bishops and very competent priests, Voltaire nevertheless felt that the corruption of the clergy was sufficiently widespread to merit exposure in his works. Corruption in high offices of the Church is clearly reprehensible. No doubt, Voltaire exaggerated in order to make his case more forceful but, there is little doubt that his claims can be at least partially substantiated. Personal merit and dedication were seldom important factors in promotion. Many bishops were far from suited for the positions they occupied. Lavissee cites as an example the cardinal de Bernis, a friend of Voltaire, who decided on a career in the Church at age forty. He was ordained as a sub-deacon in 1755, became a cardinal in 1758 and in two years he was ordained as a priest at which time he was also given an archbishopric.⁵ Undoubtedly the Huron too could have enjoyed such rapid promotion if circumstances had been different.

⁵Lavissee, op. cit., IX, p. 150.

Monasticism is also a target of Voltaire's criticism in L'Ingénu. In the opinion of the Huron whose love is imprisoned in a convent, they are indeed prison-like institutions which he is not allowed to enter:

Sitôt qu'il fût instruit que cette assemblée était une espèce de prison où l'on tenait les filles renfermées, chose horrible, inconnue chez les Hurons et chez les Anglais, il devint furieux (Ingénu, 18).

When Voltaire describes her stay in the convent, he suggests that it is an unnatural way of life which actually defeats its own purpose:

L'affront d'avoir été mise dans un couvent augmentait sa passion;...les regrets, la tendresse, et l'horreur bouleversaient son âme...De plus, elle s'était bien formée dans son couvent par les romans qu'elle avait lus à la dérobée (Ingénu, 35).

One immediately thinks of Voltaire's portrait of the wretched theatine monk Giroflée in Candide (1759).

We learn that he is completely dissatisfied with his lot in life. He had no desire to become a monk and was forced to enter holy orders by his father who did not want to divide his estate between his two sons. Now the monk lives a miserable life, hating the brother who inherited the entire estate. Voltaire's opinion of monks is vividly illustrated in this statement which Candide makes sarcastically when he learns that Eldorado is free of them:

Quoi! vous n'avez point de moines qui enseignent, qui disputent, qui gouvernent, qui cabalent et qui font brûler les gens qui ne sont pas de leur avis? (Candide, 117-118).

In conclusion, it can be said that Voltaire's criticism of the clergy in L'Ingénu is violent and devastating. While he was selective in choosing people who would best illustrate corruption in the ranks of the clergy, nevertheless, he portrayed a reality which did in fact exist, as contemporary evidence reveals. The corruption of the clergy was widespread as Cairns, writing about the Church in the eighteenth century, concludes:

The Church was corrupt to the core...The evils of the monastic system were flagrant ...The tyranny in the state found in that of the church its best support. Every proposal of reform was met by the sternest censorship or by a lettre de cachet consigning to the Bastille...It was impossible to save from great and terrible convulsions a church and a people which had retained so little of the preserving salt of Christian faith and purity.⁶

⁶John Cairns, Unbelief in the Eighteenth Century, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1881), p. 90.

CHAPTER IV

CHURCH AND STATE

Voltaire's criticism of the abuse of power within the state by members of the Church is much more vigorous in comparison to his attack on the sacraments and orthodox belief. In this chapter, we shall examine the relationship between Church and state and the abuse of power by the clergy, particularly through the use of lettres de cachet. We shall consider Voltaire's relationship with the Jesuits and his portrayal of them in L'Ingénu in the persons of père de La Chaise and père Tout à Tous.

Brailsford notes:

Toleration was certainly the effect at which Voltaire aimed but his study of history, no less than the experience of religious disputes of his lifetime, had taught him to see in the issue something more fundamental than the abstract right to worship or debate with freedom. The root of the matter for him was the relationship of the secular to the ecclesiastic power.¹

In his conversations with the Protestants at Saumur, the Huron learns that it is because this group of people refuse to recognize the authority of the pope

¹H. N. Brailsford, Voltaire, (London: Butterworth, 1935), p. 205.

that they are being driven from their homeland. At first, in his naivety, he asks why they should not recognize the authority of the pope, because in his limited experience, he has found the pope to be rather benevolent. The Huron asks:

Et pourquoi ne le reconnaitriez-vous pas?
 Vous n'avez donc point de marraines que vous
 voulez épouser (Ingénu, 22).

These Protestants object to the pope's claim to be the supreme authority in the state and to rule over the temporal authority. They protest in these words:

Ce pape dit qu'il est le maître du domaine
 des rois (Ingénu, 22).

The Huron agrees that they are right to refuse to yield to a pope who intends to wield such secular power:

Si votre pape dit qu'il est le maître de
 vos draps et de vos fabriques, vous faites
 très bien de ne le pas reconnaître (Ingénu, 22).

Although the arguments against the influence of the pope are not well developed in L'Ingénu, nevertheless the message is clear as Varloot concludes:

Le pape n'est qu'un souverain local, un féodal
 comme les autres, dont les intérêts très
 terrestres se cachent derrière des moyens
 d'action "spirituels"; nous devons défendre
 nos intérêts contre les siens.²

In La Henriade (1723), Voltaire describes the pope as the "rival des rois" who plans to "asservir tout,

²Voltaire, L'Ingénu, éd. Jean Varloot, (Paris: Editions sociales, 1955), p. 12.

jusqu'à Philippe même". Rome is seen as a source of trickery in politics:

Au fond du Vatican régnait la Politique,
Fille de l'Intérêt et de l'Ambition (M. VIII, 115).

Voltaire felt that subservience to Rome was the first religious shackle from which his contemporaries should free themselves, though complete separation of spiritual and temporal powers was not desirable in his view. State and Church had completely different areas of concern: the object of the state was primarily the well-being of people on earth and the advancement of their temporal happiness while the Church, on the other hand, aimed at salvation of the soul. Voltaire preferred the subordination of the ecclesiastical authority to temporal power and the integration of religion into secular society as we have seen in his recommendations concerning the priesthood.

In the Lettres philosophiques (1734), Voltaire portrays the model relationship between Church and state as found in England. Here the dominant religion is upheld by the state but is clearly under the authority of the state. In the sixteenth century, the authority of Rome was rejected by Henry VIII and the Church of England became the established Church, recognized by the state as the national Church. The pope was replaced by the

king as supreme head of the Church on earth. It must be noted, however, that this is not a separation of the two authorities for the Church is still part of the organization of the state, subject to Parliament. Hence the Church of England derives authority from the laws of the state, not from divine authority. The power of the "assemblée du bas clergé" is limited to ecclesiastical functions and this is as it should be in the view of Voltaire who remarks ironically:

Ils (les ecclésiastiques) sont réduits dans
l'obscurité de leur paroisse, au triste
emploi de prier Dieu pour le gouvernement,
qu'ils ne seraient pas fâchés de troubler
(Lp., 24).

Voltaire considers it to be unjust that bishops sit as peers in the House of Lords since they can abuse their authority. In his opinion, they should have no special political power, nor should they be able to influence the government of the country. Their responsibilities should not involve political power. Voltaire admits that in England heretics and non-conformists were denied full rights of citizenship but they were nevertheless free to utter and to print their thoughts. The implicit criticism of the situation in France is clear.

The solution, in Voltaire's view, is definitely not the separation of Church and state, each considering itself as the ultimate authority in the state. The

dangers which exist when the spiritual authority becomes supreme in the state is graphically seen in the Paraguay episode in Candide. Here the Jesuits have established independent villages in order to preserve the Indians in their faith and to protect them from slave traders. No doubt, they had good intentions but Voltaire was only concerned with the end result. The clergy here became so strong that they defied the secular authority, the King of Portugal. In fact, the clergy had its own state completely independent of the secular authority.

In the article "Prêtre" (1765), Voltaire quotes Jesus himself in order to support his arguments that priests should have no secular authority:

De toutes les religions, celle qui exclut le plus positivement les prêtres de toute autorité civile, c'est sans contredit celle de Jésus: Rendez à César ce qui est à César--Il n'y aura parmi vous ni premier ni dernier--Mon royaume n'est point de ce monde (Dp., 355).

In La Voix du sage et du peuple (1750), Voltaire clearly advocates the undivided sovereignty and supremacy of the secular authority:

Cette raison nous enseigne que le prince doit être maître absolu de toute police ecclésiastique, sans aucune restriction puisque cette police ecclésiastique est une partie du gouvernement (M. XXIII, 468).

He compares the relationship between Church and state to that of a tutor and his master. Both should limit their

activities to the functions for which they have been engaged. They should set a good example for others, be held in high regard but they should have no authority over their master.

Quarrels between Church and state would be avoided if no ecclesiastical law had authority unless sanctioned by the government. This sentiment is expressed in the article "Lois civiles et ecclésiastiques" (1764):

Que jamais aucune loi ecclésiastique n'ait de force que lorsqu'elle aura la sanction expresse du gouvernement (Dp., 289).

Voltaire goes on to prescribe that all clergy should be governed by the laws of the state since they too are subjects.

In La Voix du sage et du peuple, Voltaire advocates that Churches should be taxed like all other institutions in the state (M. XXIII, 467). This was written in 1750 when the clergy directly refused to pay their share of the taxes in spite of the fact that they owned one-fifth of the property in the realm.³ It was clearly unjust that nobles and clergy, amongst the most affluent members of society, should be exempt from taxes or be tried in different courts of law than those used for other members of society. Clearly no such privilege

³John Morley, Voltaire, (London: Masmillan, 1913), p. 233.

should exist in the state.

We have already seen that Voltaire did not consider marriage to be a sacrament. In his opinion, it should be a civil contract between two people, administered by the state:

Que tout ce qui concerne les mariages dépende uniquement du magistrat; et que les prêtres s'en tiennent à l'auguste fonction de les bénir (Dp., 290).

In Idées républicaines (1762), Voltaire suggests that the state can be healthy only if the ecclesiastical authority is subordinate to the secular authority. He concludes:

C'est insulter la raison et les lois de prononcer ces mots: gouvernement civil et ecclésiastique. Il faut dire gouvernement civil et règlements ecclésiastiques et aucun de ces règlements ne doit être fait que par la puissance civile (M. XXIV, 415).

Strife between secular and ecclesiastical authorities is clearly lamentable but when Church officials abuse their positions for personal gain the situation is reprehensible. Protests against such abuse are numerous in L'Ingénu.

Père de La Chaise is at least in part responsible for the imprisonment of both Gordon and the Huron. It is a Jesuit in disguise who acts as a spy for him and reports the subversive activities of the Huron at Saumur. He is thrown into jail arbitrarily without knowing the

reason, with no trial by court. He describes his plight and that of Gordon:

Nous sommes tous deux dans les fers, sans savoir qui nous y a mis, sans pouvoir même le demander...Il n'y a point de lois dans ce pays! On condamne les hommes sans les entendre! Il n'est pas ainsi en Angleterre (Ingénu, 38).

Gordon names père de La Chaise as being directly responsible for his imprisonment:

Le père de La Chaise a obtenu du roi, son pénitent, un ordre de me ravir sans aucune formalité, le bien le plus précieux des hommes, la liberté (Ingénu, 27).

Both are denied justice and are victims of lettres de cachet. These were orders for imprisonment without trial, already signed by the king, for those who incurred royal or official displeasure. They only had to be countersigned by one of the king's ministers and the victim was imprisoned with no appeal to the courts. Hence the decision to imprison could well be made on the caprice of one person.

The dangers to personal liberty in such a judicial system with its contempt for the law and the rights of the individual are recurrent themes in the passages on the imprisonment of Gordon and the Ingénu. The use of lettres de cachet had become so common that they were used against members of one's immediate family. Gordon speaks about this particular form of the abuse of power:

J'ai vu un espion du père de La Chaise trahir son propre frère dans l'espérance d'un petit bénéfice qu'il n'eut point; et je l'ai vu mourir, non de remords, mais de douleur d'avoir été trompé par le jésuite (Ingénu, 50).

Mlle de Saint-Yves is horrified by the liberal use of lettres de cachet, as she says to M. de Saint-Pouange:

Hélas, monsieur, on est donc bien libéral de lettres de cachet dans vos bureaux, puisqu'on en vient solliciter du fond du royaume, comme des pensions. Je suis bien loin d'en demander une contre mon frère. J'ai beaucoup à me plaindre de lui, mais je respecte la liberté des hommes (Ingénu, 40).

Evidence of the frequent use of lettres de cachet at the time that the tale was written and even later, is provided in this letter of Malesherbes to Louis XV in 1770:

Aujourd'hui, ces ordres sont prodigieusement multipliés. Il en résulte, Sire, qu'aucun citoyen dans votre royaume n'est assuré de ne pas voir sa liberté sacrifiée à une vengeance: car personne n'est assez grand pour être à l'abri de la haine d'un ministre, ni assez petit pour n'être pas digne de celle d'un commis des femmes.⁴

Lettres de cachet were effective weapons against one's political adversaries but they were also used extensively by Louis XIV against Protestants, Jansenists and minor offenders of the social or moral code. It was a useful means of suppressing opposition, but eventually

⁴Funck-Brentano, Les Lettres de cachet à Paris, (Paris, 1903), p. xli; quoted by S. S. B. Taylor, "Voltaire's L'Ingénu, the Huguenots and Choiseul" in The Age of the Enlightenment, (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1967), p. 133.

central control over their use disappeared and even bishops received a number to use at will.

Since Church and state were one because monarchs ruled by divine right, the abuses of the state would often receive sanction by the ecclesiastical order, while the latter remained likewise subject to all the pressures of secular politics. So it is in L'Ingénu where the corruption and self-interest of the state official M. de Saint-Pouange is sanctioned by a representative of the very institution which ought to condemn it. We have already examined the hypocritical behaviour of père Tout à Tous. It is in large part because of this abuse of power that Voltaire advocates the subordination of the spiritual authority to the temporal authority.

It is interesting to note this same concern in a contemporary work, namely Idées de la Mothe le Vayer (1766). Here Voltaire defines "la religion dangereuse" as follows:

N'est-ce pas celle qui, se choisissant un chef hors de l'Etat, est nécessairement dans une guerre publique ou secrète avec l'Etat
(M. XXIII, 489).

Voltaire says that the best years experienced by the monarchy were those when the ruling monarch was supreme and kept the clergy in its place. In La Voix du sage et du peuple (1750), Voltaire cites as examples the latter

years of the reign of Henri IV as well as parts of the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV:

Dans un Etat quelconque, le plus grand malheur est que l'autorité législative soit combattue. Les années heureuses de la monarchie ont été les dernières de Henri IV, celles de Louis XIV et de Louis XV quand ces rois ont gouverné par eux-mêmes (M. XXIII, 467).

Later, in the Siècle de Louis XIV, Voltaire enters into some detail and praises the conduct of Louis XIV in the struggle between temporal and spiritual authorities:

Le clergé...a toujours exigé du souverain la conduite la plus délicate et la plus ménagée...; savoir faire obéir les évêques comme sujets, sans toucher aux droits de l'épiscopat; les soumettre en beaucoup de choses à la juridiction séculière, et les laisser juges en d'autres: tout cela demande un mélange de dextérité et de fermeté que Louis XIV eut presque toujours (Siècle, 1028).

Surely a notable exception is the pressure put on him by the Jesuits to sign the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes which Voltaire describes as "un des grands malheurs de la France" (Siècle, 1055). In the Siècle, as in L'Ingénu, it is not Louis himself who is directly blamed for this legislation but rather his advisers, especially the Jesuits, and père de La Chaise in particular. When the Huron asks the identity of Louis' advisers, Gordon replies categorically:

Ce sont les jésuites: c'est surtout le père de La Chaise, confesseur de Sa Majesté. Il faut espérer que Dieu les en punira un jour et qu'ils seront chassés comme ils nous chassent (Ingénu, 23).

This brings us face to face with the complex and often ambiguous relationship between Voltaire and the Jesuits. Before examining his portrayal of Jesuits in L'Ingénu, it is necessary to consider the background to the struggle.

Voltaire had received all his formal education at the Jesuit Collège Louis-le-Grand and his early relationship with the Jesuits was cordial. While he was able to get along well with individual members of the Order, there were complications in his attitude to the Society as a whole. Although he respected their educational system, he was perturbed that they were lagging behind the rapid scientific progress of the century. In spite of the tension caused by the publication of such works as the Lettres philosophiques and Zadig, relations between Voltaire and the official Jesuit newspaper, the Journal de Trévoux were, until 1750, as friendly as one could expect between a provocative philosophe and a critical Jesuit journal. However, when the Encyclopédie came under heavy criticism in the Journal for its anti-religious views, Voltaire allied himself with the editors of the Encyclopédie and he was soon openly attacked in

the Journal. Historical errors in the Histoire universelle are seen as deliberate distortions of the truth in order to place religion and the Church in a disfavorable light. The Poème sur la religion naturelle is seen as a work which furnishes arms to atheists.⁵

Voltaire did not retaliate until 1759 when the Encyclopédie was officially condemned. Even then it was with regret that he formally broke ties with the Jesuits.⁶ Voltaire's attack on the Jesuits was incorporated into Candide and his wrath gives vent to such offhanded statements as "Mangeons du jésuite" (Candide, 98). In November, 1759, Voltaire published the devastating satire on the editor of the Journal, the Relation de la maladie, de la confession, de la mort et de l'apparition du jésuite Berthier. In this work, devoted specifically to attacking the Jesuits, he singled them out for censure, thus showing his determined hostility.

The repeated blows by the philosophes and the Jansenists helped to bring about the suppression of the Jesuit Order in 1762. Their supporters at court were able to have the decree of suppression annulled however,

⁵Journal de Trévoux, April, 1757, p. 1088. For criticism of the Lettres philosophiques, see Dec., 1755, p. 2939.

⁶see M. VIII, 478.

and suppression was not made final until 1764. Their defence of papal authority at a time when the Bourbon monarchs were struggling for supremacy caused the Society to be viewed as a force working against national interests. Further charges centered around alleged privileges and the abuse of power, charges graphically illustrated in L'Ingénu.

One might suspect that Voltaire would have been glad to hear the news of the suppression of the Order. Such was not the case. He feared such consequences as the closing of their schools which, despite their shortcomings, were among the best in France. Furthermore, he feared that once the Jansenists had won their battle with the Jesuits, they might turn their full attention to the philosophes. It was in this spirit that on April 14, 1764 Voltaire wrote to d'Alembert:

Les jésuites étaient nécessaires; ils
faisaient diversion; on se moquait d'eux
et on va être écrasé par des pédants qui
n'inspireront que l'indignation (Best. D 11822).

Although officially suppressed, the Jesuits continued to be a threat. The following letter of February 2, 1767 shows that, in Voltaire's view, the Jesuits were still influential at the time of publication of L'Ingénu:

D'Hémery est venu enlever à Nancy un libraire nommé Leclerc, accusé par les jésuites. Qui croirait que les jésuites eussent encore le pouvoir de nuire et que cette vipère coupée en morceaux pût mordre dans le seul trou qui lui reste? (Best. D 13910).

This being the case, it is not surprising that Voltaire continues his attack on the Jesuits in L'Ingénu. In his portrait of père Tout à Tous, he condemns the intrigues of the Jesuits, their moral decadence, their desire for power, and the manner in which they twist moral principles in order to suit the needs of the hour. Tout à Tous is ridiculous and contemptible as we have already seen. His inconsistency and unlimited flexibility are suggested by his very name--he can be all things to all men. It is the Jesuits and père de La Chaise in particular who are blamed for the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. La Chaise was Louis' confessor from 1675 until 1709 and his influence on the King was doubtless as great as any of Louis' ministers. It is this control over the King which the Jesuits possessed in their positions as confessors to the King that Voltaire censures here. In strongly advising the Revocation, père de La Chaise was upholding the interests of the Church, rather than those of the state.

When the abbé de Kerkabon is in Paris in search of his nephew, he is finally allowed to see père de La Chaise whose hypocrisy is shown when he remarks that he

has always had a special esteem for his visitor although, as Voltaire clearly points out, he had never before met him:

Enfin, il vit le jésuite; celui-ci le reçut à bras ouverts, lui protesta qu'il avait toujours eu pour lui une estime particulière, ne l'ayant jamais connu (Ingénu, 35).

Voltaire also satirizes their penchant for scandalous secrets which they obtain from serving girls:

Il y avait les jésuites du grand commun et surtout les jésuites des femmes de chambre par lesquelles on savait les secrets des maîtresses; ce n'était pas un petit emploi (Ingénu, 36).

Varloot concludes:

La Société de Jésus est supprimée en France en 1764. C'est une grande victoire pour les philosophes. Mais il est des morts qui renaissent de leurs cendres. Les jésuites, condamnés par presque tous les pays européens, dissous par le pape, subsisteront "illégalement" et reparaitront au jour dans la réaction qui suivra la Révolution. Leur Société sera rétablie...Voltaire, conscient sans doute que l'ennemi n'est pas écrasé, redouble ses attaques contre eux dans L'Ingénu, trois ans après l'ordre royal de suppression. C'est à la fois une justification après coup et le prolongement d'une tâche non terminée. Car les jésuites incarnent le fanatisme, antithèse de la liberté.⁷

The abuse of power by the clergy and their use of lettres de cachet are surely amongst the targets at which Voltaire was aiming and for which he was loading

⁷Voltaire, L'Ingénu, éd. Jean Varloot, (Paris: Editions sociales, 1955), p. 11.

his gun, as he says in the following letter to d'Alembert on August 10, 1767:

Je fais la guerre à droite, à gauche. Je charge mon fusil de sel avec les uns, et de grosses balles avec les autres (Best. D 14347).

This distinction between the use of sel and grosses balles as ammunition is clearly seen in the vigorous attack on the corruption of the clergy and of their abuse of power, in contrast to the lighter tone which was noted in Voltaire's criticism of the sacraments and of orthodox beliefs.

It should be noted, moreover, that Voltaire frequently expresses similar views on the relationship between Church and state in his Correspondence. For example, in a letter to Damilaville on November 10, 1765, he defined the following ideal situation:

La seule véritable puissance est celle du souverain et l'église n'a d'autre pouvoir que les prérogatives accordés par les rois et par les lois (Best. D 12974).

When such a reference is found in material not intended for publication, it is certain that Voltaire's concern is genuine, not just polemical.

Rowe arrives at the following conclusion concerning Voltaire's ideas on the relationship of Church and state:

In his opinion, the true function of the Church should be to help the state accomplish its original purpose, which was the common good. The clergy should act as a sort of moral police force to the populace and urge the citizens to upright actions...Thus, from a rival and usurper of the civil power, Voltaire would change the status of the Church to an important and indispensable adjunct to the temporal authority.⁸

Rowe expresses Voltaire's positive attitude on the subject whereas L'Ingénu illustrates the negative. The tale represents an important attempt on Voltaire's part to realize the attitude defined by Rowe. L'Ingénu portrays the inherent dangers to a society when Church officials possess authority in the secular affairs of the state.

⁸C. Rowe, Voltaire and the State, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), pp. 182-3.

CONCLUSION

The general consensus of Voltairian criticism over the years has been that L'Ingénu is one of his most valuable tales, even if it is riddled with baffling complexities. Mason writes:

L'Ingénu is one of Voltaire's most interesting experiments, one of his least understood but most rewarding works.¹

The complexity as well as the appeal of the tale is underlined by Henriot:

L'Ingénu est un livre à clef; nous avons perdu cette clef, et il nous divertit quand même et encore. A quoi tient ce curieux prodige? A l'art du conteur et à sa diction. C'est toujours l'attrait de Voltaire.²

Although we have seen Voltaire's severe criticism of orthodox Catholic belief, the Church and its representatives, we must note that there was a positive side to his beliefs as well. His is a sincere belief in God and morality, a simple belief, free from dogma and modelled as closely as possible on the teachings of Christ. He professes the following belief:

¹H. T. Mason, "The Unity of Voltaire's L'Ingénu", in The Age of the Enlightenment, (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1967), p. 106.

²E. Henriot, Courrier littéraire, XVIII siècle, (Paris: Editions Marcel Daubin, 1945), I, p. 176.

Je suis chrétien, comme l'était Jésus, dont on a changé la doctrine céleste en doctrine infernale (M. XXV, 131)

It is a simple, straight-forward belief in God which the Huron expresses when he is asked about his religious beliefs. He has no views on such metaphysical questions as the nature of the soul, free will or divine grace. When he is asked what he thinks of these, he replies:

Rien, si je pensais quelque chose, c'est que nous sommes sous la puissance de l'Etre éternel comme les astres et les éléments; qu'il fait tout en nous, que nous sommes de petites roues de la machine immense dont il est l'âme; qu'il agit par des lois générales et non par des vues particulières; cela seul me paraît intelligible; tout le reste est pour moi un abîme de ténèbres
(Ingénu, 28).

The sincerity of Voltaire's belief in the existence of God has been questioned by some critics. They suggest that, so as to have his books published, it was simply out of prudence and in an effort to meet the demands of strict censorship by the authorities that he expressed a superficial belief in God. The objective critic will note that it was not as a polemist but as a sincere constructive deist that Voltaire wrote Le pour et le contre (1722), originally entitled Epître à Uranie. This is a personal poem whose harsh but not rhetorical tones indicate a deep religious belief. In this poem,

he rejects Christianity, if belief in it requires the acceptance of such obnoxious doctrines as original sin, eternal damnation, incredible miracles and a universal flood (M. IX, 357).

The existence of God, he maintained, was totally compatible with reason:

Il m'est évident qu'il y a un Etre nécessaire, éternel, suprême, intelligent; ce n'est pas de la foi, c'est de la raison (Dp., 203).

It is precisely because the Jansenist belief in Deus absconditus rests on revelation, not on reason, that Voltaire rejects it. This God is withdrawn from the world and his existence must be accepted on faith. The Huron protests against such a belief in hidden truths:

C'est une absurdité, c'est un outrage au genre humain, c'est un attentat contre l'Etre infini et suprême de dire: Il y a une vérité essentielle à l'homme, et Dieu l'a cachée (Ingénu, 38).

In his book on Voltaire, Torrey³ suggests that deism means the adoption of natural religion based on common ideas of morality, including the worship of a rather indefinite Supreme Being whose laws are plain and engraved in the hearts of all men; it implies, too, opposition to Christianity with its supernatural doctrines and positive religious duties. If deism is defined in

³N. L. Torrey, The Spirit of Voltaire, (Oxford: Marston Press, 1963), pp. 227-28.

these terms, then it may be said that Voltaire was a deist from his earliest days. In the article "Théiste" (1765),⁴ he defines a theist in the following manner:

Le théiste est un homme fermement persuadé de l'existence d'un Etre Suprême aussi bon que puissant, qui a formé tous les êtres étendus, végétants, sentants, et réfléchissants, et récompense avec bonté les actions vertueuses (Dp., 399).

He continues that a theist is a non-sectarian who is submissive to God, does good, helps the needy and defends the oppressed. This is precisely the Huron's motive in pleading on behalf of the persecuted Protestants. He in fact sacrifices his own freedom for their cause.

If the orthodox rules known as the Ten Commandments are rejected, how will mankind be able to distinguish right from wrong? Voltaire gives this answer in the article "Religion" (1765):

Qui nous a donné le sentiment du juste et de l'injuste? Dieu, qui nous a donné un cerveau et un coeur (Dp., 269).

Reason and moral sense will guide man's actions:

Il ne s'agit donc plus que de nous servir de notre raison pour discerner les nuances de l'honnête du déshonnête (Dp., 270).

Voltaire believed that all the essential truths

⁴This article was originally entitled "Déiste". Voltaire drew no distinction between theist and deist, as we do, theist implying the idea of cult along with the deistic notion of God.

of natural religion were implanted in the hearts of men by God and were logically demonstrable. Having read widely, he concluded that all religions and teachers of morality had the same basic moral code. Conscience is universal and it is God-given. It is found in Cicero, Plato, Epicurus as well as Confucius. Dogmas, on the other hand, differ greatly since they are a human invention:

La morale n'est point dans la superstition, elle n'est point dans les cérémonies, elle n'a rien de commun avec les dogmes. On ne peut trop répéter que tous les dogmes sont différents, et que la morale est la même chez tous les hommes qui font usage de leur raison. La morale vient donc de Dieu comme la lumière. Nos superstitions ne sont que ténèbres (Dp., 326).

In L'Ingénu, the Huron himself is a good illustration of the existence of universal morality and conscience. Even though he was born and raised on the other side of the Atlantic, nevertheless, his ideas about right and wrong do not differ in their essentials from those of Frenchmen. If anything, in his naivety, he exhibits a stricter moral code than his fellow men. Unlike others who rely on witnesses, lawyers, contracts and dispensations, his word is of the greatest importance to him and he feels that he has a moral obligation to marry Mlle de Saint-Yves since he had promised to do so. At his baptism, he thinks about the significance of the promises which he

must make. His imprisonment does not result from an infraction of the moral code of Church or society, but rather from the religious prejudices of those in high places. He is natural man, who follows his God-given moral sense and this gives him a certain moral greatness.

Since all religions are, in their basics, equally valid, the basis of social and religious equanimity in the state must be a well-established tolerance. By writing L'Ingénu and works similar in spirit, Voltaire was seeking to bring about an indulgent attitude not only towards Protestants but also towards all others who held unorthodox beliefs. The Huron's is a personal religion which is tolerant of the beliefs of others and seeks to convert no one:

Je suis de ma religion comme vous de la
vôtre (Ingénu, 5).

This reminds one of Eldorado where the old man explains to Candide:

Nous avons, je crois, la religion de tout
le monde; nous adorons Dieu du soir jusqu'au
matin (Candide, 115-16).

Here religious controversy and intolerance are non-existent since, as the old man again explains:

Nous sommes tous ici du même avis
(Candide, 118).

In L'Ingénu, the Huron himself is the personification of tolerance since he allows for difference of opinion when

he meets Protestants, Catholics and Jansenists, and does not seek to impose his own views.

In the Lettres philosophiques (1734), Voltaire shows his admiration for the religious tolerance shown by the Quakers in Pennsylvania:

La première (loi) est de ne maltraiter personne au sujet de la religion, et de regarder comme frères tous ceux qui croient en Dieu (Lp. 19).

In the article "Tolérance" (1765), Voltaire no longer argues for toleration on the grounds that all religions are equally valid and have the same moral precepts. Here he pleads for toleration in the name of humanity and because of human fallibility. We are all ridden with weaknesses and error and so should pardon each other's folly. He concludes:

La discorde est le grand mal du genre humain, et la tolérance en est le seul remède (Dp., 405).

In L'Ingénu, Voltaire graphically portrays the results of intolerance in both economic and human terms. We see that the prosperous town of Saumur has been reduced to a shadow of its former self and we experience the very real suffering of people when the Protestant minister there speaks of the human misery caused by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

The Traité sur la tolérance (1763), an outcome of the Calas affair, is one of the most powerful indictments

ever written of so-called religious people who have enough religion to hate and persecute, but not enough to love and help others. In this work, Voltaire makes a sincere appeal for an end to intolerance and calls on his readers to recognize that all men are human and all are children of one God:

Je vous dis qu'il faut regarder tous les hommes comme nos frères: Quoi! mon frère le Turc? mon frère le Chinois? le juif? le Siamois?--Oui, sans doute: ne sommes-nous pas tous enfants du même père et créatures du même Dieu?"

L'Ingénu may be seen then as part of an active campaign of the 1760's by Voltaire to combat fanaticism and intolerance. His war against intolerance in all domains is summed up in the famous injunction "Ecrasez l'infâme". By l'infâme, Voltaire did not mean religion itself but rather the blind, unenlightened use which fanatics have made of the religious sentiment in man. These fanatics show contempt for any opinions other than their own and their will to dominate leads them to seek to impose their views on others. This is precisely the situation in L'Ingénu where the Huron is practically forced to be converted to the Catholic religion immediately upon his arrival in Brittany. If l'infâme meant

⁵Voltaire, Mélanges, éd. E. Berl, (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), p. 561.

Christianity, to Voltaire, it was certainly not the Christianity of Christ. It was rather the religion which enforced its doctrines by the sword and which massacred and persecuted. It was the religion which was responsible for the innocent suffering of Mlle de Saint-Yves and the arbitrary imprisonment of both Gordon and the Huron.

Voltaire did not propose a new religion, but sought rather to restore religion to the basics which Christ taught and from which contemporary religions had degenerated. Baumer concludes:

He strove to put an end to wars and the mutual intolerance of religious sects. It was a religion of nature as opposed to one of revelation or superstition--a religion of reason as opposed to faith.⁶

Since Roman Catholicism was the only religion recognized by the state in France, Voltaire could never hope to convince all of his readers of the merits of deism, but his efforts were sincere. During the final days of his life, priests tried to extract from him a confession and renunciation of his past attacks on the Church. Surely the sincerity of his beliefs is proven by the fact that he refused to acknowledge the divinity of Christ to the end, even though this meant risking the

⁶F. L. Baumer, Religion and the Rise of Skepticism, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1959), p. 52.

possible desecration of his body after death. He remained a sincere and ardent deist to the end and had a powerful influence on the society in which he lived. His contributions in combating religious persecution are readily demonstrable in the cases of Calas and Sirven.

In L'Ingénu, Voltaire's satire concentrates heavily, though not exclusively, on theological and religious absurdities. We see his vigorous opposition to organized religion, its ritual and temporal power as well as to the fanaticism and immorality of its followers. This attitude is included by Brumfitt and Davis in their general conclusion concerning L'Ingénu:

It condemns the kind of society in which men can be thrown into prison without due cause and without trial; in which religious persecution abounds and in which the abuse of power can lead to moral corruption as it does in the case of M. de Saint-Pouange, and in which this corruption is pandered to by the very authority which ought to uphold moral standards against arbitrary power--the Church as represented by père Tout à Tous (Ingénu, xvii).

Nowhere is Voltaire better than in his tales where he gives full range to his talents as a polemist. L'Ingénu is a well-told tale, bearing the reflexions and intentions of the author, written with such depth of human understanding and skill that it remains relevant two centuries after its publication.

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