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EVANGELICAL THOUGHT IN THE WORKS

OF

FRANÇOIS RABELAIS

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of History

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Arts in History

by

Mickey Thomas Terry

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MICKEY THOMAS TERRY. EVANGELICAL THOUGHT IN THE WORKS OF FRANÇOIS RABELAIS. Thesis director: Dr. Bodo Nischan, Department of History, East Carolina University, Greenville, N. C., August, 1980.

This thesis examines the nature and the development of the Sixteenth-Century French Evangelical Movement, specifically its influence on the thought of François Rabelais. The Evangelical Movement, essentially a pre-Reformation group, was comprised of non-schismatic Catholics advocating moderate ecclesiastical reform within the confines of the Catholic Church. Through a careful analysis of Rabelais' literary works, the writer will show that Rabelais identified with the group. The movement's origins, its membership, philosophy and development, and Rabelais' unique contributions to it will be thoroughly analyzed. The historical background material for the period given provides a context for the group's evolution.

The term "Evangélisme" will be defined in the context of being a philosophy of non-schismatic ecclesiastical reform of Catholic origin, and shall be thus presented in conjunction with etymological data concerning its development into this concept. The topics discussed in the thesis include: the history of interpretation of Rabelais' works (among contemporaries and in current scholarship), the nature and development of the Evangelical Movement in Sixteenth-Century France, the concept of Evangélisme in Rabelais' works, and the unique aspects of Rabelaisian Thought.

The thesis also shows Rabelais' connection with the movement as being authentic and profound. His frequent usage of the gospel writings will be featured as one of the prime indicators of Rabelais' Evangélisme.

The idiosyncratic tendencies which these writings evidence will provide further proof regarding this view. All of these items, in addition to the inferences which his contemporaries make, will attest to Rabelais' identification with the movement. Finally, a different light will be thrust upon Rabelais' Evangélisme which will indicate the profundity of his convictions and the extent of the importance that they hold for him.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It is at this time that I would like to take the opportunity to recognize those whom have been most helpful in providing assistance to me during the undertaking of this thesis. To begin with, I would like to gratefully acknowledge my director, Dr. Bodo Nischan, for his guidance and assistance in the pursuit of this topic. I would also like to thank Dr. William Cobb and Dr. Anthony Papalas for their careful reading and suggestions. A special acknowledgment is extended to Dr. Nicole Aronson of the Foreign Languages Faculty, as it was Professor Aronson who first suggested the topic to me. She has since provided much invaluable assistance and direction during the course of this endeavor. Finally, I would like to bestow the utmost sincere and fervent appreciation to my mother, Mrs. Beatrice C. Terry, who has been a constant source of inspiration to me over the years in my every endeavor, and whose support I dearly cherish.

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to examine the nature and developmental influence of the Sixteenth Century French Evangelical Movement on the literary works of François Rabelais. Through the years, the term "enigma" has often become associated with nuances which create frustrating labyrinths for scholars desiring to interpret his thought. Given this fact, Rabelais' writings are open to a wide range of interpretation. For years Rabelais scholars have been trying to classify his Christianity, or should one say the lack thereof. Much has been published concerning this man, and yet so little is known of him and the method of his thought.

Rabelais augmented the problem in the preface to his First Book, Gargantua, in which he alludes to his dual usage and non-usage of allegory, thus giving cause for immense interpretational difficulties. This is but one example of the types of problems with which scholars have had to deal over the years. It is this writer's intention to give credence to the thesis that Rabelais was amply influenced by a rather obscure pre-reform movement in Sixteenth Century France called the "Evangelical Movement," which was spearheaded by such illuminati as Guillaume Briçonnet, Lefèvre d'Étaples and Marguerite de Navarre.

In the thesis, much material is revealed concerning the movement, its origin, members, philosophy and development, in addition to a revelation of facts and obscured subtleties in Rabelais' literary works which point to this influence. As a group, the Evangelicals were devout Christians in the most ardent sense. One distinguishing characteristic that they manifested which distinguished them from any other reform group was

that they never left the Catholic Church, a point on which there will be much elaboration in the thesis.

Attention will also be drawn to the writer's use of the term Evangelisme, the concept underlying the movement. Evangelisme was a Sixteenth Century pre-reform concept which emphasized non-schismatic ecclesiastical reform within the Catholic Church. Its reforms were moderate in conception and focused on religious practices rather than theological disputes as did the Protestants. Evangelisme emphasized a return to the simple type of Christianity outlined by Christ and the Apostles in the gospel. Whenever this term is used in the thesis, it will be underlined and retained in the French in order to prevent it from being misconstrued with any later anglicized connotation of the term. In English, its closest translation would be "evangelicalism" rather than the word "evangelism." As the term is rarely used in English in reference to this concept, the writer has chosen to retain the French.

With reference to the sources, the writer has consulted French and English references, but even these materials are relatively few and originate in the Twentieth Century; hence it has been necessary to consult the writings of several contemporary Rabelais scholars in order to extract the data necessary to put together the components of the movement proper, an aspect of approach which we will elaborate on in the chapter on "The Nature and Development of the Evangelical Movement in Sixteenth Century France." French source material has been translated for use in the first four books of Rabelais. The writer has chosen to use an English edition with appropriate citation. The Complete Works of Rabelais, by

Jacques LeClercq,<sup>1</sup> provides the reader with a colorful, yet viable translation of appropriate material. It should be noted that the thesis will be based on Gargantua, Pantagruel, the Third Book and the Fourth Book, ranging in date of publication from 1532-1552. There is an alleged Fifth Book, a posthumous publication, but there is much doubt and controversy concerning its authenticity.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, the Fifth Book will be disregarded.

When dealing with the works of Rabelais, it is difficult to find an unassailable position, but the examination and method attempted by the writer will, hopefully, bring us just that much closer to dissolving the enigma.

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<sup>1</sup>François Rabelais, The Complete Works of Rabelais, trans. Jacques LeClercq (New York: Random House, 1936), hereinafter cited as Rabelais, The Complete Works.

<sup>2</sup>Florence M. Weinberg, The Wine and the Will (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972), p. II.

## CHAPTER I

### RABELAIS--A HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION

Of the infinitesimal variety of literary figures in history, François Rabelais may be regarded as one of the most perplexing and abstruse from the standpoint of analyzation. Having been, for many decades, the object of arduous scrutiny by scholars, Rabelais, thus far, has defied efforts of any type of indisputable categorization and definitive interpretation either as a personality or as a satirist. Consequently, it would be beneficial to examine the factors causing the problems encountered.

Given the framework which scholars have established, it is possible to sense that the basic problems are twofold in nature. The first emanates from the dearth of information, documentable data, concerning the man and his work. There is no adequate account of either his life or work. For instance, the date of Rabelais' birth has been a point of speculation for quite some time, and this item becomes even more complex to deal with when one considers the fact that it is based on a "copy" of mortuary records of a Parisian church written more than a century after his death. We read:

"François Rabelais, [is] dead at the age of 70 years, rue des Jardins, 9 April, 1553, [and] has been buried in the cemetery of St. Paul."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A. J. Nock and C. R. Wilson, Francis Rabelais--The Man and His Work (New York: Harper & Bros. Publishers, 1929), p. xiv, hereinafter cited as Nock and Wilson, Francis Rabelais.

Albert Nock and C. R. Wilson comment on this terse statement by noting:

The date of death here given is no doubt correct, as it is corroborated by a statement antedating the copy, in the preface to an edition of some letters which Rabelais wrote from Italy; but the age given is open to serious question, and has been all but universally repudiated. There are almost insuperable critical difficulties in the way of assuming that Rabelais was born as early as 1483, and since this document is the only actual evidence in support of such an assumption, it is more reasonable to suppose either that the original entry was in error or that the copyist made a mistake.<sup>2</sup>

Commenting on Nock and Wilson, Donald Frame proceeds to explain the implications by saying:

This would mean, however, that he entered orders at about thirty, left no record of his existence until he was thirty-seven, fathered three illegitimate children in his mid-forties and late fifties, and was almost fifty--a ripe age at the time--when he started to write his book, almost seventy when he finished it. A later birth date such as 1494, which some scholars have suggested, seems a good deal likelier.<sup>3</sup>

Confrontation with such problems as this as well as others gives rise to enigmas requiring some speculation which, in turn, frequently results in error.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Nock and Wilson, Francis Rabelais, p. xiv.

<sup>3</sup>Donald Frame, François Rabelais (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>Among the other problems referred to are a lack of knowledge concerning: sexual partners, reasons for entering and/or leaving the monastery, influences on his childhood, lack of verifiable date indicating whether he was really the author of the Fifth Book (Published posthumously).

The second problem which confronts the scholar and creates a dissonance in the analysis of Rabelais is Rabelais himself, as he creates a paradox in the prologue to his First Book Gargantua. In order for one to better comprehend and appreciate the implications of the problematic passages evident in the works to be presented, we will pursue a discussion of the genesis of Gargantua and Pantagruel as well as the factors influencing their development.<sup>5</sup>

Gargantua is the first of Rabelais' controversial works. It was followed by a second book Pantagruel, an epic concerning the lives and adventures of two giants, Gargantua and his son Pantagruel. Although Gargantua is listed by Rabelais as being the first book, Pantagruel was written first and was published prior to Gargantua, in 1532. Gargantua was not published until 1534.<sup>6</sup>

These first two books are considered to be his most prominent and also most revealing of his attitudes and character.<sup>7</sup> What about his character? Why are these books so important? The answer to these and other such questions can be understood only by examining Rabelais and the times in which he lived.

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<sup>5</sup>The latter entails a succinct biographical sketch of that which is known about Rabelais.

<sup>6</sup>Marcel De Grève, L'Interprétation de Rabelais au XVI<sup>e</sup> Siècle (Genève: Droz, 1961), p. 15, hereinafter cited as De Grève, L'Interprétation de Rabelais.

<sup>7</sup>The literary content of these books provided the basis for such conjectures.

Rabelais was a man of many talents, possessed both with wit and an extraordinarily keen intellect. Born near Chinon a small town located in the French province of Touraine, Rabelais received a well-rounded education which, among other subjects, emphasized the study of ancient language, philosophy and literature.<sup>8</sup> Some scholars assume that he entered the monastery of La Baumette near Angers,<sup>9</sup> but it is generally asserted that it was at the Franciscan Monastery of Le-Puy Saint Martin at Fontenay-le-Comte in Vendee where the first record of him is evidenced to the world in a letter addressed to the great French Humanist Guillaume Budé, who was then acting as secretary to the king.<sup>10</sup> Concerning this letter, Frame notes:

From this and from Budé's reply a month later we learn that Rabelais was by that time not only a monk, but a priest (which means that he probably had already been in orders for six or seven years as novice and then scholastic).<sup>11</sup>

His studies at Le-Puy were ended by the passing of a ban on the study of Greek placed by the order. Soon after this Rabelais transferred to the Benedictine Monastery of Saint-Pierre de Maillizais. For reasons unknown, Rabelais decided to leave monastic life and pursue the study of medicine in Paris where he is thought to have also studied law, the knowledge of which his works display.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> William A. Nitze and E. Preston Dargan, A History of French Literature (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1950), p. 146.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Frame, François Rabelais, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

In 1530 Rabelais enrolled in the Faculty of Medicine in Montpellier where he took a bachelor's, a master's and a doctorate degree. He had moved to Lyons by the spring of 1532 and there he practiced medicine and edited books.

As a writer, it was more the role of Rabelais the monk and priest that projected the most significant influence on his works. Through his experiences, he was able to satirize the abuses existing within the Catholic Church of this time, which he frequently did, depicting clergy as the epitome of decadence and corruption. Although the citation of abuses within the Church was an important aspect of his works, Gargantua, Pantagruel, and the subsequent books, Rabelais outlined a viable philosophy of education and morality as well as one of religion. It is the religious philosophy asserted that becomes the issue here for debate, because a philosophy is present, though currently indiscernable as to its originator. The reason for this indiscernment brings us to the second problem earlier alluded to in our attempts to interpret this austere satirist. In the prologue to Gargantua, Rabelais admonishes the reader to look for hidden meanings (le sens cache) in his books, thus giving attention to his use of allegory, analogizing his usage of it to that of Pythagoras. He states:

. . . . by diligent reading and prolonged meditation, you should break the marrow of my meaning--for I make use of allegory as freely as Pythagoras did. As you read, you must confidently expect to become valiant and wise. For here you will find a novel savor, a most abstruse doctrine, here you will learn the deepest mysteries, the most agonizing problems of our religion, our body politic, our economic life.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 5.

With the preceding statement, the inherent difficulties become all too apparent. Rabelais magnifies the difficulties considerably by saying:

Do you honestly believe that Homer, penning his Iliad or Odessey, ever dreamed of allegorical patchwork, subsequently inflicted upon him by Plutarch, by Heraclides Ponticus, by Eustathius, by Cornutus the Stoic, or by Politan, the Italian who filched his criticism from the lot of them? If you do, you are miles away from my opinion, for I hold that Homer no more dreamed of all this allegorical fustian than Ovid in his Metamorphoses dreamed of the Gospel.<sup>14</sup>

It is this paradox that sets the course of endeavor which this writer will venture to analyze.

Of the differing view held concerning the author, the most basic and generally agreed upon is that of Humanist and Evangelical. For the purpose of defining the concept of Humanism, as generally perceived, probably no explanation can be deemed more precise than that which Oskar Kristeller provides:

By humanism we mean merely the general tendency of the age to attach the greatest importance to classical studies, and to consider classical antiquity as the common standard and model by which to guide all cultural activities.<sup>15</sup>

This view is supported by such critics as Donald Frame,<sup>16</sup> Jean Larmat<sup>17</sup> and Lucien Febvre.<sup>18</sup> Such a thesis may be maintained from

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<sup>14</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 5

<sup>15</sup>Kristeller, Paul Oskar, Renaissance Thought (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1961), p. 95.

<sup>16</sup>Frame, Francois Rabelais, p. 150.

<sup>17</sup>Jean Larmat, Rabelais (Paris: Hatier, 1973), p. 11.

<sup>18</sup>Lucien Febvre, Le Problème de L'Incroyance au XVI<sup>e</sup> Siècle, (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1942), p. 128, hereinafter cited as Lucien Febvre, Le Problème de L'Incroyance.

various passages throughout the work, but particularly in those concerning the education of Gargantua, in Chapters XIV and XV of the work by that name. Gargantua's education as prescribed by Grandgousier is where the emphasis on Humanism is greatly marked. Frame refers to Gargantua as being the most humanistic of all Rabelais' books as well as being the most evangelical.<sup>19</sup>

Several authors classify Rabelais as an Evangelical, Evangelisme being considered to have coincided well with Humanism, inasmuch as many Humanists<sup>20</sup> were Evangelicals. This position is upheld by Jean Larmat<sup>21</sup> and M. A. Screech.<sup>22</sup> For purposes of definition, Frame may be cited in order to provide a working definition of the term:

By Evangelism, I mean a Christian belief whose insistence on the primacy of the Bible makes the believer his own authority, rather than the Church as the accredited interpreter of an authorized text. Sixteenth-Century Evangelism was too close to Protestantism, differing mainly in seeking only peaceful reform in the Church.<sup>23</sup>

The latter half of this definition is by far the most significant, as it emphasizes Evangelicals' desire to stay within the confines of the

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<sup>19</sup>Frame, Francois Rabelais, p. 153.

<sup>20</sup>The type of humanism spoken of in this context is Northern Humanism, as opposed to Italian or Southern Humanism--the more secular variety. Northern Humanists, as a whole, tended to be more religiously oriented; Harold Grimm, The Reformation Era (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1973), p. 52.

<sup>21</sup>Larmat, Rabelais, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup>Screech, L'Evangelisme de Rabelais, p. 94.

<sup>23</sup>Frame, Francois Rabelais, p. 150.

Church, and thus distinguishes their position from that of a Protestant. In recent years, several Sixteenth-Century authors have been classified as being both Humanist and Evangelical. Among these are such names as Erasmus,<sup>24</sup> Lefevre d'Etaples<sup>25</sup> and Marguerite de Navarre.<sup>26</sup>

It should be noted, however, that this view of Evangelisme, most particularly in regard to Rabelais, has not always been held. It was not until 1916 that this thesis became popular. It was first propounded in the doctoral dissertation of French scholar Augustin Renaudet in his Pré-reforme et Humanisme à Paris Pendant Les Premières Guerres d'Italie (1494-1517). This dissertation opened up the study of Sixteenth-Century Evangelisme.<sup>27</sup> Since its publication, several scholars have attempted to maintain Rabelais' Evangelisme.

M. A. Screech has distinguished himself over the years by making some extensive efforts to reinforce this thesis, thus classifying Rabelais' type of Evangelisme as being "erastian" in conception.<sup>28</sup>

One of the most outstanding passages in Pantagruel from the standpoint of Rabelais' Evangelisme is Pantagruel's prayer in Chapter XXXIX, when he prays before battle, professing the Catholic faith and promising to spread His "holy gospel" in a pure, simple and truthful fashion:

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<sup>24</sup>Frame, Francois Rabelais, p. 151

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Jean Plattard, The Life of Francois Rabelais (New York: Humanities Press, 1968), p. 164.

<sup>27</sup>Frame, Francois Rabelais, p. 155.

<sup>28</sup>Screech, L'Evangelisme de Rabelais, p. 87.

Lord God, Who hast always been my preserver and protector, behold the peril that now encompasses me. Nothing brings me here save the natural will Thou grantest men to defend themselves, their wives and children, their country and their homes, when Thine own cause (which is the Faith) is not attacked. In Thine own cause Thou hast forbidden us to bear arms; Thou needest no coadjutor but only that we profess the Catholic faith and obey Thy Holy Word. Being almighty, Thou wilt take into Thy hands a defense strong beyond our conceiving.<sup>29</sup>

It is in the last section of this supplication in which the other elements of Evangelisme appear to describe, through a vow, how the "Word" is to be preached:

If it then please Thee to succor me in the hour of peril, I do offer up a vow. In Utopia and in all lands over which I may hold power and sway, I will cause Thy holy gospel to be purely, simply and entirely preached. And I will blot out the abuses of a rabble of ranters, pope-mongers and false prophets who, by human fabrications and depraved subterfuges, have poisoned the world we live in.<sup>30</sup>

In the opinion of this writer, the significance of the previous two passages lies in the fact that they emphasize the most essential element of Evangelisme, remaining within the confines of the Catholic Church, thus requiring a statement of profession.<sup>31</sup>

Each line in the following passage is essential as it serves as one

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<sup>29</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 268.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 269

<sup>31</sup>The two previous excerpts from Pantagruel will be cited only once to avoid repetition. Although Chapter IV will deal with the concept of Evangelisme in Pantagruel, the writer has chosen to use them in the context of this chapter only and to omit any later reference to them for the reason stated.

of the most significant humanistic-evangelical statements in all of Rabelais.<sup>32</sup> Gargantua advises Pantagruel:

I urge you to spend your youth making the most of your studies and developing your moral sense. . . . But I demand more of you. I insist that you learn languages perfectly! Greek first, as old Quintilian prescribes; then Latin; then Hebrew for the sake of the Holy Scripture; then Chaldee and Arabic, too. Model your Greek style on Plato, your Latin on Cicero. Let no history slip your memory; cultivate cosmography, for you will find its texts helpful.

As for the liberal arts of geometry, arithmetic and music, I gave you a taste of them when you were a little lad of five or six. Proceed further in them yourself, learning as much as you can. Be sure to master all the rules of astronomy; but dismiss astrology and the divinatory art of Lullius as but vanity and imposture. Of civil law, I would have you know the texts of the Code by heart, then compare them with philosophy.

A knowledge of nature is indispensable; devote to this study with unflagging curiosity. Let there be no sea, river or fountain but you know the fish that dwell in it. Be familiar with all the shrubs, bushes and trees in the forest or orchard, all the plants, herbs and flowers that grow on the ground, all the birds of the air, all the metals in the bowels of earth, all the precious stones in the orient and the south. In a word, be well informed in everything that concerns the physical world we live in.

Then carefully consult the works of Greek, Arabian and Latin physicians, without slighting the Jewish doctors, Talmudists and Cabbalists. By frequent exercises in dissection, acquire a perfect knowledge of that other world, which is man.

Devote a few hours a day to the study of Holy Writ. Take up the New Testament and the Epistles in Greek; then, the Old Testament in Hebrew. Strive to make your mind an inexhaustible storehouse of knowledge. . . . Further, I wish you to soon test what profit you have gained from your

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<sup>32</sup>As both concepts are apparently interrelated, it would be only appropriate to give mention to a passage that would concern them both. The passage is taken from Chapter VIII of Pantagruel in which a letter from Gargantua to his son is included.

education. This you can best do by public discussion and debate on all subjects against all comers, and by frequenting learned men both in Paris and elsewhere.<sup>33</sup>

If one reflects upon Gargantua's letter, the elements of Evangelisme, and particularly Humanism, shine forth.<sup>34</sup>

Although Rabelais has received various interpretations over the years, that of Abel Lefranc seems to be the most controversial and extensively dealt with in recent decades.

Lefranc, in his 1922 preface to Pantagruel, proclaims Rabelais an atheist.<sup>35</sup> Although supported by a few co-workers, such as Jean Plattard,<sup>36</sup> this thesis later led to a surge of treatises and articles presented by such renowned scholars as Etienne Gilson,<sup>37</sup> Lucien Febvre,<sup>38</sup> Marcel De Grève,<sup>39</sup> and M. A. Screech,<sup>40</sup> mostly proposing theses to the contrary.

Etienne Gilson makes a rather formidable rebuttal to Lefranc in his article "L'Athéisme de Rabelais," in which he cites central points and

<sup>33</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 193

<sup>34</sup>Other such passages may be also cited, but as a study of the evangelical elements within the works of Rabelais is not the sole end of this chapter, it would be better to cite a few of the major examples supporting differing interpretations, and then, move forward in order to thoroughly cover all the points that will be in need of observation.

<sup>35</sup>Abel Lefranc, Rabelais--Etudes sur Gargantua, Pantagruel, le Tiers Livre (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1953), p. 190.

<sup>36</sup>Plattard, The Life of Francois Rabelais, p. 166.

<sup>37</sup>Etienne Gilson, Les Idées et Les Lettres (Paris: Vrin, 1932), p. 219.

<sup>38</sup>Febvre, Le Probleme de l'Incroyance, p. 27.

<sup>39</sup>De Grève, L'Interpretation de Rabelais, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup>Screech, L'Evangelisme de Rabelais, p. 11.

individually refutes them. It is informative to note Lefranc's thesis in conjunction with the observations made by Gilson as the latter treats both sides of the issue. In his article, Gilson posits his position by stating:

In the remarkable study that has been published entitled Vol. III of the Works of Francois Rabelais, Mr. A. Lefranc tries to prove that the author of Pantagruel had ceased to be a christian and adhered, at the beginning his his literary career, to the rationalist faith, to that modern thought called independent thought.<sup>41</sup>

Gilson infers that the statement is absurd. He maintains that one cannot determine the rule for what was considered religious or irreligious for the Sixteenth Century based simply on current readings; it will escape us.<sup>42</sup> He goes on to cite another of Lefranc's arguments by saying:

Another argument invoked by Mr. A. Lefranc in favor of the atheism of Rabelais resembles the better defined and susceptible nature of an immediate verification.<sup>43</sup>

Here, the author points out Lefranc's reference to the letter in Chapter VIII written by Gargantua to his son Pantagruel on which Lefranc remarks: "One would be surprised to find that there is not the slightest allusion made to the future life."<sup>44</sup>

As Lefranc's thesis hinges itself on this point, it would be here appropriate to refer to his text for further elaboration. In it, Lefranc

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<sup>41</sup>Gilson, Les Idees et Les Lettres, p. 218.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

says the following:

All notion of the immortality of the soul is absent from this large expose. Without doubt God the Creator and Protector has His place there and Jesus is named there; original sin, help and divine grace are also brought to mind, but the declarations go no further. No religious practices are mentioned, but I repeat, the idea of a commonplace survival of the soul is totally omitted.<sup>45</sup>

Lefranc also remarks that the same allusion is made to the final judgment, that upon close examination, it implies, in effect, no ideas of retribution in a life hereafter.<sup>46</sup>

Here one finds himself coming closer and closer to the heart of the matter at hand as Lefranc continues:

One only finds here a conception of a scientific philosophy of general order which applies itself to the arrest of life in the universe and takes sight only of the author, it exists in no other. There is only to think over the words, and the conviction that those of his here did not adhere to the Christian dogma of the life eternal will impose itself quickly upon the mind.<sup>47</sup>

In response to this argument, Gilson makes the following rebuttal:

One is a little embarrassed to see that there was a place for Jesus Christ in a doctrine where there is no other world than the material world, because if he is not in a spiritual world, where, then does one find Jesus Christ?<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Abel Lefranc, Rabelais--Etudes sur Gargantua, Pantagruel, le Tiers Livre (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1953), p. 182, hereinafter cited as Lefranc, Rabelais--Etudes.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Gilson, Les Idées et Les Lettres, p. 231

According to Gilson, Lefranc's position stands in conflict with itself and does so even further when he neglects to cognicize Rabelais' use of biblical texts in his works, a fact which surely would have had an effect on the reader. Concerning this, Gilson remarks:

There is a very strange beginning for someone who is preparing himself to teach atheism.<sup>49</sup>

In concluding, Gilson asserts that there was no stronger, competent theologian than the author of Pantagruel.<sup>50</sup>

As Etienne Gilson was a formidable scholar, it comes as no surprise to find his arguments, generally speaking, to be sound and viable. It is true that an author who is trying to denounce a doctrine would hardly find either need or desire to make positive mention of elements which might tend to have sublimating effects. As the discipline of psychology and the theory of sublimation were non-existent at the time, one may explain Rabelais' inclusion of such "affectious" religious material. Just the same, it seems that Mr. Gilson, in pointing out Lefranc's oversight, makes a rather sizable one of his own.

Whereas Gilson criticizes Lefranc for attempting to analyze and evaluate a Renaissance intellect according to modern standards, Gilson, surprisingly enough, makes the very same error. Such is the case when Gilson suggests that Rabelais would surely not have included such sublimating themes in his works, themes which could influence his readers to form beliefs and opinions contrary to his. Gilson dismisses the

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<sup>49</sup>Gilson, Les Idees et Les Lettres, p.232.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 231

the possibility that Rabelais was not aware of the psychological implications of what he was doing, provided that Lefranc's thesis is correct. It is also the opinion of the writer that Gilson tends to overlook the fact that he is dealing with a Sixteenth-Century intellect, a fact which can produce some far removed results given particular circumstances; consequently, this writer finds it necessary to have reservations concerning Gilson's last argument. In addition, Gilson fails to explore the scope of his counter-attack to the fullest extent. In speaking of atheism, Gilson makes no attempt to define the concept in any context in which it may or may not have been held in the Sixteenth Century as does Febvre and, therefore, does not assess the feasibility of holding such a view at the time. Gilson, in fact, makes no such assessment of a Sixteenth-Century intellect holding religious views of any type. No attempt is made to discern the nature of Rabelais' faith. It should be regarded that history and the writing of history can be and is generally based on the readings in the sources, both primary and secondary, which a scholar has available. Gilson's position on this point would not be plausible if by the term "current readings" he is referring to the reading of historical writings from which one is to draw conclusions logically. It is, in reality, current values and thought patterns that would serve as deterrents to viable scholarship.

In regard to the problem of projecting modernity on antiquity, Lucien Febvre also reproaches Lefranc, more thoroughly than Gilson, in his Le Problème de l'Incroyance au XVI<sup>e</sup> Siècle for seeking to point out the extent and implication of non-belief and belief in the Sixteenth

Century.<sup>51</sup>

Febvre, one of the foremost scholars on Rabelais, centers his views on the concept of the Renaissance mentality. He suggests the notion that certain mental concepts did not exist for the Sixteenth-Century intellect; therefore, they could not reason in the fashion in which the Twentieth-Century intellect reasons. In effect, this would cause the Sixteenth-Century mind to arrive at different conclusions from those of the Twentieth.<sup>52</sup> Febvre provides an example with the term "atheism" or "atheist." The term "atheism" did not have a strict definitive meaning in the Sixteenth Century. The term was not polarized.<sup>53</sup>

Pierre Viret, a Lausanne reformer, is cited by Febvre as denouncing these "atheists" in his Instruction Chrestienne. For Viret, the atheist is the superlative of deist:

They (the atheists) have a God and each profess . . .  
"some opinion of the immortality of souls."<sup>54</sup>

Viret proceeds to declare, according to Febvre, that such does not matter. Their god is not our God. They are not of our religion and, therefore, are not atheists.<sup>55</sup> Such was how the Sixteenth-Century mind thought.<sup>56</sup> Viret also refers to the superstitious and idolaters as

<sup>51</sup>Febvre, Le Probleme de l'Incroyance, p. 26.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 420.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

atheists echoing Ronsard when the latter treats the Huguenots as  
atheists.<sup>57</sup>

Febvre remarks that in the Sixteenth Century, religion colored the universe, and that the man who pretended not to think on all absolutely as all would be called a blasphemer, an atheist.<sup>58</sup> The author points out that men were seeking a reflection of the divine in all and concludes his position by saying:

To pretend to make the Sixteenth Century a skeptical century, a libertine century, a rationalist century and glorify it as such: the worst of errors and illusions.<sup>59</sup>

Of all the arguments asserted against Lefranc's thesis of atheism, Febvre appears to be the most thorough; but, in speaking of the atheistic interpretation and the thought pattern of the Renaissance individual, it might be asked just what Rabelais' contemporaries thought of him, and whether he was considered atheistic in his own time. In order to appreciate the implications of any Sixteenth-Century interpretation of Rabelais, we should first provide a brief sketch of the religious state of affairs in France at this time.

At the time of the publication of Rabelais' First Book, Gargantua, François I (1494-1547) of the House of Valois was king of France. The year 1534 is an important one in French religious history, and especially where Rabelais is concerned, for it was in this year that the Affaire des

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<sup>57</sup>Febvre, Le Probleme de l'Incroyance, p. 127.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 427.

Placards took place. Prior to that date, France had been relatively receptive to new ideas and concepts.

François I's sister, Marguerite d'Angoulême (1492-1549), the queen of Navarre<sup>60</sup> was herself a fine author as well as Evangelical. Due to the Navarre queen's intercession with her brother on behalf of Evangelicals, new ideas were, for a while, able to circulate in France without fear of suppression and persecution; however, this was soon brought to an abrupt end.

On the night of October 17, 1534, some religious radicals sought to protest by nailing tracts (placards) in Paris, Orléans, Blois, Rouen, Tours, and Amboise. One, nailed to the door of the king's bedroom chamber, was entitled True Specification on the Horrible Abuses of the Papal Mass. When the king arose the next morning and saw the tract, he became infuriated at the thought that, in addition to maligning the holy mysteries, the party responsible would have had the affrontery to perpetrate such an act. This "effrontery" resulted in a sudden and acrimonious change in royal policy. This change took effect in the form of an official withdrawal of the protection previously allowed to religious dissenters. The change of policy played right into the hands of the conservative Sorbonne theologians, including Noël Beda, syndic of the Sorbonne, who had an intense disdain for religious dissenters of any type.

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<sup>60</sup>Marguerite d'Angoulême shall hereinafter be referred to as Marguerite de Navarre.

In response to the event, expiatory processions were held throughout France formed in vehement protest of the "sacrilege." Even the king took part in one during January, 1535.<sup>61</sup> In that month alone, over 35 "Lutherans"<sup>62</sup> were tried, arrested and burned.<sup>63</sup> Many were forced to flee the country. The atmosphere, from 1534 and for some time onward, became one of intolerance and hostility toward any criticism of the Church. Heretics were sought out, had their property confiscated, and were persecuted. Informers were well rewarded for their services.

Although Gargantua was banned by the Sorbonne, it circulated underground. The Sorbonne perceived the "non-Catholic" sentiment as heretical and, consequently, banned Rabelais' book and branded it as obscene. As a result, the Sorbonne put Rabelais in the class with other reformers, and his books were listed along with those of such men as Calvin, D'Avignon, Erasmus, Marot, Bucer, and Zwingli as heretical and dangerous from a religious perspective.<sup>64</sup>

The Sorbonne's opinion concerning the book's obscenity was neither rare nor unique for it was also shared by the reformer John Calvin.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Thomas Lindsay, A. History of the Reformation, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), 2:146.

<sup>62</sup>The Sorbonne saw all religious dissenters as one-in-the-same, and thereby, referred to them all as being "Lutherans," S. Dresden Humanism in the Renaissance (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1968), p. 143.

<sup>63</sup>Lindsay, A History of the Reformation, 2:146

<sup>64</sup>De Grève, L'Interprétation de Rabelais, p. 16.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

In fact, Rabelais, by virtue of these writings, became regarded as a reformer by friends and enemies alike.<sup>66</sup> Among those accepting Rabelais as a reformer were the first Huguenots, particularly those from Lyon, where he once resided.<sup>67</sup> Despite this fact, De Greve<sup>68</sup> and Dresden<sup>69</sup> deny that Rabelais was a reformer, and, conversely, was far from it, as it was senseless to risk dying as a martyr.

M. A. Screech, in treating this subject, makes a pertinent observation saying:

Rabelais is an Evangelical, so be it. But is he in the true sense of the word, a reformer? He is certainly not hostile to the Church in so much as an ecumenical and apostolic institution. He was schismatic only to those who denied the catholicity of all those who did not accept the supreme authority of the Pope and the infallibility of the councils. There is a place to support that reform that Rabelais envisaged in an English reform.<sup>70</sup>

Screech thinks that Rabelais' Evangelisme was erastian in conception. He holds that Rabelais conceived of the intervention of the prince in ecclesiastical and theological matters in addition to administrative affairs.<sup>71</sup> The prince, he says, should suppress the abusers of religion in his own domain as well as those of conquered rulers. Screech, then,

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<sup>66</sup>De Greve, L'Interpretation de Rabelais, p. 55.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>S. Dresden, Humanism in the Renaissance (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1968), p. 161.

<sup>70</sup>Screech, L'Evangelisme de Rabelais, p. 94.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

cites Chapter XLV of Gargantua as the most striking example of the necessity of princely intervention to defend the evangelical faith.<sup>72</sup>

Screech's view, although not shared by many pro-evangelical scholars, seems tenable. "Réforme à l'Anglaise" would be the perfect medium for insuring against the dictatorial powers of the pope and would provide a method of appeal to a source outside the realm of the Church for those who might encounter abuse or clerical injustice.

Some scholars would view the possibility of Rabelais holding Protestant ideas as being totally improbable. Marcel De Grève and Screech both comment on this, thus denouncing Rabelais' Protestantism.

De Grève, in his L'Interprétation de Rabelais, states:

As a good number of other Frenchmen, Rabelais is too little a christian and too much of a philosophe in the erasmian sense to become a huguenot. And then, the attitude and methods of Calvin began to disturb his spirit--fond of freedom and tolerance.<sup>73</sup>

Screech, while admitting that Rabelais was no Lutheran, purports that the satirist was, just the same, influenced by Luther in his Evangelisme; Rabelais also adopted a faith close to that of Luther. Screech maintains that Rabelais' rejection of some of the ideas of Luther would support his non-Lutheranism.<sup>74</sup> As Rabelais was not a Lutheran, neither was he a Calvinist as Calvin's doctrine was repugnant to him as was that of the Sorbonne.<sup>75</sup> On this point, Screech and De Grève are in

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<sup>72</sup>Screech, L'Evangelisme de Rabelais, p. 88.

<sup>73</sup>De Grève, L'Interprétation de Rabelais, p. 35.

<sup>74</sup>Screech, L'Evangelisme de Rabelais, p. 19.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

agreement. Given the facts, it seems safe to say that Calvin did not have any more appeal for Rabelais than Rabelais did for Calvin.<sup>76</sup> It also does not appear that Rabelais' connections with Luther went any further than that which they both held sacred due to their humanistic beliefs; in this sense, one can see the relation although it is cognized that Luther was not a Humanist.

Protestant? Skeptic? Evangelical? What was this man François Rabelais who tells one all and yet nothing? Were his sentiments that of a truly devout "fidele" of Catholicism, Lutheranism, or Atheism,<sup>77</sup> or are they indicative of an Evangelical. This and other such questions seem to be perennial for Rabelais scholars. Despite this bald reality, one must not consider Rabelais' writings as nebulous, and, therefore, meaningless, for the innermost significance of his satire lies neither in the religion of the author nor in the nature of his life-style, but rather, in the fact that his books suggest the spirit of the times and posits their most controversial issues.

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<sup>76</sup>Reference is being made to an earlier statement indicating Calvin's opinion of Rabelais' first books.

<sup>77</sup>The term "atheism" being used here to suggest the possibility of Rabelais being a precursor of atheistic thought.

## CHAPTER II

### THE NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

In order to understand the mind and spirit of the Sixteenth Century evangelical, particularly in regard to Rabelais, it is necessary to look at the Evangelical reform movement which was comprised of reform-oriented individuals identifying with its views. It would also be advantageous for the reader to look at the philosophy of Evangelisme as well as to examine the problematic implications involved in holding such a view during Rabelais' time. Before proceeding any further, there are a few inherent problems with the scholarship into this area which must be mentioned.

Evangelisme is a reform concept on which there is sparse documentation. In result, current Renaissance and Reformation scholars have failed in applying the term in any definitive categorical sense by which such "erasmian" reformers as Etienne Dolet, Clément Marot, Lefèvre d'Étaples, not to mention François Rabelais,<sup>1</sup> could be classified for reasons which will be presented later in this chapter. It should be noted that although it is the French school of reformers which is given the most note, the Evangelical movement did, nevertheless, exist in

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<sup>1</sup>It should be pointed out that any reference made to Rabelais as a reformer, in the strictest sense of the word, would be inappropriate as he was not of this class. Just the same, Rabelais was reform-minded; it is only in this context that he could be referred to as a reformer.

areas such as Spain, Germany, and Italy at approximately the same time.<sup>2</sup>

Admittedly, the precepts of Evangélisme appear to be nebulous and somewhat indiscernable from Protestantism at the current time as well as in the Sixteenth Century. All considerations demand a working definition of the term at hand.

Evangélisme is a Sixteenth-Century reform concept which advocated non-schismatic ecclesiastical reform within the existing bounds of the Catholic Church and whose advocates became known as "Evangelicals." As far as etymology is concerned, this writer has run across no reference to the term Evangélisme being used as such prior to the Twentieth Century. The term, nevertheless, is a derivative of the French word "evangile," commonly used at that time, denoting the "gospel" as taken from the Bible. Although most reformers possessed a formidable zeal for the Bible, it should be pointed out that the Evangelicals distinguished themselves by their affinity for the gospel. This, no doubt, accounts for the significance of the name later given the movement despite the fact that they were often, erroneously, associated with the Lutherans of that time.

As mentioned earlier, one of the first significant usages of the term Evangélisme appeared with the publication of a doctoral dissertation in 1916 by Augustin Renaudet entitled Pré-reforme et Humanisme à Paris Pendant Les Premières Guerres d'Italie (1494-1517) whose thesis asserts the Evangélisme of Rabelais, a thesis which has since been confirmed

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<sup>2</sup>Eva-Maria Jung, "On the Nature of Evangelism in 16th Century Italy," Journal of the History of Ideas 14 (October 1953): 513, hereinafter cited as Jung, "On the Nature of Evangelism," JHI.

and negated by various scholars over the years. The prominence of this work may be attributed to the fact that it is considered to have opened the study of Evangelisme, a subject still awaiting full examination.

It is important here to point out that although Renaudet is often cited for presenting the first major study, it is Pierre Imbart de la Tour who is credited for having coined the term Evangelisme in the third volume of his Les Origines de la Reforme, published in 1914 under the title of L'Evangelisme. In the work, de la Tour indicated the main aspiration of this movement, and a reform of Christian life through a return to the spirit of the gospel.<sup>3</sup>

Now, as far as the movement proper is concerned, it will be advisable to venture into some background material on the period prior to outlining the precepts of the movement as a whole, as it would provide an explanation for the direction that the Evangelicals took in regard to advocating their reform ideas.

In regard to France and the rest of Europe, if one word could be selected to describe the religious-political situation during Rabelais' time, it would be "chaos." Sixteenth-Century Europe served as a theatre for war and conflict, most of which was set on the Italian stage. To treat each aggression, even as it affected the religious situation in France, would entail entering a maze of endeavor transcending the scope of our present interests and purpose. For this reason, the writer has chosen to mention only the most significant developments as affecting the Evangelical movement during the reign of François I.

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<sup>3</sup>Jung, "On the Nature of Evangelism," JHI, p. 513

As previously mentioned, many of the hostilities took place in Italy. After the election of Charles V as Holy Roman Emperor in 1519, the belligerence centered itself mainly around the activities of three groups: the Imperialists, the French and the Papacy. Everyone during this period seemed to be preoccupied solely with the desire for the aggrandisement of power and territory, and the papacy was no exception to this. It should be mentioned that there were various and sundry causes cited by each group for the hostilities suffered, but avarice was the principal factor just the same.

As the century begins, the Italian Wars (1494-1516) are already in progress, soon followed by the Imperial-Valois War (1521-1524), not to mention the other conflicts. Each of those wars would be tentatively halted by treaties such as Madrid (1526) and Cambrai (1529), but war would shortly resume. As mentioned, Charles V, as Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, had acquired much power and territory, so much so that the French felt threatened and attempted to diminish it. This resulted in long-term warfare between Charles V and François I.

As for the common interests shared in Italy, there were factors to be considered:

1. Italy was one of the richest areas of all Europe. It would have been a tremendous boon to anyone who controlled it.
2. It served as a geographical crossroads to Europe which would make access to other areas more feasible.
3. More importantly, Italy held the papacy. In that day and age, the influence of the pope was not just confined to the spiritual sphere; it could serve as an invaluable aid to any ruler to whom the pope was obligated.

As the Sixteenth Century was an age of active aggression, it was also a period of fickle alliance, for during this time, various

belligerent factions would ally themselves with other factions sharing a mutual goal. Certainly, then as today, it was a matter of political expediency. Quite often, alliances would be formed between groups that had nothing in common save the desire to remove a particular threat. All the same, the formation of these alliances was of great consequence to the French Evangelicals, as such alliances frequently fostered national policies. Unfortunately, the ambitions of François I set the course for a very precarious state of affairs in France, for he would ally himself with anyone who he thought would aid in his defeat of Charles V, whether it be Catholic or Protestant. This he did, adjusting policy accordingly in order not to offend his ally. Initially, this seems to be a very prudent thing for any leader to do in such a situation, but when one considers the fact that François I would establish, terminate, and then reestablish alliances with the same group, it lends the impression that the king was indecisive and his policy unstable. Just the same, such positions, as taken by the court at this time, caused much havoc for the Evangelicals at different intervals, and even after the death of François I in 1547.

This served as another reason for the shifts in the support of religious tolerance; for example, at the initial outbreak of tension between Rome and France, the king allied himself with Briçonnet's reforms which served counter to Roman interest.<sup>3</sup> It was at this time that the first signs of the court's interest in the Groupe de Meaux can

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<sup>3</sup>Henry Heller, "The Briçonnet Case Revisited," Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2 (Fall, 1972): 230.

be witnessed,<sup>4</sup> but as aggression declined, so did interest in the reformatory work at Meaux.<sup>5</sup>

The intolerance brought on by the Affaire des Placards witnessed a sudden shift of this sort in 1535. In effort to fight Charles V, Francois I aligned his forces with the Schmalkaldic League. Preserved Smith makes a very incisive comment when he noted that Francois:

would have had no scruples in supporting abroad the heresy that he suppressed at home, but he found the German princes would accept his friendship on no terms save those of tolerance to French Protestants.<sup>6</sup>

In result, on July 16, 1535, Francois proclaimed an edict ceasing their persecution and authorizing their release from the prisons. Even this situation changed by 1538. From that time onward, edicts were issued in 1538, 1539, 1540, 1542 and 1543 by various regional Parlements in order to "root them out."

As one can see, the situation fluctuated. Marguerite de Navarre was able to provide some protection to the Evangelicals at different times during earlier years, but the interests of the crown eventually took precedence over all.

At the time of Rabelais' mature years, the Protestant Reformation had already been begun by Luther. Germany was in a state of religious turmoil and witnessed a mass proliferation of Lutheran ideas, much to the chagrin of the Roman Catholic Church authorities. We are dealing here

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<sup>4</sup>Henry Heller, "The Briçonnet Case Revisited," Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2 (Fall, 1972): 229.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>6</sup>Preserved Smith, Age of the Reformation (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1923), p. 197.

with a concept, developed as a result of this proliferation of ideas and the reaction which arose against it. This concept was Evangelisme, produced in result of the conflict between the Catholics and Protestants, a conflict by which it was to become significantly affected.

During this period, any individual who voluntarily left the confines of the Church or broke its rules was generally confronted with the danger of excommunication. A writ of excommunication entailed one being expelled from the graces of the Church and being barred from the partaking of the sacraments required for salvation. Excommunication also presented the threat of eternal damnation to one's soul. More importantly, the protection of the Church would also be withdrawn, allowing for the danger of one being branded as a heretic and an outlaw and, thus, subject to persecution by Church authorities and even death. For the people of this time, all of the consequences of excommunication mattered, but for the religious dissenter, the threat of persecution and death became the concern of the greatest relevance.

This brings us to the most significant and unique feature of the Sixteenth-Century Evangelical; the Evangelical never broke away from the Catholic Church and chose, rather, to seek peaceful reform, essentially ritualistic in nature, within it.

As Protestants were also reform-oriented, one might wonder about the extent of similarity between Protestants and Evangelicals. Essentially, they differed very little, a point which should assist in explaining their being mistaken for Lutherans. Just the same, it was the desire for personal interpretation during the Reformation era which helped to provide the stimuli for humanist-reformers such as Lefèvre

d'Etapes and Martin Luther to share in such common activities as translating the Bible into the vernacular. First-hand knowledge of scripture was indeed rare for the layman during this period. According to M. A. Screech, it was this knowledge of the Bible which separated the Evangelicals from the other Frenchmen of the Sixteenth Century.<sup>7</sup>

The Evangelicals denounced the use of images and pictures in churches, rejected most of the traditional ritual just as did the Protestants. They also objected to the proliferation and worship of saints and the Virgin Mary; the Evangelicals accepted Jesus as the sole mediator between God and Man.<sup>8</sup> Evangelisme and Protestantism were similar in many ways, but they differed essentially by the fact that the Evangelicals remained faithfully within the confines of the Catholic Church<sup>9</sup> and possessed no desire, despite their personal objections to doctrine and policy, to break from it.<sup>10</sup>

Regarding the preceding statement, the writer deems it necessary to point out that there have been isolated instances when some scholars such as Lewis Spitz<sup>11</sup> and Preserved Smith<sup>12</sup> have written works in which they

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<sup>7</sup>M. A. Screech, Marot-Evangélique (Genève: Droz, 1967), p. 14. Whether by this Screech includes Protestants in this statement is not discernable from the comments provided, but it is true that such scriptural knowledge as theirs was rare for the time.

<sup>8</sup>Frame, Francois Rabelais, p. 151.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>10</sup>Jung, "On the Nature of Evangelism," JHI, p. 523.

<sup>11</sup>Lewis Spitz, "Humanism in the Reformation," ed. Anthony Molho and John A. Tedeschi, Renaissance Studies in Honor of Hans Baron (Dekalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971), p. 656.

<sup>12</sup>Preserved Smith, Age of the Reformation, p. 157.

either refer to such reformers as Calvin and Zwingli as being Evangelicals or infer their association with such ideals toward reform. Such a reference, if applied, would be viable only in the sense that the gospel was significant to the movement toward reform as a whole;<sup>13</sup> for this reason, the term, in reference to "schismatics," should be avoided if at all possible. The religious position held by such individuals was entirely different from that of non-schismatics such as Briçonnet, Lefevre and Marguerite de Navarre in this regard.

As many Evangelicals were Humanists,<sup>14</sup> there were also similarities between Evangelisme and Northern Humanism as well, such as the desire to know the Bible in the original Hebrew and Greek as well as advocating its translation into the vernacular.<sup>15</sup> Another similarity consisted of an affinity for the erudition of classical literature, philosophy, and culture; to this point, Rabelais gives considerable support through his frequent references to the classical authors in his works.

In addition, French Humanists, such as Lefevre d'Etaples, viewed the erudition of the ancient writings of the Church Fathers as a vital part of the general renaissance of Christian knowledge. Although such writings were available to the high scholastics, the French Humanists considered that only in their time, with the current emphasis of the

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<sup>13</sup>The gospel was highly regarded by advocates of reform before as well as after 1517.

<sup>14</sup>Larmat, Rabelais, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup>Frame, Francois Rabelais, p. 150.

gospel, could these writings be properly know, read, and used.<sup>16</sup> In effect, such works became regarded as prototypes for theological writings and humanist teaching.<sup>17</sup>

In 1497, Lefevre assessed the significance of the Corpus Dionysiacum, and in so doing, lay down his "rule-of-thumb" on which he founded the preeminence of patristic writings:

The more nearly a light approximates the intensity of the sun, the more brightly it shines . . . and the closer a thing is to its origin, the more purely it retains its own nature. . . . It follows that of all writings the Holy Gospels are recognized as having the greatest dignity, splendor, and authority, as writings which have emanated directly from God and been infused into ready minds.<sup>18</sup>

He then goes on to state the sequential order of textual authority as being:

1. The Holy Gospels
2. The Old and New Testaments
3. The Apostolic writings
4. The Pseudo-Clementine writings
5. Dionysius the Areopagite.<sup>19</sup>

Among the leading Evangelicals of the movement in France at this time were such illuminaries as François Rabelais, Marguerite de Navarre,

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<sup>16</sup>Eugene F. Rice, Jr., "The Humanist Idea of Christian Antiquity: Lefèvre d'Étaples and his Circle," ed. Werner L. Gunderscheimer, French Humanism (1470-1600) (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1969), p. 164, hereinafter cited as Rice, "The Humanist Idea," FH.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 166.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 173

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

Bonaventure des Periers,<sup>20</sup> Lefèvre d'Étaples,<sup>21</sup> and Clément Marot,<sup>22</sup> to name a few. The source of the movement's doctrine has been a point of dispute for years. Some scholars, such as V. L. Saulnier, cite Desiderius Erasmus as being the founder of the movement,<sup>23</sup> whereas others, such as S. Dresden, give Lefèvre d'Étaples' disciple, Guillaume Briçonnet, Bishop of Meaux, credit for being the introducer of the doctrine.<sup>24</sup> In this writer's opinion, the accuracy of Dresden's assertion is somewhat questionable, as the writer has found evidence more indicative of "even" Lefèvre, by virtue of his role and achievement, than Briçonnet regarding this matter. There does not seem to be enough supporting data to make any confirmation on Briçonnet plausible; besides, even if one were to cite Lefèvre as the source, which is not necessarily the writer's intention, one would still have a difficult time trying to exalt anyone over Erasmus. Just the same, it is a fact that Briçonnet did play a prominent role as far as the movement is concerned.

As to the originator of the movement's doctrine, it is rather difficult to state absolutely, for there is much to attribute to all these men, but it would seem prudent to say that, in the case of doctrinal origin, Erasmus "laid the egg" for Briçonnet as well, hatched through the

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<sup>20</sup>V. L. Saulnier, La Littérature Française de la Renaissance (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), p. 68.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>24</sup>Dresden, Humanism in the Renaissance, p. 148.

guidance of Lefevre d'Etapes. If so, then just who was Briçonnet and what was his significance to the movement in France at this time?

Guillaume Briçonnet (1470-1533), whom Henry Osborne Taylor refers to as being Marguerite de Navarre's first spiritual director,<sup>25</sup> descended from a rather prominent aristocratic French family which produced four bishops to its credit. Briçonnet was serving as the Abbot of Saint Germain-des-Près when he was appointed Bishop of Meaux, a small town located just northeast of Paris, in 1516. Briçonnet, who became a disciple of the illustrious Humanist Jacques Lefevre d'Etapes (1455-1536), commonly known by his Latin name Faber Stapulensis,<sup>26</sup> is referred to as having been the leading Erasmian,<sup>27</sup> in addition to being called the first founder of reform.<sup>28</sup> According to Petit de Julleville, author of Histoire de la Langue et de la Littérature Française, as early as 1512, in the Commentaires sur les Epistres de Saint Paul, Lefevre stated all the essential principles of the reformed faith.<sup>29</sup> Appointed vicar general in spiritualibus, under Briçonnet, Lefevre d'Etapes had formerly taught Mathematics and Physics at the University of Paris and later

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<sup>25</sup>Henry Osborne Taylor, Thought and Expression in the 16th Century, 2 vols. (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1930), 1:314.

<sup>26</sup>David C. Steinmetz, Reformers in the Wings (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), p. 46.

<sup>27</sup>G. R. Elton, Reformation Europe (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), p. 113.

<sup>28</sup>Petit de Julleville, Histoire de la Langue et de la Littérature Française (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1924), p. 349.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

served as Professor of Philosophy, Mathematics, and Music at le Collège de Cardinal Lemoine and was among the first to translate the Bible into the vernacular (French), not to mention having edited and authored various works on scriptural writing.

Briçonnet, having been appointed Bishop of Meaux, moved there and set about the business of reforming the diocese. While at Meaux, Briçonnet drew about himself a group of individuals somewhat of his own religious temperament, in the sense of being reform-oriented, such as Lefevre himself, whom Briçonnet brought to Meaux in 1521 for the purpose of providing spiritual leadership; Gerard Roussel (1480-1550), chaplain to Marguerite de Navarre; and Guillaume Farel (1489-1565), a precursor of Calvin who was to become the radical leader of the Protestant reform movement in Switzerland, to name a few.

According to Jules Michelet, the group was comprised of Humanists, critics, as well as scholars like Francois Vatable, first originator of the Collège de France, and the Swiss Rationalist Historian Glanvianus. Briçonnet, Lefevre, and their disciples Roussel and Michel d'Arande were pious mystics who advocated mild reform. This spirit, however, was not representative of the entire group, for the community at Meaux united individuals possessing rather diverse religious perspectives.<sup>30</sup> Despite this fact, the group remained under the guidance and inspiration of Lefevre, while encouraged and protected by Briçonnet.

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<sup>30</sup>Jules Michelet, Histoire de France (Lausanne: Editions Rencontre, 1966), 6:135.

The reforms sponsored by Briçonnet while at Meaux consisted of several innovations. Briçonnet reorganized the parishes with the diocese into districts and banned activities such as dancing and games which might help to promote the establishment of immoral activity. He also tightened up control on negligent priests and mendicant orders. Under Lefevre's guidance, Meaux became a leading center, if not "the" leading center for Evangelicals, and remained as such until fate turned on Lefevre.

As time passed, new factors entered the picture which bore harsh consequences for Lefevre. Although Lefevre had been censured by the Sorbonne in 1521 and by the Franciscans in 1525, it was not until some men professing to be his disciples had been arrested and executed that his world began to crumble. Consequently, he was forced by circumstances to flee to Strasbourg, a Protestant stronghold where he could find safety. This sudden withdrawal to Strasbourg, in conjunction with already declining court interest, marked the demise of the Groupe de Meaux.<sup>31</sup> Afterward, Pope Clement VII put a stop to the reformatory work at Meaux.<sup>32</sup>

Although Lefevre's flight marked the demise of the group, it should be noted that the group had witnessed some signs of dissolution prior to this time. Current issues had served to divide the group. Some of its members, such as Josse Clichtowe, one of the group's first and most fervent disciples, took alarm at the threatening gestures of the Church

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<sup>31</sup>Steinmetz, Reformers in the Wings, p. 50.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 51

toward Luther. Clichtowe had become intimidated so badly that he reentered the fold, resumed traditional dogma, and proceeded in his works Culte de Saints (1523), L'Anti-Luther (1525) and Le Sacrament de Eucharistie (1527) to recant and disavow his former opinions.<sup>33</sup>

There is one very important point on which Steinmetz cites documentation that should be mentioned here regarding Lefèvre's work as a reformer, and that is that Lefèvre "was not, in the customary sense of the word, a Protestant," despite attempts of older scholarship to class him as such.<sup>34</sup> Briconnet, the group's director, although possessing non-traditional views, had turned against Luther and his books as early as 1522,<sup>35</sup> and remained faithfully within the Church. Obviously, the Evangelicals refused to leave the Catholic Church and, in their criticisms, would always stop just short of excommunication. As aforementioned, Protestants and Evangelicals did share some of the same premises, the main difference being that Evangelicals failed to draw from these premises the same conclusions as those which led the Protestants to revolt and overthrow the ecclesiastical system.<sup>36</sup>

Given the evidence, it would seem correct to conclude that not all of the members of the Groupe de Meaux were Evangelicals in the expressed sense of the word. This fact appears particularly apparent after the

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<sup>33</sup>Ernest Lavissee, Histoire de France (New York: AMS Press, 1969), 5:352.

<sup>34</sup>Steinmetz, Reformers in the Wings, p. 51.

<sup>35</sup>Elton, Reformation Europe, p. 113.

<sup>36</sup>Jung, "On the Nature of Evangelism," JHI, p. 523.

dissolution of the group, for it was then that some of its members, such as Farel and Vatable, became Protestants.<sup>37</sup>

This event probably can be attributed to the fact that, previously noted, the group was constituted by individuals with various or diverse perspectives on religion. The basic factor that bound the group was the common desire for some type of Christian reform, and reform within was the type advocated by its leaders. Strangely enough, James MacCaffrey seems to overlook this point in his History of the Catholic Church as he proceeds to refer to the Groupe de Meaux as being Lutheran,<sup>38</sup> which it clearly was not. This group of reformers advocated mild or moderate reform, reform without revolution, reform within the Church. Protestantism and Evangelisme, although strikingly similar on many points, were two separate and distinct categories. Some of the notable differences between the two consisted of the following:

1. Evangelism did not deny the sacrament of holy orders as did Protestantism.
2. Unlike the Protestants, Evangelicals believed in transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the Mass.
3. As most Evangelicals were Humanists, they could not accept the Protestant doctrine of the complete corruption of man.
4. The Evangelicals did not protest in the manner as did the Protestants.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Steinmetz, Reformers in the Wings, p. 51

<sup>38</sup>James MacCaffrey, History of the Catholic Church (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970). 1:151.

<sup>39</sup>Jung, "On the Nature of Evangelism," JHI, p. 522.

The Evangelicals, for the most part, possessed three general characteristics. They were undogmatic, aristocratic and transitory.<sup>40</sup> In her article "On the Nature of Evangelism in 16th Century Italy," Eva-Maria Jung, while addressing the movement as a whole, sheds some light on this point in saying:

Evangelism was no theological system and no pious organization, but a new religious attitude--very noble and serious, but ambiguous, non-committal, and unsure of itself. It was not so much interested in a dogmatic or ecclesiastical reform, as in the renewal of the interior man; not so much in theological knowledge, as in a life according to the spirit of Christian love.<sup>41</sup>

The writer should here point out that the renewal of the interior man and the life according to the spirit of Christian love that Ms. Jung alludes to are more like unto utopian ideals. The pragmatism of the day called for both dogmatic and ecclesiastical reform as well as theological knowledge, but their emphasis was not pushed to the extreme. The aristocratic element in Evangelisme refers to the calibre of people who comprised the movement. These individuals were "aristocratic in spirit by virtue of their higher education, refined manners, leading positions and aristocratic connections."<sup>42</sup> Third and lastly, the movement was transitory; it was temporary in nature. Evangelical circles formed

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<sup>40</sup>Jung, "On the Nature of Evangelism," JHI, p. 520.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 522.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 524. This statement concerning the aristocratic element comprising the movement may be attested to Rabelais' description of the inhabitants of the Abbey of Theleme, a haven for Evangelicals, in Chapter LVII of Gargantua; see Rabelais, The Complete Works of Rabelais, p. 154.

around leading religious figures appearing in different areas at different times almost spontaneously and seeming to have dissolved in the same manner;<sup>43</sup> for example, Evangelisme flourished for ten years in Italy, between 1532 and 1542,<sup>44</sup> whereas it had made an appearance in France as early as the 1520's.

As far as persecution is concerned, the situation varied, as mentioned earlier. Due to the intercession of Marguerite de Navarre, the Evangelical reformers were able to pursue their endeavors rather unmolested for the most part during the earlier years, prior to the Affaire des Placards. After the Affaire, the atmosphere in France transformed for them; groups such as the one at Meaux could not form and function overtly. Now, because of the similarity between Evangelical and Protestant doctrine, the Evangelicals, despite their professed fidelity to the Catholic Church, suffered along side the schismatics. As Evangelicals and other alleged dissenters were referred to as Lutherans,<sup>45</sup> one could see the problems that they faced. After the constitution of Calvinism, Humanists turned toward tacit Evangelisme, that which advises being careful and waiting. This attitude, so different from "Erasmisme prédicant," is called "le Hesuchisme,"<sup>46</sup> an attitude, according to Saulnier, that knew diverse nuances ranging from mysticism to politics.<sup>47</sup> Calvin, reproachfully, coined the term "Nicodemisme" for this attitude, taken

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<sup>43</sup>Jung, "On the Nature of Evangelism," JHI, p. 520.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 525

<sup>45</sup>Dreseen, Humanism in the Renaissance, p. 143.

<sup>46</sup>Saulnier, La Litterature Francaise de la Renaissance, p. 39.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

from Nicodemus, the Pharisee, whom the Bible speaks of as having made clandestine visits to Christ by night as he did not dare to speak to him by daylight.<sup>48</sup>

For the Evangelicals, as was mentioned previously, the gospel had a special place too, particularly the writings of Saint Paul, who, if the worship of the saint cult were not contrary to their beliefs, could have been justifiably referred to as their patron saint. The writings of Saint Paul served as a constant source of inspiration for the Evangelicals and were their most cited biblical authority. The importance of the gospel to the Evangelical (Evangile) cannot be over stressed, as the name seems to imply. The discovery of the Bible and of Pauline theology strongly marked the first half of the Sixteenth Century.<sup>49</sup> This is not to say that the Holy Scriptures were unknown prior to this time because they were not.<sup>50</sup> The Evangelicals stressed purity and simplicity and thought that religion should be uncomplicated and free of the various and sundry complex theological subtleties, that it should follow the Bible, and especially the gospel and the words of the Apostle Paul.<sup>51</sup> The followers of this movement felt, as did the Lutherans, that this had been a basic fault of the Church up to that time. People had drifted from the original teachings of the Church and became preoccupied with dogma and symbolic ritual.

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<sup>48</sup>Jung, "On the Nature of Evangelism," JHI, p. 519.

<sup>49</sup>Screech, Marot-Evangélique, p. 46.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Plattard, The Life of Francois Rabelais, p. 135.

In his work The Life of François Rabelais, Jean Plattard supports this view in the following passage concerning this subject:

Human constitutions and depraved inventions are the terms which were used in the pre-Reformer's groups, in the entourage of Marguerite de Navarre, Lefèvre d'Étaples, Bricconnet, to express all that which is the traditional church to say, the cult of the Virgin and the Saints, veneration of relics, pilgrimages, indulgences, sometimes the Papacy and even confession.<sup>52</sup>

Luther and his disciples were making this very same point in Germany. In result, there came a formidable and energetic urge to return to the original teaching of Christ and His Apostles. Rabelais alludes to the same evangelical aim in this regard in Pantagruel, when Pantagruel takes a vow just prior to fighting Loupgarou in Chapter XXXIX of the work, vowing to " . . . cause Thy holy-gospel to be purely, simply, and entirely preached. . ."<sup>53</sup> The grand old maître himself, Lefèvre d'Étaples, takes a more direct approach to the subject in saying:

It is in the Holy Scripture that the doctrine of Christ is found. Let us not follow the dogma of man, who don't have any foundation in the light which shines above . . . Let us stick, therefore, only to Christ and the apostolic doctrine.<sup>54</sup>

Evangelicals also emphasized the spirituality of religion and stressed the inner experience.<sup>55</sup> Luther became widely read in France even though some, such as Bricconnet, did not approve of his writings. According to Dresden, the Evangelicals wanted to absorb the good and true from all sides and felt that by so doing, it could be less rigid,

<sup>52</sup>Plattard, The Life of François Rabelais, p. 135

<sup>53</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 269.

<sup>54</sup>Lavisse, Histoire de France, 5:342.

<sup>55</sup>Dresden, Humanism in the Renaissance, p. 148.

richer and more complete.<sup>56</sup> From this writer's standpoint, the previous statement seems rather accurate as one will conclude after reflecting upon the tenants of Evangelisme which Frame provides in his François Rabelais. One sees there the strains of Catholicism, Protestantism, and Northern Humanism combined into a type of synthesis. With the strains which appear to greatly parallel Protestantism, it is of no particular wonder that the Evangelicals were persecuted in the fashion that they were, mistaken for Luthérans. With reference to the parallels between Protestantism and Evangelisme, a significant fact is brought out by Hubert Jedin in his Girolamo Seripando which should be made here; Evangelisme in Germany, France and Spain was more or less identical with Erasmianism because of the enormous influence of the Enchiridion Militis Christiani (1504) and the treatise on church reunion, Da Sarcienda Ecclesiae Concordia (1533) whereas in Italy, the roots were deeply embedded in Fifteenth-Century Italian Humanism, especially in the Neo-Platonism of Ficino.<sup>57</sup> Another consideration is that Reginald Pole and his circle thought Plato to be a doorway to Saint Paul. The Pauline and Augustinian elements in Evangelisme were, therefore, not only independent from, but older than those in Protestantism.<sup>58</sup>

Among the various points that this writer has endeavored to bring across to the reader, one is that Evangelisme was not just mere "closet"

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<sup>56</sup>Dresden, Humanism in the Renaissance, p. 148.

<sup>57</sup>Jung, "On the Nature of Evangelism," JHI, p. 511.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

Protestantism, but rather a firmly based concept, quite separate and distinct. The preceding paragraph should attest to this fact.

In the writing of any work concerning Evangelisme, no thorough treatment can possibly be given without mentioning its "guardian angel," Marguerite de Navarre. In a previous chapter, as well as in an earlier section in this one, the religious-political situation in France during the reign of François I was discussed, thus giving only brief and passing mention of this brilliant and accomplished member of the literati in relation to such affairs; but because of her major significance to the Evangelical movement and its disciples, to which she provided much aid, it would seem only too appropriate to take a closer look at this great lady of letters in order to stress more clearly her overwhelming importance to the life and the spirit of the movement.

Marguerite d'Angoulême, was the elder sister of King François I and later Dutchess of Alençon and Queen of Navarre. An accomplished author herself, Marguerite de Navarre became greatly moved by the philosophical ideas which were flourishing during her period. She took participatory interest in almost all phases of intellectual activity which her day provided. She also took a very special interest in the ideas concerning ecclesiastical reform such as those advocated by Lefèvre and Briçonnet, the latter of whom has been referred to as her spiritual director.

Referred to as "l'Élixir des Valois,"<sup>59</sup> this lady possessed a formidable intellect in addition to the respect of those who knew her.

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<sup>59</sup>Edith Sichel, Women and Men of the French Renaissance (Westminster, England: Archibald Constable and Co., Ltd., 1902), p. 97.

A patron of the arts, she gathered about her some of the most gifted minds in France. Men such as the Meaux reformers, Roussel and d'Arande, served as her chaplains, the poet and Evangelical Clément Marot served as her protégé; Lefèvre d'Étaples took refuge at her court at Nirac after his flight to Strasbourg. Her aid and influence on their behalf to her king-brother was one of the few factors that saved the Evangelicals, as a group, from the bloody and lethal hands of the Sorbonne. She protected them from harm, and what success the group experienced in France may be partially attributed to her in this sense. Bricconnet, however, being a bishop of the Church, was able to provide some protection for those who came within his realm, the Bishopric of Meaux, but it was she who, in turn, protected his interests, to some extent, at court. It was the queen of Navarre who was even attempting the proselytism of her brother François. One has only to imagine the possible sequence of events that could have happened if she were to have succeeded in this endeavor. It was due to these reasons that she has achieved the prominence that she has been given by various scholars over the years.

As for Rabelais, his connection with the queen of Navarre and the Meaux reformers existed only on the spiritual plane, as the dedication of his Third Book to the spirit of Marguerite de Navarre suggests. It is true, however, that Rabelais differed from them to some extent, basically in regard to approach. Although they were moderate as a whole the Groupe de Meaux still overtly identified with Evangelisme. This Rabelais never did. Just the same, Rabelais' role, however subtle, was nonetheless as significant as that of other Evangelicals and, conse-

quently, should be respected as such; for he did no less than the most audacious disciples of Lefevre to promote the cause of Evangelisme.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE CONCEPT OF EVANGÉLISME IN GARGANTUA

As the origins and implications of the term Evangelisme were treated in the previous chapter, it would now be worthwhile to examine Rabelais' conception of the term as inferred by its application to his writings. In so doing, particular emphasis will be placed upon the presence of evangelical elements in the First Book, Gargantua, the most evangelical of Rabelais' works; but as these elements are to be examined, it would be appropriate that a discussion as to their source precede.

Noted earlier was the fact that there are two schools of belief concerning the source of evangelical thought, one being attributed to Desiderius Erasmus and the other to Lefevre d'Etapes' disciple, Guillaume Briconnet, whom Henry Osborne Taylor's Thought and Expression in the 16th Century refers to as being Marguerite de Navarre's first spiritual director. Regarding this point, one may find some basis of support for either view. Be that as it may, for present purposes, it is with Erasmus that we will be concerned, as an attempt will be made to show that Erasmus wielded an overwhelming influence upon Rabelais.<sup>1</sup>

Desiderius Erasmus (1469-1536), in Rabelais' day, was probably the most celebrated scholar of his time. He served as a model to many a great literary figure, some of whom borrowed from his works; among these are such illustrious names as Rabelais, Shakespeare, Marot, Montaigne,

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<sup>1</sup>Benoit Beaulieu, Visage Littéraire d'Erasmus (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1973), p. 188, hereinafter cited as Beaulieu, Visage Littéraire.

Cervantes, Johnson, and Marguerite de Navarre.<sup>2</sup>

Erasmus' name spread throughout Europe like wildfire, as the following excerpt from the writings of Jean Eck will bear witness:

All the learned . . . except some wearers of monk's hoods and some theologians, are erasmian.<sup>3</sup>

Rabelais possessed a great interest in the works of Erasmus and was greatly affected by the Dutchman. Concerning Erasmus, he notes in a letter to the great man:

I called you my spiritual father; I called you also my mother, if that were permitted to me by your goodness . . . All that I am, all that I can do, I would be the last of the grateful if I did not know that I received it from you.<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, Rabelais' admiration for Erasmus caused him to borrow many things from him. Louis Thasne attributes all the profound thought in Rabelais on death, love and war to Erasmus.<sup>5</sup> Erasmus and Rabelais shared many of the same traits, a fact to which the following excerpt concerning the former, extracted from Margarite Mann Phillip's Erasmus and the Northern Renaissance, will also attest:

Erasmus was not only a Latin scholar and a corrector of morals, he was a most human person, with an incurably frivolous side; he had a delight in the ridiculous, an acute eye, a knowledge of character and a sympathy with natural ways of living.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Margarite Mann Phillips, Erasmus and the Northern Renaissance (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1949), p. 103.

<sup>3</sup>Beaulieu, Visage Littéraire, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>6</sup>Phillips, Erasmus and the Northern Renaissance, p. 105.

In the Ten Colloquies, Erasmus treats many of the great ecclesiastical abuses of the day, such as the habits and customs censured by Luther, the pushing of young people into monasteries and convents, praise of celibacy, indulgences and pilgrimages, rash vows, fasting and immoral clergy. Upon reflection of the nature of the topics which Erasmus treats in the work, the Evangelical characteristics of his writings vividly display themselves, this in conjunction with the fact that Erasmus always remained a Catholic.

Erasmus' satire is filled with an abundance of wit and risqué humor which is used to display his discontent with existing conditions, social, political, ecclesiastical, prevalent during his time; it is this element of his style that Rabelais develops to the fullest capacity.

Whether Erasmus was the original innovator of the Evangelical movement is still left up to question, but whether he was or not really is of little significance for our purposes. His importance basically lies in the fact that he was still "the" prime innovator, at least in regard to Rabelais. Just the same, one may ask just how Rabelais and the Evangelical movement were affected by the current situation. In order to find the answer, it is advisable to examine the conditions as they existed for the Evangelicals in France during the Sixteenth Century.

The Church was putting up a tremendous effort to censure the radicals and reassert its dominance as it had done earlier. The greatest theological center, besides Rome at the time, was the Sorbonne in Paris which was devotedly pro-Catholic. The Sorbonne saw religious dissenters as being "Lutherans." Evangelicals, such as Rabelais, were often thought of in the same context, even though they remained within the Church and

had not been excommunicated from it.<sup>7</sup> Dresden's Humanism in the Renaissance paints a clear picture of the situation saying:

. . . the charge of "Lutheranising" was brought against anyone who deviated from an orthodoxy that was becoming inevitably more and more rigid in the face of attacks which were levelled at it and indeed endangered it.<sup>8</sup>

An even more specific example may be cited in reference to the case of two such individuals (Evangelicals) who were found guilty of lutheranizing:

Finding some analogies between the doctrine of Lefèvre and the Lutheran theses of 1517, the Sorbonne condemned to fire through the Parlement, the French Bible of Lefèvre, sent to the guillotine the Evangelical Berquin, forced Briçonnet to formally condemn Luther, and forced Lefèvre to go into exile.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the persecutions which were made, the Sorbonne had its hands tied due to the policy of toleration afforded by François I, sustained through his sister's influence who was very much an Evangelical.<sup>10</sup> This era of toleration met a tentative end with the "Affaire" in 1534. François I, despite his fickle nature, was rather cosmopolitan and receptive to new and differing ideas, but neither magnanimity nor his sister's intercession could suppress the immediate indignation suffered by the "Affaire."

As Gargantua is considered to be the most evangelical of Rabelais'

<sup>7</sup>Dresden, Humanism in the Renaissance, p. 143.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Saulnier, La Littérature Française, p. 26.

<sup>10</sup>Henry Heller, "The Briçonnet Case Revisited," The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies 2 (Fall 1972):246.

books, it would be revealing to examine the motivic elements of this work as they can explain how Rabelais could have been influenced to become Evangelical.

Rabelais' development as an Evangelical seems to have been motivated by two basic factors:

1. The literary works of Erasmus
2. Personal experience

It is important to remember two facts, the first of which is that Rabelais attributed "all" that he was to Erasmus, by his own admission. The other fact to remember is that Rabelais was, himself, a monk who belonged to both the Franciscan and the Benedictine orders, and was a beneficed priest and secular canon. His experiences in the Church of his time were invaluable to him, as they were taken firsthand. Rabelais did not have to rely on the recollections of others as did the Nineteenth-Century American novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe in writing Uncle Tom's Cabin.<sup>11</sup> It was these first-handed experiences coupled with the inspirational guidance of Erasmus that gave rise to the genius which saturates his works. This, no doubt, is the key to his success. Rabelais' wit never seems to cease. The fertility of his genius is a constant source of wonder and amazement for the reader.

Throughout his entire works, particularly in Gargantua, the author mocks the abuses either within the Church or those in society which are caused by the Church, the Church of this time being a well-developed prototype for illogic and misplaced values. In this sense, Rabelais'

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<sup>11</sup>Having never been in the South, Harriet Beecher Stowe had to rely on the experiences of those who had in order to depict the horrors of southern slavery.

writing style strikingly resembles that of Erasmus. Of the various works that Erasmus has written, the Ten Colloquies is probably as apt an example to cite as any, for the achieved ends are similar.

As Rabelais cited Erasmus as his spiritual parent, it would not be inappropriate to note some parallels between these two works, because Erasmus's influence, particularly in regard to the usage of wit and humor seems to be all-pervasive in Rabelais. Such a parallel may be cited between an excerpt from the colloquy of "The Shipwreck" and Gargantua's chapter concerning the invasion of the abbey of Seuilly, both of which deal with the concept of saint worship, praying to saints and using them as mediators between God and Man. The following excerpt is extracted from the Erasmian colloquy dealing with this theme. At this point in the colloquy, two men, Adolph and Antony, are speaking of a ship full of passengers during a storm at sea:

Adolph. . . . soon afterwards a sailor reports seeing a church tower in the distance, and beseeches us to appeal to whichever saint took that church under his protection. Everyone falls to his knees and prays to the unknown saint.

Antony. Had you invoked his name, he might have heard.

Adolph. We didn't know his name. As much as he could, meantime, the skipper steered the ship in that direction.<sup>12</sup>

The Gargantua excerpt, taken from Chapter XXVII, concerns an invasion of the abbey at Seuilly during the Picrocholine War and the reaction of the monks to it:

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<sup>12</sup>Desiderius Erasmus, Ten Colloquies (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1957), p. 9.

The town ransacked, they proceeded to the abbey amid the horrible din. Finding it closed and the approach cut off, they split into two groups: the main body marched to the Gue de Vede, whilst seven companies of infantry and two hundred lancers remained to break down the walls of the close and lay waste the vineyards.

The monks, poor devils! did not know what saint to turn to. In their dilemma, they took a chance and had the bells rung . . .<sup>13</sup>

In both cases, one can see that the use of wit and humor are masterfully employed by both authors. They deal with the same theme in both cases, thus making the similarity all the more striking. In "The Shipwreck," Erasmus exemplifies the irony and illogic expressed by such a situation; the passenger prefers to pray to a saint instead of God and is not bright enough to even consider thinking in terms of contacting Him, not even after they failed to identify the patron saint of the sighted refuge, the church. The case involving the monks at the abbey is no better, for the monks never considered praying to God either, and did nothing but ring bells.

This similarity of style, as well as the technique of didactic writings, is quite marked. As aforementioned, Rabelais is known to have borrowed from Erasmus, which would explain the similarity of style and content.

Rabelais' thoughts on the subject of indirect prayer are best summed up by Gargantua's harangue to the pilgrims in which he states:

All true Christians of all classes and conditions always and everywhere send up their prayers to the Creator.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 85.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

In reading these passages, one can readily sense a conjunction of sentiment shared by Erasmus and Rabelais advocating direct supplication to God.

Another point on which they share agreement is "the good life." Erasmus' satire, The Praise of Folly stresses this point very well, according to Kathleen Williams, who discusses this point in her book Twentieth Century Interpretations of the Praise of Folly:

The Praise of Folly can be seen to be an integral part of Erasmus' life. It is a brilliant satire, but like all satire it implies, through its attacks, what its writers hold to and love. Good writings and good living, both enlivened by the love of Christ and by a simple faith, are implied everywhere as values . . .<sup>15</sup>

The reference, in the previous quotation, to the "simple faith" is very evangelical in connotation. The Evangelical believed in a simple faith, deemphasis on ritual, and a clear presentation of the Holy Scriptures. Rabelais' attitude toward good or "joyous living" and his disdain for any deterrants to it, according to Osborne Taylor, are attested to by the Abbey of Thelème.<sup>16</sup> Rabelais' creation of the abbey is of substantial importance, as it, in essence, serves as a stronghold of Rabelaisian ideals. Taylor, in his Thought and Expression in the 16th Century, provides a rather vivid description of the abbey and its inhabitants:

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<sup>15</sup>Kathleen Williams, Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Praise of Folly (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 7.

<sup>16</sup>Taylor, Thought and Expression in the 16th Century, p. 330.

There shall be no wall about the abbey . . . nor shall there be any clock or dial. . . . The abbey was built in grandeur and magnificence, with alabaster fountains and arcaded luxuries; with libraries in every tongue. Over its gates were emblazoned verses forbidding bigots, hypocrites, dissemblers, cannibals, to enter; but inviting all noble blades and brisk and handsome people, faithful expounders of the Scriptures, and lovely ladies, stately, proper, fair, and mirthful.<sup>17</sup>

This unique abbey was built by Gargantua for Frere Jean des Entommeures in return for the monk's courage during the Picrocholine War. This creation was a type of utopia for virtuous men and women where everyone could read, write, sing, play instruments and speak several languages. Rabelais, in Chapter LVII, provides information on how the inhabitants of the abbey were governed:

Their whole life was ordered not by law, statute or rule, but according to their free will and pleasure. They arose when they pleased. They ate, drank, worked and slept when the spirit moved them. No one awoke them, forced food or drink upon them or made them do anything else. Gargantua's plan called for perfect liberty. The only rule of the house was: DO AS THOU WILT.<sup>18</sup>

Rabelais' evangelical antipathy for monasticism is strewn throughout this chapter, as the Abbey of Thélème serves to function as the direct antithesis of the traditional abbey. There was no issuance of vows concerning chastity, poverty and obedience; neither was there clock nor bell to regulate the activities of the abbey. Monks were even free to leave the abbey in order to marry. Rabelais felt that the monks of his time served little purpose. His writings indicate his belief that men of good character and breeding have an inherent instinct which

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<sup>17</sup>Taylor, Thought and Expression in the 16th Century, p. 330.

<sup>18</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 154.

prompts them to virtuous action and honor.<sup>19</sup> Through the abbey, Rabelais was able to cite what he considered to be the major faults of monasticism, such as prayer without understanding the significance of the prayer and falling asleep while praying. Two passages from Gargantua support this statement; the first is taken from Chapter XL where Gargantua and Grandgousier are found having a conversation with a monk concerning the habits of some other monks:

They mumble a quantity of litanies and psalms which they do not begin to understand. Automatically and without the slightest comprehension, they say countless paternosters, interlarded with interminable aves. I call that flouting God, not worshipping him.<sup>20</sup>

The next passage is taken from Chapter XLI in which Gargantua, when having trouble getting to sleep, is given some availing suggestions by a monk:

"I never sleep so well as during a sermon or prayers," Friar John of the Funnels remarked. "I earnestly advise you to try my system. Let us both say the seven penitential psalms: we'll soon find out if you can sleep or not."<sup>21</sup>

Allusion was also made to the many monks whom, contrary to the rules of their order, never studied. In Chapter XXXIX, a monk bears witness to this fact in a conversation with a friend saying:

For my part, I study not at all; in our abbey we avoid learning for fear of the mumps. Our late abbot always said it was a monstrous thing to see a learned monk.<sup>22</sup>

This statement ran counter to the ideals of the Evangelicals, as the Evangelicals possessed an overwhelming zeal for knowledge and learning.

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<sup>19</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 131.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

To such an Evangelical as Rabelais, the statement just issued would have caused him much chagrin. This zeal for broad erudition causes one to perceive the strains of Humanism which were characteristic of the group.<sup>23</sup> The humanistic desire for knowledge is best exemplified in Chapter XIV of Gargantua in which the "ideal" education is sketched out by Grangousier for his son, Gargantua:

The name of Master Tubal Holofernes, a great sophist and Doctor of Theology, was proposed to Grangousier. Subsequently this savant taught Gargantua his A B C so thoroughly that he could say it by heart backwards. . . . A succession of standard texts followed; the Facet (a treatise of puerile moral precepts), the Ars Grammatica of Actius Donatus, the fourth century grammarian; the Theodolet (in which Theodulus, Bishop of Syria in the fifth century, exposed in Latin the falsity of mythology and truth of Holy Scripture) and the Alanus in Parabolis (a series of moral quatrains by Alanus of Lille, a thirteenth Century worthy).<sup>24</sup>

The education of Gargantua is where the emphasis on Humanism is probably the most greatly marked.

Another tenant of Evangelisme is brought out in Chapter XLV concerning the disdain of the Evangelicals for pilgrimages. In this chapter, Rabelais succeeds in pouring out the most vehement abuse upon those clerics who advocate such "futile" excursions as well as bringing out some shaded nuances concerning the morays of the clergy. Advice is then directed by Grangousier toward the pilgrims regarding such matters. The following text is an excerpt from this chapter. Although the passage is rather lengthy, it has been selected for citation despite this fact, because it is exceptionally explicit and representative of Rabelais' sentiments on

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<sup>23</sup>As pointed out earlier, most Evangelicals were Humanists; therefore, this statement should come as no surprise.

<sup>24</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 46

this subject. At this point in the book, Grangousier rescues a group of pilgrims who, returning from St. Sebastian, state:

"And what," Grangousier asked, "were you doing at St. Sebastian?" (answers Sweertogo) "We went to offer the saint our vows against the plague!" "Alas! poor wretched men!" Grangousier moaned. "Do you believe the plague comes from St. Sebastian?" (answers Sweertogo) "Of course: our preachers tell us so!" (Grangousier replies) "False prophets only could spawn such imposture. What blasphemy, O God, to liken Your saints and holy men to those devils who do but hurt mankind! . . . no humbug has shown his smug face in my country . . . Indeed, I marvel that your monarch allows the preaching of such scandalous doctrine; for it is worthier of punishment than the magic arts or other devilry that spread the plague over this land."<sup>25</sup>

Then, Grangousier addresses the pilgrims concerning the alleged activities of the clerics while they (i.e., the pilgrims) journey:

God's body, may I roast in hell if they're not ramming your wife's pleasure-vents while you gad about, pilgrimizing. . . . The pox riddle me if you don't all find your wives pregnant on your return. The very shadow of an abbey spire is fecund!<sup>26</sup>

The advice which Grangousier gives is indicatively evangelical:

Go your ways, poor man . . . Go your ways in the name of God the Creator, and may He guide you forever. Henceforth do not be so ready to undertake these idle and unprofitable journeys. . . live by the teachings of that good apostle, Paul. Do this and you will earn the protection of God, His Angels and His Saints . . ."<sup>27</sup>

Rabelais' admiration for Evangelicals is particularly evident in various instances during the course of the work. He speaks of them and their work in a tone of the most fervent regard. One cannot help but sense

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<sup>25</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 129.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 129-130.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

that his sympathies lay with them. The inscription above the gate of the Abbey of Theleme attests to this fact as it says:

Here enter, all ye loyal scholars who expound novel interpretations of the Holy Writ. Here is a fort and refuge; from this favored ground you may confound the error that is elsewhere found, you may found a profound new faith instead of it, sweeping away false teaching, bit by fallacious bit.<sup>28</sup>

Upon reading this inscription, one might find cause to wonder as to whether the Evangelicals are really the group whom Rabelais is addressing here, as he fails to refer to any one group by name. Based on the revelation of previous material, there would hardly be any other group to whom he would address such a message. Firstly, we know that there was neither anything novel nor recent about the traditionally Catholic interpretations of the scripture; therefore, we know that it is not the "orthodox" Catholics whom he is addressing. Secondly, Rabelais was never a Protestant; he was a spiritual disciple of Erasmus, not Luther. As Luther bore no inspiration for Rabelais, it seems reasonable to conclude that Lutherans are not being addressed here either. As Rabelais had a vehement disdain for Calvin and his followers, it would hardly seem probable that the author would extend such a warm welcome and offer such a tranquil refuge to those whom he refers to as being "demoniacal imposters"<sup>29</sup> Only the Evangelicals, having been very cordially treated by the author, are the only group in need of refuge which could have met entrance requirements into such a place as Theleme.

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<sup>28</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 149.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 592. In Chapter XXXII, Rabelais refers to Calvinists in this regard, as he had little use for them.

In a passage from Chapter XXIV, Rabelais gives a slight reference to Evangelicals when he speaks of Gargantua's activities on rainy days:

. . . they might attend public lectures, official convocations, oratorical performances, speeches, pleadings by eloquent attorneys and sermons by evangelical preachers--that is, such priests as wished to restore Christianity to the primitive tradition of the Gospel.<sup>30</sup>

The last instance where the author's sentiments toward Evangelicals may be found located in the last chapter of the book, when Gargantua, after reading the prophetic enigma and predicting future woes for mankind, says:

It is not today alone that persecution hounds those who believe in the Gospel. Happy indeed the man who will not be scandalized! Happy the man who, refusing to be hindered or misled by carnal instincts, aims constantly at that joy God foretold through His only begotten Son!<sup>31</sup>

This passage is an excerpt of an address given by Gargantua to some bystanders, uttered after the reading of the inscription of Theleme. By the very fact that the author tells us that it was begun with a "cavernous sigh"<sup>32</sup> emanating from the mouth of Gargantua, one should be made to realize that Rabelais, in thought and sentiment, identified with the Evangelicals. Their woes were his woes; their joys were his joys. Nothing seems to verify it more than this passage does.

As the preceding passages indicate, Evangelisme held a very special place in the Rabelaisian philosophical framework. The comic frivolity in his satire served only as a well-defined facade. Rabelais had a rather

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<sup>30</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 69.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 158

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

deep and serious side, a side which he only shows his readers from time to time, such as he does after the reading of the prophetic enigma. As an individual, Rabelais yearned for change. When one couples this yearning with the conflict caused by opposition to change, plus adding the effort to avoid such conflict, there inevitably evolves a circumstance that gives rise to new concepts and ideas. Given these circumstances, the concept was Evangelisme.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CONCEPT OF EVANGELISME IN THE SUBSEQUENT BOOKS

Having examined the concept of Evangelisme as it appears in Gargantua, we turn now to Pantagruel, the Third Book and Fourth Book for further insight into Rabelais' evangelical message.

It should be noted that Pantagruel, often referred to as the "Second Book," was actually the "first" in the given sequence. It was published in 1532 whereas Gargantua, listed as the "First Book," was actually not published until 1534, the year of the Affaire des Placards. Pantagruel is a work concerning the remarkable life and adventures of a giant, the son of Gargantua. Pantagruel, as well as the other three books, is satirical and derisive in both nature and content. Like Rabelais' other work, it focuses on the abuses within the Church as well as on what may be referred to as the perceived fallacies of the theology and practice of Catholic orthodoxy. Rabelais, in addition, projects the precepts or perhaps the various facets of the concept of Evangelisme.

As the evangelical elements within the Second Book, Third Book and Fourth Book are to be discussed, it would be availing to briefly outline the content and structure of these works.

The Second Book (1532) relates the origin and antiquity, nativity, education and exploits of its protagonist Pantagruel. Through the adventures of Pantagruel and his companions, the reader is exposed to the basic issues of the day, essentially religious. The Third Book (1546) and the Fourth Book (1548-1552) serve as a sequel to the earlier books. The Third Book basically concerns Panurge's preoccupation with the prospect of marriage. Upon seeking advice concerning the feasibility of

marriage, the prediction of a cuckolded fate is pronounced upon him, a prediction which Panurge refuses to accept. He, in turn, spends much of his time looking for auspicious omens and sources which will prove the earlier prediction to be false.

The Fourth Book is taken up with a voyage which Pantagruel makes on Panurge's behalf in order to visit the oracle of the Divine Bottle, Bacbuc, where Panurge is advised to go to seek an answer to the advisability of his proposal. In the meanwhile, Pantagruel makes various stops along the way where he encounters such groups as the Catchpoles, the Papimaniacs, the Chitterlings and the Gastolaters. Through these various groups Rabelais is able to bring across some of his strongest evangelical beliefs.

The Sorbonne, as Rabelais informs us in his letter to the Cardinal de Châtillon, censured the author for alleged heresies in the Third Book, but the scholars failed to produce any concrete evidence.<sup>1</sup> A serious effort on the part of the Sorbonne to entrap Rabelais, seems to have existed and is evident in this attempt to find fault with the Third Book. Consider, that in this book, there was a printer's error which he mentions in his letter to the Cardinal.<sup>2</sup> It involved the substitution of an "n" for an "m" in the word "âme" (meaning "soul" as opposed to the word "âne," denoting "ass") in the sentence from Chapter XXII: "His soul is doomed to thirty-thousand basketfuls of devils."<sup>3</sup> The Sorbonne

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<sup>1</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 491.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 492.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 373.

attributed this to be a sign of irreligion.<sup>4</sup> Plattard points out that at a time prior to this incident, such a mishap occurred in Cent Nouvelles which shocked no one.<sup>5</sup> Plattard, in addition, points out another source of contention which the theologians found contemptuous in this book, involving the circumstances in which Panurge finds the poet Raminagrobis in Chapter XXI of the Third Book:

Whoever on his death-bed disdained the aids of religions was suspected of heresy. Now, that is exactly the case with the poet Raminagrobis, on the point of death, who feels himself already reposing in the bosom of God, having chased from his room the mendicant friars . . . Panurge is seized with terror at the idea of the evils that this iniquity may bring upon the house into which he has come . . . Friar Jean des Entommeures . . . is amused at Panurge's cowardice. And, no doubt, to Rabelais' mind, this scene was only a humorous theme. The theologians thought otherwise.<sup>6</sup>

Obviously, Rabelais was held suspect in the eyes of the Sorbonne. Rabelais was so disturbed by the Sorbonne's actions that he fled to Metz where he lived for two years. It was not until Odet de Coligny, Cardinal of Chatillon, intervened that Rabelais decided to continue the adventures of Pantagruel through the completion of the Fourth Book. Coligny used his influence with Henri II, son of François I, to gain protection for Rabelais against his opponents.<sup>7</sup> On August 6, 1555, Rabelais, through the efforts of the Cardinal, was granted permission to reprint those of his works which had been "depraved and disguised, to

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<sup>4</sup>Plattard, The Life of François Rabelais, p. 226.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 242

bring to light and sale the continuation of Pantagruel's heroic deed and sayings."<sup>8</sup> Taking each book in the order of progression, let us now examine the concept of Evangelisme in these works and observe how they are arrayed.

One of the first and most pronounced references to Evangelisme in Pantagruel comes from Chapter X, when Pantagruel's wisdom is sought in the resolution of a legal dispute. Here, Du Douhet, an attorney, is addressing the jury:

The devil, he warned, would carry them off to hell if they did not proceed according to the precepts of philosophical and evangelical justice.<sup>9</sup>

Just by the very inference of this statement, evangelical justice is made to take on the appearance of being a desirable essence, equivalent with a state of goodness; this state of goodness is implied by the admonition stating that "the devil would carry them off" if they did not proceed according to the rules of this genre of justice.

In Chapter XX, one finds a reference to the gospel which, as explained earlier, is the prime scriptural authority of the Evangelicals. At this point in the story, Thuamastes addresses an audience and proclaims the virtues and knowledge of Panurge. He arises and cites words from the gospel: "Et ecce plusquam Saloman Hic."<sup>10</sup> Such a citation, from the gospel, is one of the many that one will find in the works of Rabelais.

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<sup>8</sup>Plattard, The Life of Francois Rabelais, p. 242.

<sup>9</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 204.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 241.

The celebrated prayer by Pantagruel, cited earlier, is taken from this book. In the prayer, Pantagruel prays for guidance prior to entering the field of battle with the Dipsodes.<sup>11</sup> This prayer can be considered as being the most evangelical passage in Pantragruel, for it was the desire of the Evangelicals to preach God's Word, the gospel, and have it as devoid of elaboration and theological labyrinths as possible. Dogma, at this time, had been terribly complicated by the most subtle nuances which, in result, kept theologians as well as laymen in the most profound obscurity concerning the true significance and interpretation of God's Word. In addition, the problem of interpretation became magnified by the inclusion of often uneducated and misinformed clergy, the very type of individuals that Pantagruel, his supplication, plans to eliminate.<sup>12</sup>

One of the other notorious practices, or perhaps "abuses," within the Catholic Church was usury, the practice of lending money at exorbitant rates of interest. Rabelais, as did other Evangelicals, despised this practice. In result, Rabelais addresses himself to this abuse in Chapter XXX. During the battle with the Dipsodes, Epistemon, a companion of Pantagruel, is killed and is "mysteriously" resurrected from the dead by Panurge. Subsequently, Epistemon proceeds to tell of his experiences with the damned in Hell. During the course of his tale, Epistemon

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<sup>11</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 269. Pantagruel's prayer has been omitted from this chapter, as it has been cited previously.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

describes how usurers are treated there:

They were all scouring the gutters for rusty pins and old nails, just like the beggars here. But a hundredweight of this ironware won't buy a crust of bread . . . The unhappy misers therefore often went over three weeks without one scrap of bread. Yet day and night they toiled, waiting for a windfall. And they reckon this labor of misery as nothing for they are too cursedly busy trying to earn one scurvy penny at the end of the year.<sup>13</sup>

Epistemon also gives mention to the fact that he saw many popes in Hell; among those mentioned are Sixtus IV, Calixtus III, and Urban VI.<sup>14</sup> Popes were held in disrepute throughout Rabelais' works. After all, histories are filled with horrendous tales of pontiffs who distinguished themselves by perfecting the practice of clerical abuse into an art form.

Rabelais' views toward the clerical abusers are given vent in his conclusion and apology at the end of Pantagruel, saying:

If you do so as a gay pastime . . . then you and I are less reprehensible than a rabble of unruly monks, critters and hypocritters, sophists and double-fists . . . who skulk under religious robes to better gull the world. For they seek to persuade ordinary people that they are intent solely upon contemplation, devotion, fasts, maceration of their sensualities . . . whereas, quite to the contrary, they are roistering, and God knows how they roister!<sup>15</sup>

Here again, the author makes reference to the same worthless "false prophets" that he speaks of earlier in Pantagruel's prayer, such as those who would beguile and willfully mislead the fideles. Also in this passage, Rabelais makes some very strong inferences about the dubious

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<sup>13</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 279.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 276.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 289.

character of those who would call themselves "men of God."

Included also in this book is Gargantua's letter to his son which relays a strong Christian-Humanist tendency which was strong among Evangelicals. In the letter, Gargantua advises Pantagruel to read widely from selections in the classics using the original Greek and Hebrew to possess a profound knowledge of all subjects, and to read and study the Bible everyday.<sup>16</sup>

In the Third Book, what can probably be considered as the first specific evangelical reference appears in Chapter V concerning Pantagruel and his disdain for debtors and creditors. As the chapter begins, Pantagruel is ensued in a conversation with Panurge concerning the virtues and vices of owing money. In effort to make his point to Panurge against owing money, Pantagruel cites a passage of scripture from Paul's "Letters to the Rommans" saying: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another."<sup>17</sup> Panurge, however, being sophistic, argues that debt is more a virtue than a vice.

Saint Paul, the idol of the Evangelical, is the most cited of the biblical figures among Rabelais' works. Over and over again, the Evangelicals read the words of this saint for guidance and direction. This is not to say that other biblical sources are not mentioned within these works, for in this very book, there is a brief reference to "Deuteronomy."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 191.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 315. Although Panurge's statements here are sophistic, Pantagruel still employs the scripture to refute them.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 317.

In Chapter XIX, Rabelais addresses himself to the rules of the religious orders and the misplaced prominence of such over any and all affairs.<sup>19</sup> On this matter, Rabelais makes his point through the satirical use of a preposterous anecdote which Panurge relays to Pantagruel about a nun who was raped by a priest. According to the tale, the nun, after the vile act, reported the event to her superior. When asked why she did not cry for help, the nun replied that to have made noise would have violated the rules of the dormitory. Obviously, this anecdote leaves little to the reader's imagination concerning the virtues of the clergy of the time.

Once again, in the course of this book, there are more citations from the writings of Paul. In Chapter XXX, Panurge is seeking the advice of a theologian, Father Hippothadeus, on the question as to whether or not he should marry. In the course of conversation, the theologian cites a brief passage of Paul in effort to get across his point: "Better to marry than to burn."<sup>20</sup>

In Chapter XXXV, Panurge, still intent on seeking counsel on the feasibility of marriage, addresses a philosopher. While engaged in conversation, Panurge makes reference to the previous conversation with the theologian who, in addition to Paul, cited I Corinthians, VII:29, a succinct line which was also authored by Paul.<sup>21</sup> And finally, in Chapter

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<sup>19</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 364.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 403.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 421. The contents of this passage are merely alluded to, but not cited in the text.

XLI, Bridlegoose is relaying a story of a man who settled legal cases. Here, a terse line from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians is given mention: ". . . if any would not work, neither should he eat."<sup>22</sup>

As one can readily observe, the word of Saint Paul was greatly revered. One could be certain that if the Apostle Paul did not hold any particular significance for such individuals as Rabelais, he never would have been as heavily quoted in regard to practical matters as he was. One seldom sees mention of any other such biblical figure.

The manner of usage and presentation should also be regarded. In each case where Rabelais cites Pauline passages from the Bible, he does so with a tone of respect; in other words, he does not use the words of Paul to support ludicrous hypotheses as some authors, using various texts, are prone to do, derisively, when they are trying to express contempt for or disagreement with a particular stance. Whenever the Bible is alluded to in Rabelais' works, it is done with solemnity and reverence. Surely, such fervence and regard for the gospel would indeed be rare in a work if the author did not have leanings in that particular direction (i.e., Evangelisme).

In Book IV, one finds several more significant passages which display characteristics which may be attributed to the author. In the prologue, there is a reference to St. Luke in relation to the story of little Zacchaeus, the story being relayed by Rabelais.<sup>23</sup> In Chapter I, there

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<sup>22</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 446.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 497.

is a rather blatantly evangelical passage concerning Pantagruel's brief sermon to his associates on board the Thalamege prior to departure.

Based on scriptural passages, it was followed by a prayer and the singing of Psalm 114.<sup>24</sup> The prayer, from what one can gather, was rendered in the vernacular, as it was said aloud by all present. The psalm, "When Israel went out of Egypt . . .," was, according to Frame, a favorite of the Evangelicals which, in Clément Marot's verse translation which the Sorbonne condemned,<sup>25</sup> symbolized their plight.

One of the strongest traces of Evangelisme is in Chapter XLV where a devil is talking to a churl, telling of the endeavor he plans to undertake. The devil speaks of going away to tempt some nuns, implying the readiness of priests for him to do so.<sup>26</sup> Paul is again given brief mention in a passage describing Lucifer's diet. Here in this passage, the devil, still in conversation with the churl, speaks of the difficulty of finding scholars for Lucifer's diet since the addition of the Bible to their studies. He also adds that unless Paul's writings are taken away from Bible students, Lucifer would have few in his diet.<sup>27</sup>

The Evangelisme in Chapter L strikes out at the clerics. In this chapter, Rabelais ridicules monks who brag about money they swindled out of some unsuspecting member of the fidele on a holy day with the use of false relics:

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<sup>24</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 510.

<sup>25</sup>Frame, Francois Rabelais, p. 157.

<sup>26</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 621.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 623.

One boasted of the farthings he had collected, another of the pence, a third of his caroli, a fourth of his shillings. A fifth fat rascal bragged of having taken in a whole crown.

"Easy enough," his colleagues jeered. "After all, you have the leg of God!"<sup>28</sup>

This type of avarice and beguilement is just another manifestation of the kind of abuses which the Evangelicals abhorred and desired to abolish. The passage cited above typifies the extent to which avarice had infiltrated the sacerdotal system. This clerical abuse is alluded to again in Chapter LIII when Stoutmoron speaks of the confiscation of several benefices and the gross taxation of the pope. France, during Rabelais' time, was a great source of income for the papal treasury. It was through taxation that Rome's avarice received its gratification.

Another Pauline citation is utilized in Chapter LVIII; it is taken from Paul's "Epistle to the Philippians." This citation is used in connection with the Gastolaters whose god was their belly.<sup>29</sup> The passage from "Philippians III" speaks of these individuals as being "enemies of the cross of Christ."<sup>30</sup>

Another side of Rabelais' Evangelisme shows itself in Chapter XXXIII. In this chapter, concerning King Lent, Rabelais' last paragraph strikes out at Calvinists, Popemongers and monks. In this passage, the most adamant regard toward monks is paid, as they are referred to as:

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<sup>28</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 633.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 656.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

. . . the dunces of the cowl . . . the Pharisee shufflers, the hooded pinchbacks and all manner formless ill-favored monsters fashioned in spite of Nature.<sup>31</sup>

Criticism of the character of the monks is once again alluded to in an article by Raymond Lebegue entitled "Rabelais, the Last of the French Erasmians," where the author makes reference to the death-bed scene of the poet Raminagrobis:

The dying man describes how he has driven from his bedside a mob of importunate creatures, black, white, dun, etc.; and as if this were not plain enough, Panurge states explicitly that the poet was railing at the "bon peres mendians cordeliers et jacobins." Rabelais is here, surely, remembering the wrangling and importunity of monks in the presence of the dying as described in the colloquies Funus and De incomparabile heroe Ioanne Reuchlino.<sup>32</sup>

In reference to the Popemongers, a group for which Rabelais had little use, the chapter on Pantagruel's visit to Papamania serves as a medium to vent his qualms regarding those individuals whom this group represents. On the island of Papamania, the pope is worshipped seemingly as if he were himself a deity. Here, Rabelais delights in the ludicrous, portraying this group of Papimaniacs as being just what their name implies, maniacal idolaters of popery. The Decretals, a medieval compilation of papal decrees and regulations on which canonical jurisprudence was based,<sup>33</sup> are also helpful in getting Rabelais' messages across; for instance, Rabelais magnifies the gross preoccupation with the mundane on the part of the monks in regard to such things as money

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<sup>31</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 592.

<sup>32</sup>Raymond Lebegue, "Rabelais, the Last of the Erasmians," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute (1949): 96, hereinafter cited as Lebegue, "Rabelais," JWCI.

<sup>33</sup>Plattard, The Life of Francois Rabelais, p. 258.

gained from relics and relics themselves.<sup>34</sup> Instead of concentrating on the holy and the divine, the clergy are depicted as avaricious money-grubbers who are too busy making over godless objects to do anything else. The monks are made to look absolutely ridiculous.

As one can clearly see, the works of Rabelais seem to be saturated with motivic traces of Evangelisme. Upon perusing these works, there is little room for any doubts about Rabelais' sentiments toward either the Evangelicals or the movement. When Rabelais begins his tale in the First Book, Gargantua, he begins with marvelous comedy, satirizing the religious world as he saw it; the further he goes into the plot, the more adamant some of his points appear to be. After the second book, Pantagruel, one senses less levity and witnesses more intensity in the author's tone. This is not to say that the later books are more evangelical; on the contrary, they seem to be less so in regard to any associations one could formalize from content. The Fourth Book, although basically gallican,<sup>35</sup> contains several evangelical elements and probably gives more references to Paul's writings than any of the others. Rabelais seems to use the expedition to the Holy Bottle as a means of introducing to his readers the various types of individuals comprising the Christian world. Here, each basic group seems to dwell on its own little island; it is as if each island were symbolizing a little world, separate and distinct from the other. During the voyage, the reader gets an opportunity to

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<sup>34</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 637.

<sup>35</sup>Gallicanism, as a consequence of various political events in France, was on the rise, particularly after the outbreak of hostilities with Rome.

become acquainted with the types of individuals for which Rabelais had a dislike, for example: the Papimaniacs, the Gastrolaters, as well as the Engastrimythes. Each group represents the prevailing elements within the sacerdotal system of that time.

The Papimaniacs were deifiers of the Roman pontiff whose traits were mentioned earlier. The Gastrolaters were those individuals whom Rabelais describes as having their belly as their god, and the Engastrimythes were described as being "prophets, enchanters and swindlers of the common people."<sup>36</sup>

As well as taking the opportunity to rebuke those whom he abhorred, Rabelais, in his writings, also took time to exalt those whom he regarded highly, such as his one-time protector Lord Cardinal du Bellay, whose death he laments in the Fourth Book.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, as one can see, his writings were not completely one-sided. He spoke well of that which he revered and, conversely, spoke ill of that which he despised.

The Evangelicals disdained the proliferation of sainthood as well as the usage of mediated prayer between God and Man. It should be noted that Panurge does invoke the aid of the Virgin and the saints, in addition to God, during the sea storm and makes a vow to them, but fails to mention it after the storm subsides.

Concerning the Fourth Book, as well as the other books, Lebegue points out the following:

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<sup>36</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 655.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 580.

What at this time is the position of Rabelais? Now that only two main parties can be distinguished, irrevocably opposed to the Sorbonne nor to the Calvinists. Holding a middle course, he is consequently anathematized by both factions . . . These violent attacks on Rabelais darkened his humor, and perhaps for the first time one finds vehement and bitter outbursts coming from his pen.<sup>38</sup>

This is an interesting observation as well as a useful one in that it assists in confirming the earlier point about the decreasing amount of levity that these works display as they proceed. Lebegue's citation explains why. In this case, Rabelais is reacting to those things that he felt objectionable. Such a point makes a case for the premise that Rabelais' writings were a mirror of his soul, the inner workings of his "esprit." Lebegue's observation is striking and perceptive, because of Rabelais' mocking attitude toward "Sorbonnist" Catholic althroughout his works, as well as the pugnacious remark regarding the Calvinists of Geneva whom Rabelais refers to in Chapter XXXII as being demoniacal imposters.<sup>39</sup>

Another topic to which Rabelais addresses himself in the Fourth Book concerns the bellicose and unchristian acts of the clergy who were more concerned with purporting their own goal and volition rather than of God. Two examples of this are obvious, one being the insupportable attitude held by the clergy toward any opinion dissenting from their own. A pointed, but outstanding example is provided in Chapter LIII when Stoutmoron is speaking to Epistemon about the Decretals. At this point in the conversation, Stoutmoron directs a vehement blast toward those

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<sup>38</sup>Lebegue, "Rabelais," JWCI p. 97.

<sup>39</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 592.

"heretics" who refuse to learn and apply the Decretals:

Squeeze them between red-hot pincers, hold them over the flame, hack them to pieces, hang, draw and quarter them . . . Pierce their breasts with spits, their conduits with rapiers; make mincemeat of them; fry, grill or boil them; split them in half; grind them to powder . . . Pluck out their entrails; crush, pound, bash and smash them; snap their legs and arms off, roast them to ashes . . .<sup>40</sup>

The other example deals with the pope. In Chapter L, Stoutmoron is ensued in conversation with Panurge, the latter of which makes an allusion to some warfaring popes to which Stoutmoron replies:

. . . if they fought, it was to punish such rebel, heretic, protestant villains as refuse to abide by the holy program of god on earth. Not only is His Holiness the Pope authorized and entitled to do this; he is commended for it by the sacred Decretals. . . . Worse, he must not only destroy their own bodies, but also those of their children and their relations.<sup>41</sup>

The previous quote verifies Rabelais' ardent efforts to depict the character of some popes in conjunction with their preoccupation with grasping temporal superiority in addition to spiritual superiority. These so-called "gods on earth" attempted to take that title to heart by asserting themselves in order to assume dominant control. A rather brief allusion is made to one such pontiff, Julius II, mentioned in Chapter XXX of Pantagruel, whom Epistemon speaks of as seeing in Hell.

In Lebegue's article, author provides a more introspective view of Rabelais' Evangelisme in a section devoted to politics. The author speaks of war and Rabelais' opposition to it saying:

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<sup>40</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 642.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 633.

For Rabelais, as for Erasmus, war is against the Gospel and against reason. Erasmus said repeatedly that wars arise from futile origins, and what could be more futile than the peasants' quarrel which led to the Picrocholinal war? According to Erasmus, warring kings seize upon the slightest pretext, exaggerate it, and allow themselves to be carried away by their anger; thus it was with Picrochole.<sup>42</sup>

If one recalls, the Picrocholinal War was started by just such a trifle, a quarrel over baker's bread. This war would be the typical example of just how Rabelais could express his contempt for a concept or institution; he would make it appear to be absolutely inane.

As shown, Rabelais uses his works as a vehicle for bringing across his evangelical message to his readers. From the nature and the volume of the evangelical material within these works, there can be little doubt as to the conceptual origin and intent of Rabelais' thought. In every regard, Evangelisme is held in the highest esteem throughout Rabelais' writing, and never is it treated derisively.

As for the relative distribution of evangelical material in Rabelais' four books, there is a proportional imbalance. Certain books like Gargantua and the Fourth Book<sup>43</sup> are full of Evangelisme whereas the others, such as the Third Book possess relatively little. The nature of the material, however, despite whatever twist or turn is taken by the plot, concentrates fully on the abuses and the more perverse aspects of Catholic orthodoxy.

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<sup>42</sup>Lebègue, "Rabelais," JWCI, p. 95.

<sup>43</sup>It should be noted that although the Fourth Book has several features characteristic of Evangelisme, this work is still rather gallican in conception.

Having examined the nature and style of Rabelais' works, there is the question as to how each one was received by the public, including the authorities. Moreover, did the reception of a particular book, upon publication, have any effect upon the character of subsequent works? To begin with, the nature and content of Rabelais' first two books led to their condemnation by the Sorbonne for obscenity in 1543.<sup>44</sup> When he endeavored to revise their objectionable passages, Rabelais did not eradicate any of the alleged obscene passages, but rather edited explicitly the more perverse passages dealing with orthodox theology and its professors.<sup>45</sup> Plattard tells us that Rabelais did, in fact, refrain from the acrid attacks on the monks and the ridicule of scholasticism in the Third Book which are characteristic of Gargantua.<sup>46</sup> Through inference, it may be assumed that the reception of earlier works had an effect on the writing of the later ones.

Rabelais, during the course of the work, did find occasion to mock the monks; however, the increasingly poor rapport between Rome and the French king made attacks upon the pope permissible and indicative of gallicanism by the time of the Fourth Book's creation.

The atmosphere between the new king, Henri II, and Pope Julius II was one of enmity. Upon Henri II's accession to the throne in 1547, the king became perturbed at some of the pope's practices regarding benefices

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<sup>44</sup>Plattard, The Life of Francois Rabelais, p. 207.

<sup>45</sup>Nock and Wilson, Francis Rabelais, p. 155.

<sup>46</sup>Plattard, The Life of Francois Rabelais, p. 207.

within the French kingdom. In result, on September, 1547, he issued an edict which greatly curtailed the Roman pontiff's authority within his realm. As a counter measure, the pope sided with the Emperor, Charles V, an old rival of France. In turn, Henri II took up with the Duke of Parma, who had just recently fallen out of favor with the pope, in addition to organizing ecclesiastical reform through a national church council; thus giving gallicanism a push forward. From this time onward, the situation worsened. Pope Julius began speaking in terms of excommunicating the French king. Although relations were broken off in July, 1551, no schism was evidenced,<sup>47</sup> for economics prevented such from happening.<sup>48</sup> In September of the same year, an embargo was placed on money destined for Rome from the expediting of benefices. The pope, thereby, wrote a reconciling letter to Henri II through which tensions were eased. The pope needed the French money as Henry VIII of England had intervened and prevented the pontiff access to English funds; therefore peace became the best alternative.

In the Fourth Book, the Decretals and the Papimaniacs served as the chief source of papal derision. According to Plattard, Rabelais could count on these vehement attacks upon the Decretals and the Papimaniacs as a means of gaining favor with the king.<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately for Rabelais, such gallican satire was untimely, as it came rather late for the ultimate success of the work. By the time the Fourth Book appeared,

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<sup>47</sup>Nock and Wilson, Francis Rabelais, p. 319.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Plattard, The Life of Francois Rabelais, p. 261

February, 1552, Pope Julius and Henri of France had already begun the efforts toward reconciliation that were actualized on April 29 of the same year. Already, anti-papalism had ceased to be avant-garde in France. The book was censured. As a result of the Sorbonne's censure, the Edict of Chateaubriant (June, 1551) placed the sale and printing of books under the supervision of the Sorbonne, the French Parlement, on March 1, 1552, pronounced a prohibition on the sale of the Fourth Book.<sup>50</sup>

As for Rabelais, little is known of him after this incident. It is still uncertain as to when, where and how he died. Despite this fact, there is one thing certain; and that is that Rabelais' spirit still abides in his works, and that they will continue to bear a perpetual testimony to his truth.

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<sup>50</sup>Plattard, The Life of Francois Rabelais, p. 265.

## CHAPTER V

### RABELAISIAN THOUGHT--A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

Evangelisme has been espoused as having an integral place in the thought of Rabelais, yet Jean Plattard, in his The Life of Francois Rabelais, appears to diminish the significance of this position in proposing that Rabelais' Evangelisme was superficial and was simply the form which his Christianity had taken, by the use of his reason, which tended more toward deism.<sup>1</sup> In opposition to this thesis, the writer has chosen to assail Plattard's assertion with a revelation of specific facts which not only indicate a most profound Christianity, but render any reference to deism infeasible.<sup>2</sup>

Due to the inference of Plattard's reasoning, it is essential to approach this argument by showing that Rabelais' Christianity was pure and profound, and of such a nature that would have made the evocation of Evangelisme inevitable. As Rabelais' Christianity has been firmly maintained in some circles and poignantly doubted in others, Plattard's ideas are no surprise. Just the same, Rabelais' Christianity appears viably asserted in several passages throughout his works. If this is so, then why does there seem to be a continual source of doubt?

Arthur Tilley, in his Francois Rabelais, makes a rather valid observation in pointing out that much of the prejudicial conclusions about

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<sup>1</sup>Plattard, The Life of Francois Rabelais, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>As much has been said previously in support of Rabelais' Evangelisme, the writer's emphasis will be directed more toward confirming his Christianity and denouncing any regard to deism, rather than reiterating what has already been said concerning his Evangelisme.

Rabelais' religion are caused by opinions formulated on the basis of "irreverent" remarks made in various passages scattered throughout his works.<sup>3</sup> The author disregards such remarks and presents the following advice to his readers:

Especially must we bear in mind that irreverence does not necessarily imply either disbelief or impiety. "Men often laugh at what they love, and make jests on what they reverence. "The Man doth fear God," says Don Pedro of Benedick "howsoever it seems not in him by some large jests he will make." Rabelais certainly "feared God."<sup>4</sup>

Tilley goes further by saying:

Rabelais believes firmly in the free will of man, as a matter of ethics. But he believes equally in the government of the world by an all-powerful and all-wise God, working by fixed laws and pre-determined dispositions.<sup>5</sup>

The respect and devotion that Rabelais has for God is not only implied in numerous passages of his literary works, but is stated most directly in the prologues to his Third Book and Fourth Book, and particularly well in a letter dated January 28, 1552, written in Paris and addressed to Rabelais' loyal supporter and protector "The Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Lord Odet, Cardinal of Châtillon." The following excerpt selected for citation is relevant in that it conveys several pertinent points concerning Rabelais' religious position. In his letter, prior to the excerpt given, Rabelais is speaking of those individuals who were persecuting him:

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<sup>3</sup>Arthur Tilley, Francois Rabelais (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1907), p. 329.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 350.

For the least of their detractions was that my works were crammed with various heresies; and this, although they could not show a single example in the slightest passage. What are the sole theme and subject of these books of mine? Comedy and gay fooling, short of offending God and King. Do they contain heresy? Not one word of them does, unless perverse readers misinterpret me against all use of reason and common speech. . . . I have complained of this in your presence, my Lord Cardinal. And I have said frankly that I considered I was a better Christian than they prove themselves to be. More, if my writings, my words or my very thoughts betrayed one scintilla of heresy, these enemies could not have fallen so detestably into the snares of the spirit of Calumny . . . who, through their agency, lays such crimes at my door. . . . You were then pleased to tell me that the late King François of blessed memory, being informed of these slanders, had my books read carefully and distinctly to him by the most learned and loyal aganost, or reader, in the kingdom. I refer to Pierre du Châtel, Bishop of Tulle, and I say "my" books, because several false and infamous volumes have been willy credited to me. His majesty you told me, found no single passage suspicious.<sup>6</sup>

Clearly such a document speaks well for itself, but the cynic would probably say that it serves as but a mere manifestation of feigned Christianity, superficial Evangelisme or perhaps prudence. If this were so, then this type of skepticism, thus applied, could serve to negate the sentiment behind any statement, manifesto, etc., made by any individual, no matter how fervent. In result, one would be forever faced with the question as to where the line could be drawn separating the honest from the deceitful, the sincere from the sycophant. In order to prevent this discussion from sidestepping into what could easily develop into a rather labored exercises in semantics, which would be of no avail in solving the question at hand, the writer will comment on a statement within the aforementioned letter and attempt to gain some insight concerning it. Toward the beginning of the excerpt, Rabelais poses the question:

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<sup>6</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, pp. 491-492.

"What are the sole theme and subject of these books of mine"? In reply he states that it is "Comedy and gay fooling, short of offending God and king." If one recalls the prologue to Gargantua in which he admonishes the reader of his use of allegory, and then reflects upon the answer which he gives to the aforementioned question, one will find that it serves as a key to some of the ambiguity that is encountered throughout most of these works. Rabelais may seem nebulous on occasion, but the reply that he gives concerning the previous question is probably the most sincere statement that he makes concerning his approach as a writer. To offend the king or God, in this case being the Church authorities, would require a price that Rabelais could not pay; therefore, there is an element of truth in what he was saying to the Cardinal. They were not just words. Rabelais, for his own protection, had to often cloak his thoughts, but one can now pretty much assume that in so doing, he wished to offend no one (i.e., Church or court official). One should not, however, be too quick to assume that this cloak that he sometime uses is a cover for his lack of Christianity, for such an assumption would be unfounded, as another statement from the same prologue will show.

In the prologue to Gargantua, Rabelais also speaks of one finding "a most abstruce doctrine; . . . the deepest mysteries, the most agonizing problems of our religion, our body politic, our economic life."<sup>7</sup> By the very manner in which Rabelais uses the possessive pronoun "our," this writer draws a definite correlation which seems to indicate Rabelais' affinity with religion. He does not irreverently phrase this passage,

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<sup>7</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 5.

neither does he shroud it in a nebulous manner. Rabelais speaks in terms of "our" religion, "our" body politic and "our" economic life, failing to refute ownership or affinity with either of these areas which he mentions. Before undertaking detailed treatment of Plattard's thesis, an analysis of some of the possible problems in Rabelais' Christianity, atheism and heresy, seems imperative.

As Lucien Febvre points out, atheism, as we know of it today, did not exist during the Sixteenth Century. This being the case, it would seem that the only "abstruce" doctrine to which Rabelais could have been referring is Evangelisme,<sup>8</sup> a doctrine which, as the reader will probably agree, was abstruce then and remains much the same in that manner today in many regards.

As for heresy, the heresy spoken of in France at that time generally consisted of principles and beliefs running counter to the Sorbonne. To be an antichrist was neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for being classified as a heretic, the former implying atheism which was said to have not existed for the Sixteenth-Century intellect. A charge of heresy, in reality, would not constitute a deprivation of Christianity, for Martin Luther was a remarkably fervent fidele of the Christian faith, and he was most definitely a heretic according to the standards of the time.

Question: "Was Rabelais a heretic"? One could apply a negative as well as an affirmative answer to this question. The answer could be

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<sup>8</sup>This assumption being based on the fact that Rabelais never became a Protestant and that there was no other religious doctrine that would have qualified for use by him in this particular context.

rendered negatively only if one is to take Rabelais at his word when, referring to the letter written to the Cardinal of Chatillon, he emphatically denies that his writings are heretical. Such an answer as Rabelais gives signifies, more than likely, an act of prudence on his part. An affirmative answer would definitely apply to Rabelais if he is the Evangelical which his writings imply, as heresy denotes a departure from "orthodox" beliefs, and Rabelais was not "orthodox" according to the standards of the period, even though he remained a fervent Catholic. Because of Rabelais' position as a member of the clergy, a charge of heresy would have been more difficult to prove than if he were just a member of the laity, particularly if he were making ardent efforts to protect himself. Even as such, circumstances did require, on occasion, that he either revise his writings or run for cover, and he did both at various times. Rabelais, however, was an Evangelical Christian, a fact which would naturally distinguish him from the general run of Catholics in "good standing"; consequently, he wrote from this perspective.<sup>9</sup>

Rabelais' works are saturated with impeccant supplications made by various literary characters, probably the most fervent of whom was Gargantua, spoken by the narrator's voice:

Why should you not believe what I tell you? Because you reply, there is no evidence. . . . you should believe with perfect faith. For the gentlemen of the Sorbonne say that faith is the argument of non-evident truths. Is anything I have related beyond our law or faith, contrary to reason, or opposed to Divine Scriptures? . . . I find nothing in the Holy Bible that stands against it. And if such had been the will of God, you would affirm that He

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<sup>9</sup>Rabelais was cleared of all charges of heresy that were brought against him; consequently, he was never convicted, a fact which is brought out in his letter to the cardinal.

could not accomplish it? . . . I tell you that nothing is impossible to God.<sup>10</sup>

In the same book, one will find another passage well worth mentioning. The first comes from Chapter XXIII at the end of the section concerning Gargantua's education. Here, Gargantua and his tutor Ponocrates are playing, giving thanks to God:

Then they prayed to God the Creator, doing Him worship and confirming their faith in Him, glorifying Him for His immense goodness, vouchsafing thanks for all the mighty past and imploring His divine clemency for all the future.<sup>11</sup>

This significance of the previous two passages lies in the fact that they both speak of faith and, in one way or another, attest to the glory of God in a manner indicative of only a Christian. In his works, Rabelais makes frequent reference to God's omnipotence as well as to man's need of His blessing. The following excerpt is an example of just that; here, Pantagruel is addressing a Dipsode prisoner:

No, what I say is: place all your faith in God. He will not abandon you. I myself, powerful as you see, command vast companies of men-at-arms; yet I trust not in my strength or skill but only the Almighty. Ay, God is my protector nor will He ever forsake such as offer Him their thoughts and hopes.<sup>12</sup>

Upon reading these passages, the skeptic might advance the assertion that all of these are just meaningless platitudes, simply an expression of prudence from an astute satirist. Surely, such would be easy to say, but does it seem likely that an astute author would have these praises

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<sup>10</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 29.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 78

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 263.

come from the mouth of the protagonist if he were not in agreement with them. It would be understandable if he were to have depicted solemnity as emanating from the mouth of dolts or frivolous characters such as Frère Jean or Panurge; there is no doubt that the effect would have resulted in the diminution of respect for the subject mentioned, but this does not happen. The material dealing with serious religiosity, particularly with regard to Evangelisme, is always expressed by those characters, the protagonists, whose word would carry the most weight. In the case of Rabelais, those characters are Gargantua and Pantagruel.

In the author's prologue to the Fourth Book, there is probably the most affirmative statement of all, confirming the depth and profundity of Rabelais' Christianity. In this passage, Rabelais is speaking of the spirit of Pantagruelism and its nature. Acknowledging his acquiescence to the will of God, he states:

. . . . because such is the will of the mighty, beneficent and omnipotent Creator, Whom I acknowledge and obey. Whose sacrosanct and suspicious Word I revere. (By Word, I mean Bible).<sup>13</sup>

In his classic work, Le Problème de l'Incroyance au XVI<sup>e</sup> Siècle, Lucien Febvre draws some formidable conclusions based on rare source documentation concerning Rabelais' Christianity. Among the many observations that he makes are the following striking examples.

Febvre notes that on November 30, 1532, the same month and year that Pantagruel was launched into the literary world, Rabelais wrote

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<sup>13</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 495.

his celebrated letter "à Salignac" to Erasmus containing an accusation of atheism made by Rabelais against Jules-César Scaliger.<sup>14</sup> Inscribed on that same letter, at the top, was S. P. à Jesu-Christo Servatore, an invocation of Christ.<sup>15</sup> The author points out that this appears to be very odd considering that this material comes from what was, in some circles, considered to be an enemy of Christianity. Rabelais also invoked a Christian inscription on his letters to Guillaume Budé.<sup>16</sup> To the argument that Rabelais was exercising prudence, Febvre replies:

The affirmation of a faith in the Savior Jesus Christ in a letter which was destined to publicity, which, in fact, only showed itself very lately, and under a false name, in the correspondence of Erasmus--of what use, of what protection would it have been for Rabelais?<sup>17</sup>

Febvre also cites Rabelais' use of the phrase "La Paix de Christ, nostre Redempteur, soit avecques toy" (the Peace of Christ, our Redeemer, be with you), the final formula of Grangousier's letter to Gargantua, was in current usage by the Evangelicals of that time.<sup>18</sup>

Febvre continues by pointing out other material which sustained Rabelais' Christianity, a profound Christianity, much of which indicates a bona-fide Evangelisme. Among the material given mention, Febvre speaks of the premature death of one of Rabelais' three children. To this child, Rabelais had given the name "Théodule," the name of saint, an

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<sup>14</sup>Febvre, Le Problème de l'Incroyance, p. 238.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 239

unlikely gesture for the son of a deist.<sup>19</sup> To give added support for this point, the author makes an allusion to a poetic work "Tombeau de Théodule," written by Jean de Boysonné. In one of the pieces of this work, Boysonné questions the dead child, a question answered by the child, which goes as follows:

"Why leave so quickly"? to which the child replies: "It's not, Boysonné, by hatred of life. I die to escape the risk of eternal death. To live with Christ, there is Boysonné, the only life enviable for virtuous men."<sup>20</sup>

Febvre, after the presentation of the citation, then poses the question: ". . . . would he speak in these terms of the son of an antichrist"?<sup>21</sup> Febvre also speaks of the numerous times that Rabelais speaks in enthusiastic and "irreproachable" terms of the gospel and of evangelical preachers.<sup>22</sup>

Considering the "irreproachable" terms that Febvre speaks of, it can be invariably seen that, in the passages referring to the Holy Scripture, particularly the gospel, Rabelais seeks to quote from these sacred works at every available instance and in a nonderisive manner (i.e., displaying no ludicrous points). The tone which Rabelais uses in scriptural references and in the prayers, especially those of Gargantua, are not characteristic of a person who could be called an antichrist or a deist.

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<sup>19</sup>Febvre, Le Problème de l'Incroyance, p. 242.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

Just how did Rabelais stand on other aspects of Christian orthodoxy, such as the immortal soul and the Hereafter. A reference is provided in Gargantua's letter to Pantagruel. Herein, Gargantua is speaking of Man's rejuvenation through his progeny. Of this he says:

However, thanks to seminal propagation, what a man loses his children revive and, where they fail, their children prevail. So it has gone, and so it shall be, from generation to generation, until the Day of Judgment, when Christ shall restore to God the Father His kingdom pacified, secured and cleansed of all sin. Then all generation and corruption shall cease . . . .<sup>23</sup>

According to Enno van Gelder, it is this letter that most scholar's consider to be the "real confession of Rabelais' faith."<sup>24</sup>

This writer finds Febvre's observations concerning Rabelais to be particularly informative and reliable as a good indicator of what could be considered as being the "real" Rabelais for two basic reasons. First, Febvre gets much of his material from sources which exist outside as well as inside Rabelais' written word. This fact is important to the Rabelais scholar as Man's mask does not confine itself to the text proper. Some scholars postulate that Rabelais' mask extends to his prologues, in addition to his text. According to them, Rabelais utilizes the same technique that is employed by Erasmus' Praise of Folly, as well as the works of various other authors ranging from Homer to Proust.<sup>25</sup> In other

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<sup>23</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 191.

<sup>24</sup>Enno van Gelder, The Two Reformations in the 16th Century (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), p. 284.

<sup>25</sup>Dorothy G. Coleman, Rabelais (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 45.

words, the voice of the author-narrator does not necessarily reflect the ideas and/or sentiments of the author, and particularly in the case of Rabelais, it clearly does not.<sup>26</sup> Secondly, Febvre does not rely on the opinions of Rabelais' contemporaries in trying to establish Rabelais' Christianity. This is pointed out by Plattard as being a flaw in Abel Lefranc's scholarship. He says that Lefranc puts much reliance into the opinions of contemporaries such as the Calvinists and the orthodox Catholics, most of whom carried a rather poor opinion of Rabelais, a fact which should come as of little surprise when one also takes into account that Rabelais had written rather vehement slurs against those two groups.<sup>27</sup> Regarding this particular circumstance, a proposition from Spinoza's Ethics is applicable.

We endeavor to affirm, concerning that which we hate, everything which we conceive to affect it painfully; and, contrariwise, we endeavor to deny, concerning it, everything which we conceive to affect it pleasurably.<sup>28</sup>

In his work, Febvre also draws upon Rabelais's poet friend Boyssoné, whose "Tombeau de Théodule" gives support to the premise that Rabelais was a Christian. Even that fact could probably be considered to comprise a different circumstance if one considers that the work is a viable, yet indirect reference to Rabelais' Christianity. Although the work speaks neither for nor against him, the nature of its very existence does reflect upon his character. Even if this point could be

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<sup>26</sup>Coleman, Rabelais, p. 45.

<sup>27</sup>Plattard, The Life of Francois Rabelais, p. 136.

<sup>28</sup>Benedict de Spinoza, The Ethics, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (Doubleday & Co., Inc., Garden City, N. Y., 1974), p. 281. Listed as Prop. XXVI.

refuted, it hardly seems likely that Boysonne would have written such words, not even for the sake of friendship. If empathy or friendship had moved Boysonne to a benevolent act, it would probably not have been this type of deed as the very nature of his act (i.e., words chosen) would, more than likely, be regarded as offensive to such a friend if he were an antichrist or a deist.

Plattard raises two essential points to mind concerning the argument confirming Rabelais' Christianity, particularly in regard to his Catholicism. Plattard, in footnote, makes specific referent to Bonaventure Des Périers' "Dialogue IV" of the Cymbalum Mundi, written between 1537 and 1538, urging Rabelais to give vent to his ideas on Christianity and its mysteries.<sup>29</sup> Regarding this work, he poses the question: "Is it likely that, at this date, Des Périers, who knew Rabelais' temperament, would have urged him against all prudence, to set forth doctrines which attacked Catholicism"?<sup>30</sup> In view of the question that Plattard raises, it is relevant to reiterate the fact that Bonaventure Des Périers was also a member of the Evangelical movement of that time, and probably would have known Rabelais' temperament only too well.

The other point that Plattard presents is made by posing yet another question: "If Rabelais were no longer a Christian in 1532, why would he have shown in Gargantua his sympathy for the Evangelicals which would

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<sup>29</sup>Plattard, The Life of Francois Rabelais, p. 136.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

have had the effect of making him suspect to the theologians of the Sorbonne"?<sup>31</sup> All signs seem to point to the obvious, that being Rabelais' Christianity.

As stated earlier, Plattard supports, to some extent, the Christianity and Evangelisme of Rabelais, but he spreads shadows of doubt concerning the profundity of either. In order to support his position, the author makes some observations which fall short of the astute quality characterizing his former arguments. In regard to his present stance, let us focus on the crux of his logic.

Among the points which he makes, Plattard speaks of an "antagonism between the moral and philosophical ideals of the Evangelicals and those of Rabelais in his book" Gargantua. Plattard shifts some of the reasons for his views toward the Abbey of Thelème. He doubts the ready acceptance of the "epicurean existence to which the community was invited," although he asserts the probability of Clément Marot's contentment with just such an existence.<sup>32</sup> With this postulated, Plattard comes back at the reader by doubting that "the real patron of the Evangelicals," Marguerite de Navarre, would have been at all congenial with such an existence.<sup>33</sup> Having expressed this view, Plattard then seems to dwell on Marguerite de Navarre and solely her "probable" reaction. Of Rabelais, he says the following:

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<sup>31</sup>Plattard, The Life of Francois Rabelais, p. 136.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

From his temperament, from his studies, from the influence of his masters,--and of Erasmus in particular--, from his reflexions he had received a confidence in human nature incompatible with the principles of Christianity.<sup>34</sup>

Plattard asserts that it was this human pride which went against what might be called the purer form of Christianity.<sup>35</sup> In Chapter XVI of The Life of Francois Rabelais, Plattard addresses the question as to the place of religious questions in Rabelais' everyday thought. On this subject, the author states:

It is not easy to conjecture from this book of "gay foole-ries." His readiness in the treatment of subjects calculated to glorify the mind of man and exalt "human pride" is however, to be remarked.<sup>36</sup>

And remark, he does, as the author cites a passage from almost every book in order to support this point. In Gargantua, Plattard cites two passages where human pride is exemplified. The first is taken from Chapter XXIX where Grangousier is writing to his son Gargantua about the hostilities which had developed (i.e., the Picrocholine War) between Picrochole and himself. Of Picrochole, Grangousier says:

I concluded that the Eternal Master had abandoned him to the government of his own will and sense. And how shall these be anything but evil unless the grace of God continually guides them? I believe the Divine Power has sent him here under such grievous auspices so that I might bring him back to his senses.<sup>37</sup>

The fundamental principle of Theleme is also cited as a manifestation of human pride. Provided below is an excerpt of that section of

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<sup>34</sup>Plattard, The Life of Francois Rabelais, p. 166.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>37</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 91.

the principle to which Plattard alludes. Here, Rabelais addresses the nature of the inhabitants of the Abbey of Thelème, who are of the aristocratic element:

. . . . men that are free, well-born, well-bred, and conversant in honest companies, have naturally an instinct and spur that prompteth them unto virtuous actions, and draws them from vice, which is called honor.<sup>38</sup>

In the Third Book, Plattard notes the definition and uses of the herb pantagruelion as another manifestation of his pride. Rabelais explains the usage of this herb, named for its discoverer, Pantagrue, and enumerates about as many usages for it as the scientist George Washington Carver does for the peanut. This wonder herb was supposed to have stopped robbers, cured the ill, disinfected the contaminated, made sacks, produced paper, made beds more comfortable, and cuisine more appetizing, etc. Most importantly, from Plattard's point of view, would be the fertility of invention in the human mind exemplified by the conversion of this or some other discovered plant's usage into a means for aerial or interplanetary travel and in effect become divinities themselves.<sup>39</sup>

In the Fourth Book, Plattard emphasizes the episode concerning Master Gaster, the world's first master of everything from war and arms for the protection of his corn to carts and wagons for it to be carried around in.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Plattard, The Life of Francois Rabelais, p. 165.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 264.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

Concerning Rabelais' confidence or pride in human nature, one should recall Pico della Mirandola's Oration on the Dignity of Man to encounter the epitome of this spirit. Such pride, no matter how aggressively or egocentrically applied, does not necessarily and sufficiently constitute either atheism or deism. Pico della Mirandola was, himself, an acknowledged Christian, even though, in the oration, the author lauds the inherent capabilities of Man whose striving he thought could exalt Man to the status of the angels.<sup>41</sup> Such pride characterized the spirit of the Renaissance man, of which Pico della Mirandola is a prime representative.<sup>42</sup> Remember that Rabelais was also of this period and was well in tune with the Renaissance Zeitgeist. Even given this fact, Rabelais' alleged pride can be said to be subtly inferred. He makes no such blatant statements as Pico della Mirandola.

As for Plattard's statement, there is another factor to be considered, historical time placement. The date which is generally considered to mark the death of Rabelais is 1553. The earliest record of the term "deism" being used dates only as far back as 1564 in a work by a disciple of Calvin by the name of Pierre Viret (1511-1571) entitled Institution Chrestienne, Vol. II, "Epistre." The term has long since evolved and come to take on various and sundry nuances of meaning, some of which are rather abstruse and complex. The Sixteenth-Century usage of this "new" term should be noted as it was used by Viret to denote Turks, Jews and

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<sup>41</sup>Pico della Mirandola, Oration on the Dignity of Man, trans. A. Robert Caponigri (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1956), p. 12.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. xiii.

Christians who believed in God; but not in Christ and His doctrine.<sup>43</sup> As for the question: "Could Rabelais, in any manner, be made to fit the mold of what is known as a deist"?, let us examine the possibilities. The first record of this term being used in any manner appears 11 years after Rabelais' alleged date of death. If one recalls Febvre's argument, Rabelais could not be classified as an atheist, for such a concept was foreign to the Sixteenth-Century mentality and, consequently, could not be used to classify individuals until a much later time. In the case of deism, there is a similarity of circumstance, as Rabelais needs to be judged within the framework of his own time. If the concept of deism had been introduced at any point during Rabelais' life, the circumstances would possibly be different and would make the application of the term viable. Here, an analogy might be drawn with the case involving the political theorist Marsilius of Padua (c 1275-c. 1342), author of the Defensor Pacis, a major medieval political treatise purporting the superimposition of state over church; one of the first to do so. Despite this fact, one could not today classify him as an erastian.<sup>44</sup> Such a classification would be anachronistic. The Paduan theorist, if anything, might be considered as a precursor; but that is all, for Marsilius of Padua predates Thomas Erastus and his theory by almost 300 years.

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<sup>43</sup>Preserved Smith, A History of Modern Culture (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1930), p. 399.

<sup>44</sup>An erastian is a follower of the theory of the Swiss-German theologian Thomas Erastus (1524-1583) who advocated what has evolved into and is generally referred to as the state over church concept. England was one of the first countries to employ such a concept.

Whether Rabelais was a precursor of deism is another matter altogether. Even so, it would be difficult to prove. In reference to the time period or the nuance Plattard has in mind, this writer is left in utter obfuscation, as the author is rather nebulous on this point. Even if one were to give Plattard the benefit of the doubt and disregard the time factor, there stands but one way, in this writer's mind, by which Rabelais might have been able to qualify as a deist by Viret's standards, and that is if Rabelais rejected Jesus Christ and His doctrine. What role, if any, did Jesus Christ play for Rabelais? Turning to Rabelais' writings is the obvious answer. Rabelais makes reference to Jesus Christ twice in the Fourth Book. The first reference, located in Chapter XXVIII, is the most lengthy and substantive for our purpose here, as it appears to be devoid of any deistic tendencies. In this chapter, Pantagruel is recounting the tragic tale concerning the death of heroes to his companions. He tells of the death of the great god "Pan" and how news was relayed concerning his death as well as the mysterious phenomena which ensued. In so doing, he renders his interpretation of this tale:

"For my part," Pantagruel observed, "I consider the Pan in question to have been the mighty Savior of the faithful, Who was shamefully put to death in Judea by the envy and iniquity of the doctors, pontiffs priests and monks of the Mosaic law . . . . For, after all, God may perfectly well be called in the Greek tongue, Pan, which means All. All that we are, all that we live, all that we hope is Himself, in Him, from Him and by Him. He is the good Pan, the supreme Shepherd. . . . At Christ's death, just such groans, cries, lamentation and mourning rent the fabric of the universe in earth, sea, sky and hell. Finally, the element of time bears out my interpretation, since, this most mighty, all-merciful Pan, our one and only Savior, died near Jerusalem . . . ."45

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<sup>45</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 583.

Pantagruel's actions subsequent to the relation of the interpretation is striking and deserves note as it is indicative of Rabelais' religious fervor:

His story told, Pantagruel relapsed into profound silence, lost in his own thoughts. Shortly after, we noticed tears dropping from the eyes, tears fat as ostrich eggs.<sup>46</sup>

The tenderness with which Rabelais relates Pantagruel's interpretation is too pious and benign to be the feigned ravings of a deist, one, might attempt to refute the veracity of Jesus and His doctrine.

The second reference to Christ is found in Chapter LVIII of the same book, and is of an indirect nature, giving the reader very little to go on in regard to Rabelais' real sentiments toward Christ. In this instance, Christ's name is used only in passing, through a quotation from Paul's Epistle to the Philippians which speaks of the enemies of the "Cross of Christ" who have their belly as their God.<sup>47</sup>

The first reference, in and by itself, is enough to suggest the sentiments and rationale of Rabelais on the subject. Plattard, as a whole, makes some very strong and viable arguments against the theses of opposing scholars, but seems to overlook the weaknesses of his own. Having examined and, hopefully, refuted the feasibility of Plattard's position, it would be informative to look at other passages in Rabelais which may tell us the current of his religious thought. The Fourth Book would suit the need quite well in this regard. Let us begin by addressing ourselves to Rabelais' thought concerning God.

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<sup>46</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 584.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 656.

In this book, there are at least two good passages which can to this. The first of these may be found in Chapter IV within the letter that Pantagruel wrote to his father. In this letter, Pantagruel praises God for sustaining his father's physical well being:

. . . . I must praise the Blessed Redeemer, Who, in His divine mercy, keeps you in this long enjoyment of perfect health.<sup>48</sup>

Such a passage, succinct as it is, implies that there is an acknowledgment or cognizance which was quite real for the author. The tone which Rabelais imposes on this character is one of warmth and fervor, a quality which would not be found if it were penned by an antichrist. If there are still doubts about the sincerity or conviction of this passage, this skepticism will be shaken by a passage originating in Chapter XXII. In this chapter, there is a conclusion to the events entailing the storm. Toward the end of this chapter, Pantagruel and Friar Jean are conversing about Panurge's cowardice during the storm. During the conversation, Pantagruel asks a rhetorical question for which he provides a rather interesting answer:

What is most to be dreaded in life? The danger of offending God.<sup>49</sup>

This type of answer would not likely be found among the writings of any individual who did not believe it, for what concern would it be of a "somewhat" or quasi-religious individual as to whether God is offended or not? His Christianity would have to be pure.

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<sup>48</sup>Rabelais, The Complete Works, p. 517.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 570.

Once again, attempts could be made to dismiss the preceding passage as being just another example of deception on the part of an astute satirist. Even if this were so, the author, no doubt in the design of his literary composition, would have arranged that such a peccant utterance would be depicted as either coming from the mouth of a dolt, or would be postulated; consequently, it would be shot down by subsequent rebuttals during the course of conversation, the Dialogues of Plato. This, however, is never done in any instance; hence, the conviction of the author's consent in regard to such statements.

As the writer has pointed out, Rabelais, although unorthodox in many regards, was definitely a fidele, possessing the most profound and pure Christianity; consequently, there is no reason why his Evangelisme should have undergone any transformation or taken on any characteristics which would have rendered it in any form but the purest. Rabelais was neither deist, atheist or Protestant, but rather, a bona-fide Evangelical. It is necessary to examine the facts, and it will become apparent.

## CONCLUSION

The only viable means by which any assertion may be made and supported regarding the interpretation of an individual's thought is through the examination of the writings of that individual. In this instance, it has been through an intensive study of Rabelais' religious position as inferred by various passages within his four books. Unfortunately, the hazards of such an understanding are only too evident, for as one reader can postulate a counter-premise in result of the attempt to read and interpret the very same passage or a rather contradictory one from the same work. This further augments the possibilities of enigmas and provides support for paradoxes which serve to obliterate clarity and invite obliquity. The most sublime solution happens also to be the most simplistic. A scholar must grasp as many substantive findings as possible to support his position. In the present study, an attempt has been made to examine and explain the concept of Evangelical thought, its origin and development, and relate the components of this thought to Rabelais through his publications, letters, and even personal acquaintances.

Rabelais' connection with the Evangelical movement may be described through the usage of one term, the term "implication." Nowhere is the term Evangelisme used by Rabelais, for as previously stated, its usage in reference to the movement and its thought, does not pre-date the present century. Considering the shifts of religious toleration, it is possible to see that Rabelais could not afford to be connected with Evangelisme in any way other than through implication; therefore, he

makes neither public declarations nor credos to that effect. If Rabelais, however, were no Evangelical, or if he were not affected by the movement, how can the numerous passages in his writings (i.e., inclusive of letters as well as books), the poem to Théodule, written by his poet friend Jean Boysonné, his admiration for his confessed idol, Erasmus, be explained, all of which indubitably bind him to the concept of Evangelisme? The thought must also be kept in mind that Rabelais never left the Church as did Guillaume Farel, and that Rabelais reaffirmed his fidelity to Christianity in the letter to his patron and protector, the Lord Cardinal Châtillon. Even if Rabelais were a Christian with strong Protestant leanings, does it stand to reason that he would address such a pious letter to a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church? Surely, only a loyal Catholic or an Evangelical could have done such, for neither would have taken offense with it.

In his four books, Rabelais' evangelical tendencies show themselves in several ways:

1. He frequently uses biblical citations from the gospels, particularly those using the words of the Apostle Paul.
2. Whenever Rabelais speaks of anything as being evangelical in nature, such as evangelical preachers or evangelical justice, he always does so with reverence and admiration.
3. When citing from authorized texts, Rabelais often uses levity to deride a particular practice or belief, but never allows himself to use the gospels except in making the most valid point, citing the texts with the utmost fervor.

Each of these tendencies would appear curious coming from a non-Evangelical.

Also brought out in his writings are the various tenants of Evangelisme as propounded by adherents, for example, prayer without the

use of saints as intermediaries, disdain for the practice of usury, clerical vice, and the use of indulgencies, to name a few. Scanning this list, it can be noted that these practices are no different from those held by the Protestants; however, bear in mind that these individuals, Marguerite de Navarre, Clément Marot and Etienne Dolet, were never Protestants, but were bona-fide Catholics, the same as Rabelais.

Despite whatever similarities that this group of individuals may have shared as a whole with the Protestants, the Evangelicals never broke away from the Catholic Church at any time, not even after 1517. The Evangelicals had their own precepts, followers and opposition; therefore, it was not some splinter group of the Protestant Movement as were the Ana-Baptists or the Spiritualists. Although Rabelais' first book appeared in 1532, 15 years after the posting of Luther's 95 theses, at no time in his works does Rabelais ever give more than passing mention to the Protestants;<sup>1</sup> neither does he attempt to assert any merit or status to their works and concepts as he does with Evangelicals such as when he refers to their preachers or the evangelical justice as pointed out earlier.

Rabelais, as his writings exemplify, is cognizant of the problems of the ecclesiastical and sacerdotal systems. He attempts to help rectify the problem by calling attention to these shortcomings through the devices of literary satire, which he employs ingeniously. Even though this is so, Rabelais, in actuality, does not mock the Catholic

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<sup>1</sup>The only group that is referred to is the Calvinists; even then, the reference is derogatory.

faith, just the misguided tendencies of some of its followers at that time.

To what extent was Rabelais influenced by the Evangelical movement? In order to answer this question, it will be necessary to examine the facts. Rabelais, first of all, may be considered as having been avant-garde in his time, somewhat affected by the Renaissance zeitgeist. In this sense, Rabelais was a product of the Renaissance by two means: by virtue of his humanistic education and by his attitudes toward religion. By the latter, I mean that his time was not the "Age of Faith" which St. Thomas Aquinas had known. Rabelais' views were more practical in scope, more than likely a result of this Renaissance influence. In keeping with the zeitgeist of this period, Rabelais' humanistic tendencies led him to read widely, with particular emphasis on ancient works. It was this latter group of readings that caused Rabelais to become familiarized and nurtured with the works of Erasmus, who is credited with the origin of the Evangelical movement. Rabelais became attuned to the very spirit of Erasmus. It was no doubt this alliance with erasmian principles that was responsible for the origin of Rabelais' Evangelisme. Although Rabelais is not on record as having been anything but a spiritual associate of the Groupe de Meaux or Marguerite de Navarre, he was, nonetheless, enveloped by the spirit of the movement, as his books are only too quick to bear witness.

Mentioned earlier was the fact that Rabelais never proclaimed his position. One reason may have been that the religious-political situation of the time would not allow it; but more importantly, it is possible that there was little to proclaim on the part of any of the Evangelicals,

for they were a group of confessed Catholics who congregated for the sake of advocating peaceful reform within the Church. They did not think of themselves as being anything else, and accordingly, did not pursue any type of schismatic action. They had no revolutionary theology to offer; they just desired reform. To have protested boldly might have produced three possible effects, all of which were conceivably undesirable:

1. Schism into factions which would have resulted in hostilities (i.e., war)
2. Branding as heretics which would result in excommunication from the Church
3. The loss of life and property due to political and legal sanctions against those accused of heresy.

It would be safe to assume, given their course of action, that the Evangelicals wanted their ideas to proliferate; but to lose their lives, and possibly their souls, would have profited them nothing, in that they were, as a group, practicing Catholics.

The religious quietude of the Evangelicals, although nonaggressive, merits admiration, because it is probably the one factor that preserved the uniqueness of the group; and among them, none was more unique than Francois Rabelais, for he, if anyone, marks the classic example of the Evangelical; for in him, one finds reflected the spirit of the movement.

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