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Voltaire's Candide

Voltaire’s makes use of satire to criticize religion, the state and social hierarchies. In his novel, the ‘Candide,’ the author vies the world from a different perspective as he appears to go against the social and political formalities established by politicians and religious leaders. Voltaire is satirical about organized religion because it disregards the human suffering. Voltaire believed that the only religion is an appreciation for life and nature where he appeared to have created his New World (*El Dorado*). For instance, he targeted the Leibnitz teaching where ‘all is for the best’ is the phrase being used by religious leaders to give hope to the people (Voltaire 21). He achieved this criticism by creating characters that fall into miserable situations and face conflict and then trying to fit the situation into the religious world view. According to Voltaire, Dorado was the perfect society in which he would like the people in Europe to live through. His main message was that the church should serve the society rather than distancing itself through dignified higher places and forcing the Christians to adhere to sacraments and rituals relating to the Christian doctrines.

Voltaire’s critics on politics and power is evident in the many tools of power that both the political powers and the religion use to brainwash the people and push forth their selfish agendas. The governor of Buenos Ayres is given distinct names such as y Lampourdos, Don Fernando d’Ibaraa, Mascarenes, and y Souza to imply the rulers’ vanity and pride to the people. In his journey Candide meets many people who are undergoing various sufferings (Voltaire 32). The sufferings of these people reveals the pettiness of the rulers. The rulers are depicted as being very insensitive to the needs of the people. The pettiness appears to be revealed properly when Candide and Martin engage in a talk discussing the one who deserves much pity and the response from Martin gives a true picture of the rulers. "I can only hope presume that there are millions of people on this earth who are many times more to be pitied than King Charles Edward, or Emperor Ivan, or Sultan Achmed." (Voltaire 66). This response paints a picture of many people that deserved to help from the rulers yet they still continue to suffer under the same rulers.

Social hierarchy finds much criticism by the author where the author satirizes any formal social system. Titles and physical illustrations in the novel have been used to describe and mock the aristocratic nature of the society with regards to class. There is an understatement to satirize the Baron of Westphalia. "The Baron was one of the most powerful lords in Westphalia, for his castle had not only a gate, but windows." (Voltaire 63). In the entirety of the novel, there is a consistent contrast between the upper class of individuals (foibles) and the suffering people that Candide encounter on the way. This consistent contrast of the two aspects of lives emphasize satire all through the book. The use of satire in the novel gives the reader a picture of the perspectives between the leaders and the people. The author aims at ‘opening the readers’ eyes regarding their perspective about religion and the authoritative leaderships. The author successfully achieves his goal of enlightening the society through satire.

Work Cited

Voltaire, Francois. *Candide: Or Optimism (Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition)*. Penguin, 2005.