An Examination of the Inducements of Voltaire

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No age can help finding a man fascinating who himself was so fascinated by life. Every age in history has given us great men and women to study and from whose great wisdom we can learn. The opening quotation refers to one such individual of the eighteenth century. This man was François-Marie Arouet, later known as Voltaire. He is remembered for his witty, brilliant, and often biting literary works and for his humanitarian efforts. But, he is perhaps best remembered for his dislike of Christianity and for the fanaticism and hypocrisy of the Church. His battle against these "evils" constantly got him into trouble. Yet, he was, as Henry Thomas, Ph.D., views Voltaire, a combination of saint and sinner rolled into one.

He was a combination of Aristophenes, Rabelais, Diogenes, Martin Luther, and the devil, all rolled into one. His genius was made up of the most contradictory elements.

Nevertheless, Voltaire was one of the many philosophers and great thinkers of the period called the Enlightenment. In order to understand his attitudes, we must see how they were developed and how they were pertinent to the times. Leo Gershoy explains how Voltaire fit in and that the contributions he made were very important:

The crucial battles of the 18th century were fought by the philosophers and theologians; . . . that the "sage of Ferney," vicissitudes of old age not withstanding, was buoyantly hopeful; that the better fortune mankind enjoyed in the two centuries that followed was due to Voltaire and his fellow workers.

It is the purpose of this paper to examine the inducements of this man,
Voltaire, in order that the readers of this paper might also be taught by his great wisdom.

Born on Sunday, November 21, 1694, in the Parisian suburb of Saint-André-des-Arts, François-Marie Arouet was the second son of Marguerite and François Arouet. The elder Arouet was a prosperous notary in the Justice Department at the Châtelet Palace. The Arouet family—tanners, cloth merchants, and farmers—can be traced from the early sixteenth century to the west-central province of Poitou. They had risen to the upper middle class by the 1650's. In the provinces they were landowners, in Paris, well-to-do drapers. In 1675 M. Arouet pater purchased his appointment as notary and later was promoted to the profitable position of Receiver of Court Fees, Fines, and Taxes in the Chamber of Accounts. In 1683 he married Marguerite d'Aumart. Later, he adopted a coat of arms, consisting of three golden flames, a graphic depiction of the word arrouer (a play on the name Arouet) meaning "to burn" in the Poitou dialect. Six children were born into the Arouet household: François, his "pious" brother, Armand, and a sister, Catherine. The latter, like her mother and so many other women of the day, died exhausted by childbirth at an early age in 1726. When young François was ten years old, a friend of his parents, an eighty-four-year-old courtesan named Ninon de Lenclos, took him upon her knee and, seeing that he was very bright, promised to leave him 2000 francs in her will. The only condition on this bequest was that M. Arouet use the money to buy books for the boy. As nature would have it, this benevolent lady eventually died, the books were bought, and her gift started the boy on his way to becoming Voltaire.

After this event, his Jansenist father enrolled the young François
in the prestigious school of Louis-le-grand, located directly behind the Sorbonne. He responded well in the academic atmosphere and won a prize for his poetry in 1710. At Louis-le-grand he learned Latin and Christian discipline; one teacher confiscated a snuff box with which the young Arouet was playing, making him write a poem pleading for its return.

It was the purpose of the Jesuit Eton to educate the students in the teachings of the church, also, and to sufficiently school them in the manners and ways of the world so that they could survive in French society after they left school. According to Theodore Besterman, this purpose failed utterly because many of the students became free thinkers, or at least "liberals." Although the teachings were religious, they were not "sanctimonious. The pill was sugar coated." The French Jesuits became increasingly secular and influential in this period and have been depicted ever since as "worldly, sly, and avid for power." They taught that "if man performed his religious duties, God would fulfill His side of the bargain and guarantee him salvation." There was increasingly less emphasis placed on what "Christian conduct" should be and of "man's excellent chances for heaven." So the reason why Voltaire attacked them so violently in his literature is quite clear. John Morley, in his Voltaire, explains that Voltaire attacked the Jesuit monks because of their materialism and lack of productivity:

(Voltaire) constantly attacks in a great variety of forms the material mischief inflicted on society by the vast number of monks, mendicant or other; their unproductive lives, the burden of their maintenance weighing upon more industrious subjects, the restriction of population occasioned by their celibacy.

Voltaire wrote about the cost to the nations of the communities of monks whose wealth often contrasted conspicuously with the poverty of the
neighboring peasant communities and even with the far-from-adequate stipend received by the parish priest. He indignantly illustrated this point by writing about passing through a peasant village where, in the midst of poverty, a huge palace was being built for a monk. Also illustrative of Voltaire's dislike for the priesthood, he once said of two friends who were preparing for it: "They had reflected on the dangers of a world of the charms of which they were ignorant; and on the pleasures of a religious life of which they knew not the disagreeableness." 

Another great influence on Voltaire's conception of the Church was his association with "the Temple." The young poet flourished there because poetry was considered as essential part of the Epicurean life. Many residents of the old renovated monastery "held ecclesiastical titles and drew large ecclesiastical revenues." Their chief motivation was pleasure "in the most pagan sense of the word." The sight of such blatant hypocrisy might have dampened the spirit of a less vibrant soul. However, it merely served to fuel the fire of Voltaire's protest against the Church.

Another event that could have dampened his spirit was imprisonment. When he was only twenty-one years old, Voltaire's satire roused the Duc de Orleans' fury resulting in Voltaire's imprisonment in the Bastille for eleven months. It was during his imprisonment that some of his finest works were given birth. It was also during this time that the anagram of Voltaire was first used. Printed for the first time in the preface to Oedipe, it was probably developed from Arouet L. J. (le jeune) using the u and j in their sixteenth century forms, v and i. After
his release, with a new name and a fresh start, Voltaire was ready to begin again. His father, however, was a bit skeptical about his rehabilitation: at the time of his death when Voltaire was twenty-four, his will provided that the estate be divided equally among the three heirs. There was also another stipulation-- that the second son, Voltaire, should not come into possession of his share until he was thirty-five and until he could prove that he was capable of managing his own affairs. M. Arouet's fears, to be sure, were not unfounded, for in 1726 Voltaire again found himself imprisoned in the Bastille. This time he was incarcerated only for one month, but he was then exiled to England and did not set foot on French soil for almost three years.

The period of his exile in England were some of the most important years of Voltaire's life. The first thing he did was to master the English language, which he accomplished passably inside of three months. He eventually became fluent enough to be able to write in it occasionally. These were the crucial years of his life, as his exile made him serious. During this period, he began to really become knowledgeable and specific in his writings. He also became fascinated with the physics of Sir Isaac Newton and went so far as to set up a laboratory for studying it in his chateau at Cirey upon his return to France. He also found the English way of life very admirable. In his Letters on the English, Voltaire tried to contrast the freedom of the English with the slavery of the French. He praised the English system of government as compared with the French autocracy. He praised the House of Commons. He praised the British system of taxation. He compared the happy lot of the British peasant with that of his French brother. Above all, he applauded the
comparative freedom of speech that prevailed in England. He came out of exile in 1729 and upon returning to France soon found himself in trouble again, so he fled with Mme. du Châtelet to Cirey. There was where his best works finally were produced.

In spite of all of his troubles, Voltaire remained a relentless critic of the Church and organized religion. In his youth he had been, as Walter Crocker puts it, "seduced by the optimistic view." As he grew older, he gradually became more aware of the "existence of evil in his own life, in the world around him, and throughout history." He said, "The Roman Church had always had the advantage of giving that to merit which in other governments is given only by birth." He struggled with the same problem some people experience today, the supposed conflict between Biblical teachings and emerging scientific revelations. He saw the Bible and its teachings as superstitious and a passing phase, as is evident in this quotation by Bruce Barton:

Voltaire spoke of the Bible as a short-lived book. He said that within a hundred years it would pass from common use. Not many people read Voltaire to-day, but his house has been packed with Bibles as a depot of a Bible society.

However, it is true that, at least his prediction about the Bible was wrong. One of his main points of contention with Christianity was the divinity of Christ. He believed that Christ was more divine than any other man, but he felt the doctrine of the Incarnation was absurd. All his life Voltaire was an unrelenting enemy not of the Church alone, but also of Christianity and of all organized religion. He did, nevertheless, try to convince people that he believed in some kind of supreme being. This belief, however, according to Besterman, was a matter of "expediency." He laughed at human folly and failure causing us to be
constantly reminded that there were some things, which, by reason, we could not deny, such as our own existence and the existence of God. Voltaire said, to illustrate this point: "To believe in absolutely no God... would be a frightful moral mistake, a mistake incompatible with wise government." Voltaire says that while it is not important to understand what God is, it is too audacious to deny that he exists: "If God did not exist, he would have to be invented." However, he decided that, while there probably was a supreme being, the existence of this being could not be proven: "God cannot be proven, nor denied by the mere force of our reason." Voltaire's innate brilliance made it impossible for him not to question the existence of God when he saw injustice and inequity around him. In the following quotation, Besterman supports this contention while pointing out that Voltaire's literary references to God are not negative.

Voltaire was not obsessed with God. He makes very few references to him in his literary works, and the few he does make are positive. However, he could not help but ask himself unanswerable questions.

Yet, according to Albert Desautels, in his article "Voltaire and the Church," in spite of his dislike of organized religion, he believed in a religion "where God would continue to be worshiped directly, and all men were to be considered brothers." Alfred Noyes contends that Voltaire was, in some ways, "fighting for Christian doctrine" and for the "profound truths" that science and spirit saw in the nature of evolution. Voltaire, himself, said, "The fact that I wish to destroy the rats in my house does not mean that I do not believe it had an Architect." Yet it was his contention that "in a civilized state, law must be just
and supreme, and religion consequently useless." Therefore, it was
dangerous to maintain an organized church. This idea is summed up in
his famous phrase: "Ecrasez l'inframé, crush the infamous." He specifically
meant the infamy of man's inhumanity to man--"their superstitious hatreds."36
In the article "Toleration" from his Philosophical Dictionary, Voltaire
questions why Christianity, which is supposed to be the most tolerant is,
in actuality, the least tolerant and most hypocritical.37 He saw the
religious wars and crusades as fanaticism at its very worst. They were
"proof of man's blind barbarity, the ultimate in intolerance."38 He
wanted people to look at their superstitions and see how ridiculous the
fanaticisms which they bred were.39 Alfred Noyes compares Voltaire's
crusade against intolerance to the anger of the prophet Isaiah:

It was not the wickedness, but the goodness in him that
revolted against the whole sorry business when the bloodshed
was mixed up with religion. If this, on the surface appeared
to be anti-religious, it was inspired by the same emotion, the
same hate, as that expressed by Isaiah, perhaps the most exalted
religious spirit that had appeared on the earth before the
Christian era. 'Bring no more vain oblations. Insence is
an abomination unto me. The new moons and sabbaths, the calling
of assemblies I cannot abide; it is inequity, even the solemn
meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul
hateth. They are a trouble unto me. I am weary to bear them.'40

Nevertheless, John Morley feels that Voltaire's animosity toward religion
was not just disbelief in a certain creed, but an irritation at a church.41
This view is supported by the fact that even on his deathbed he refused
communion, saying "I am continually spitting blood; we must take care
not to mingle God's blood with mine."42 He finally did permit himself
to be ministered to by a priest, and confessed to him, as the following
document, written in his last days attests:
I, the undersigned, having been vomiting blood for four days at the age of eighty-four years, and not having been able to get to church, and the priest of St. Sulpice having been willing to add to his good works that of sending to me Pere Gaultier, priest, declare that I have confessed to him; that, if God disposes of me, I die in the holy Catholic religion in which I was born, hoping that Divine Mercy will deign to pardon all my sins, and that if I have scandalized the Church, I ask for God's and her pardon.

March 2, 1778

Even in the race of death, he expounded his belief in God, and in the following quotation he explains that he hopes God, in whatever form, will not judge him:

I do not know; but I dare to hope that the master of death, and time and all our destinies--God--will preserve for himself the purest part of our being, and that he will not annihilate what he has deigned to enlighten.

But his true profession of faith is found in these words: "I die adoring God, loving my friends, not hating my enemies, and detesting superstition." In this simple statement is contained the whole of his religious beliefs.

But if Voltaire did not believe in organized religion, how can his brand of religion be described? Voltaire describes it as natural and explains that he believes in it and not in organized religion because natural religion prevents one from committing crimes:

Natural religion has a thousand times prevented citizens from committing crimes. A well-bred soul has no wish to commit them. A tender soul is afraid of them, remembering a just and vengeful God. But artificial religion encourages all the cruelties done in association, conspiracies, seditions, robbery, ambushes, attacks on towns, pillages, murders. Each one marches gaily off to crime under the banner of his saint.

He could not "worship or believe in a God who sank below the compassion and justice of man," but his supreme being was something he called "the great watchmaker." Christianity, in his eyes, "was back in the sundial league, fit only for chambermaids and tailors." Voltaire,
Voltaire, with the importance he placed on reason, embraced deism because it was a philosophy compatible with his stress on rationality. He became a deist quite early in life; at least he was one by the 1720's. His *Philosophical Dictionary* was full of deistic propaganda, the main deistic argument being that "the only valuable elements in Christianity are those that are identical with the great philosophers; all else is nonsense."

Voltaire once commented about his lack of belief in theology, saying "Theology amuses me. There we find man's insanity in all its plentitude." What was deism? Besterman cites the definition of a deist written in the *Oxford English Dictionary* of 1894 which was "one who acknowledges the existence of a God upon the testimony of reason, but rejects revealed religion." He also cites the definition of deism given in the *Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English* of 1924, which said it was the "belief in the existence of God not as a revealed certainty, but as a hypothesis required by reason." Both of these definitions quite accurately describe Voltaire's beliefs. Gay sets forth three main tenets of deism: the belief in God as a sort of great watchmaker or Mathematician, the existence of certain moral laws which govern all men, and rationality.

This quotation from Peter Gay's *Age of Enlightenment* illustrates these points:

"The deists did not deny the existence of God; the whole universe, with its beauty, its vastness, its intricate design, testified to His superb skill. But the deist God was like a great watchmaker, or as some deists liked to say-- a great Mathematician; He had created the world, given it laws to run by, and then had withdrawn. Thereafter, the world, following his immutable laws, ran itself. Thus, the idea of miracles was impossible. Secondly, the deistic notion of God insinuated that "there were moral laws which all reasonable men could discover for themselves." And thirdly "man found religious truth, by means of his powers of reason."
There were two kinds of deists, says Besterman: those who felt God created the world without providing man with a moral law and those who felt he gave man a natural law. The first group's belief was a philosophy. The second group's belief was a religion. Voltaire saw any belief beyond these deistic forms as "evil." However, he saw the greatest evil, as was previously mentioned, in the fanaticism and absolutism of organized religion. Desautels maintains that Voltaire studied and accepted "Newton's science and Locke's empiricism" to gain support for his deistic theories. "They acknowledged limits and accepted experience as the only criterion of truth." He also saw deism as a universal religion because its basic beliefs were simple and few: the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Will Durant, in his volume *The Age of Faith*, suggests that Voltaire might have found Augustine's words appropriate for use when he dedicated the chapel at Ferney:

> Let us not treat the saints as gods, we do not wish to imitate those pagans who adore the dead. Let us not build temples to them, nor raise altars to them, but with their relics let us raise an altar to the one god.

This simple faith was the source of the satirical literary masterpieces for which he is best known.

Nonetheless, the great confrontation between the rationalists represented by Voltaire and the defenders of the Church was by no means a dignified battle. Even Voltaire was not above using slander as a weapon. This caused his adversaries to attach a nickname to him and his colleagues. They were dubbed "cacouacs," suggesting the "cacaphony of quacking ducks, the bedlam of insane prattlers, sometimes (as the word intended) the odor of latrines." In spite of this less than desirable nickname,
Voltaire remained relentless. "My trade is to say what I think," he stated, and he did. Prison, and, later, exile only sharpened his hatred of tyranny whether in politics or religion.57 He also spoke his mind on other subjects such as human nature, economics and war. In the article "Wicked" in his *Philosophical Dictionary*, he makes the very emphatic point that mankind is born good and becomes sick.58 He saw a connection between commerce, religion, and politics. He said that "freedom of trade and freedom of opinion were inextricably linked with civil freedom, and religious tolerance appeared to be linked with commercial prosperity."59

His views on war are interesting, too. In the following quotation he compares war to famine and plague and finds it ironic that God is invoked by the warriors before battle:

Famine, plague, and war are the three most celebrated ingredients of this world or ours. In the category of famine can be included all the bad food to which scarcity obliges us to resort, abridging our life in the hope of sustaining it. In plague are comprised all the contagious diseases, which number two or three thousand. These two gifts come to us from providence. But war, which unites all these benifits comes to us from the imaginations of three or four hundred persons scattered over the surface of this globe under the names of princes or ministers; and it is perhaps for this reason that in many a dedication they are called the living images of divinity.

It is certainly a very fine art that desolates the country-side, destroys dwellings, and brings death to 40,000 out of 100,000 men in an average year.

What is marvelous about this infernal undertaking is that each chief of murderers invokes God before he sets off to exterminate his neighbors.50

Ironically, even though Voltaire was so outspoken and had so many enemies, women found him irresistible. He did have his tender side and, even though he never married, he succumbed to the feminine charms of two women. The first of these relationships was with Emilie du Châtelet, the wife of the Marquis. She was a scientist and mathematician in her
right and was fluent in French, Latin, Italian and English. Before Voltaire, the Duc de Richelieu had been her lover. Voltaire and Emilie lived together at Cirey for sixteen years, and even after he had begun his affair with the second woman, they remained together for the sake of appearance. Their affair ended, however, after Emilie became pregnant, at the age of forty-two, by the Marquis de Saint-Lambert. While awaiting the birth of the child, and convinced she would die in childbirth, Emilie set about finishing her studies and writing and setting her affairs in order. Her fears proved true--she died a few days after the baby was born. Voltaire and Saint-Lambert were with her. Voltaire grieved but, in his typically rational way said, "I replaced Richelieu, Saint-Lambert has driven me out. It is the natural order of things, one nail knocks out another, and so it is, in this world."61

The second woman Voltaire loved was his niece, Marie Louise Denis. An account of this relationship and of Voltaire's business expertise is found in the Time Magazine article "A Chaos of Clarity."

For the last two decades of his life, Voltaire lived in celebrated retreat with his niece at Ferney. Chronically grumbling about his health, he wrote prodigiously in six languages, expanded his farms, establishing watchmaking and lacemaking workshops, and built more than a hundred houses as a kind of 18th century real estate developer.62

In 1957 a discovery was made of 142 letters written by M. Voltaire to Mme. Denis between the years of 1742 and 1750. Their affair began in the fall of 1744 and lasted for nearly ten years.63 Perhaps the best example of the fact that Voltaire really was a tender and compassionate man is the following bit of poetry he composed after the death of the Mme. du Châtelet and the Lisbon earthquake. The words suggest his regret for adopting the
hedonistic lifestyle:

With heedless gaiety in bygone times  
I sang of pleasure in seductive rhymes.  
The times are changed and fate has schooled my mind  
To share the common sorrows of mankind.

Nevertheless, the sum and substance of his philosophy is contained in three words: "God and Liberty." These three words he said when he blessed Benjamin Franklin's grandson. He also taught men and nations how to think. Along this line he said, "When once a nation begins to think, it is impossible to stop it." He was courted by such royalty as Catharine of Russia, Louis XV, and the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha; thus he was no stranger to wealth and life in a grand style. Yet, according to Elbert Hubbard, he, too, belonged to the nobility, in the same way that Disraeli did:

Voltaire belonged to the nobility by divine right--as much as did Disraeli. Both had an inward contempt for titles, but they knew the hearts of the owners so well that they simply played a game of chess, and the 'men' they moved were live knights, bishops, kings, and queens with rollers under the castles. The pawns they pushed here and there were the literary puppets of the time.

As this above quotation suggests, Voltaire's literature was at least controversial and influential. Voltaire, like Shakespeare and Molière, was both dramatist and actor. He often took the stage in his own productions. He had a fascinating literary style. "My motto," he once said, "is To The Point." However, it is reported in "A Chaos of Clarity" that his "pattern in criticizing both church and court was to attack and then back off. Although he is credited with being the intellectual architect of the French Revolution, he was not inclined to be a martyr." But Besterman suggests that he was one of the first men to recognize and utilize public opinion. Reason and its triumphs is a theme that runs
throughout the Letters on the English as well as the Philosophical Dictionary and the science fiction story, Micromegas. In this, Voltaire well illustrates what is usually referred to as the rationalism of the French Enlightenment. It shows the climate of opinion, which, as was previously mentioned, he himself helped to form, and that resulted in the French Revolution and the downfall of the royal regime.69

One of his most famous, controversial, and loved literary works was the biting satire Candide, sometimes called the "Gospel of Pessimism." It was written, amazingly enough, in three days when many events, both in the world and in his personal life, led to its publication. The Lisbon earthquake of 1755, previously mentioned, was just one of the events. However, Candide was, as R.L. Frauschi suggests, Voltaire's reaction to the fact that he was "at once a huge success and a whipping post, cheered by what had been or could be accomplished and yet depressed by the carnage, suffering and stupidity and intolerance around him." It was first published in Geneva, Switzerland, by the Cramer brothers on January 15, 1759.70

The object of this work was to bring together full information concerning all the arts and all the sciences, as they existed at the time, and in doing so, to chronicle the progress of the human mind and of civilization. The most noted men of science and letters in France took part in the work.71

It was a reply to Liebnitzian optimism ("Everything is for the best in this best of possible worlds"). He disagreed with this philosophy, saying there is too much wrong in the world to believe it. He created Candide, a rich young nobleman, as a pupil of Professor Pangloss (Liebnitz).

The following quotation suggests that Candide has applications for life today:
In this black-comedy response to the evils of history, he seems closest to the modern reader, as in his conclusion:
Cultivate your garden (modern translation: do your own thing).

Voltaire, as well as expounding his philosophical views, held strong views on other men of the arts and sciences. He was an admirer of Sir Isaac Newton, and he attempted to popularize "Newton's theory of gravitational attraction, of the decomposition of light, and of the calculus." He set up a laboratory with Mme du Châtelet at Cirey to conduct experiments in Newton's physics. She even made the first French translation of Newton's great treatise. Voltaire had the honor of attending Newton's funeral while he was in exile in England, and it is to Voltaire that we owe the famous story of the fallen apple, as it appears in the fifteenth of his *Letters on the English*. Concerning Shakespeare, Voltaire accused him of being "barbarous," "unbridled," "low," and "absurd." And, according to Jack Valenti, Voltaire especially hated Rousseau and those who tried to win favor at court.

Voltaire knew well the limits of human reason. He felt that since man does not know what the soul is, why should he be persecuted, even killed, for not agreeing with other men who know no more than he?

Illustrative of this belief are these famous words that he once wrote: "I do not agree with a word you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." These were not empty words, either, for in 1762 he worked to exonerate the name of a Protestant shopkeeper named Jean Calas who had been tortured and killed on the false charge of murdering his son to prevent the boy from converting to Catholicism. This was not the only time he defended someone else's right to say what he believes or to hold his own beliefs. The inscription on the sarcophagus in which
his remains were transported to the Pantheon read "He avenged Calas, La
Barre, Sirven, and Montbailli." It continues, "Poet, philosopher, historian,
he gave great impetus to the human mind; he prepared us to become free." This was a fitting testimonial to his humanitarian efforts.

People have perceived Voltaire in many different ways. In "The
Great Gadfly," he is seen as exemplifying the "conflict between religion
and science-plus-philosophy which became a living drama in the eighteenth
century, and which resulted in the secret secularism of our times." Voltaire
was a jester. Born half dead, he was slapped to life. Given
four days to live, he lived eighty-four years. He ended in a jest also.
As he lay on his deathbed and the priest came, Voltaire asked, "who sent
you here, M. l'Abbé?" "God Himself, M. Voltaire," said the priest.
"Ah, my dear sir," he replied, "and where are your credentials?" As
a jester it was his business to combat the tension and hypocrisy of
his world with laughter. "I laugh," he said, "in order to keep from
going mad." Yet he failed from a kind of perfection. Everything
came easily to him except a certain "divinely vulgar excess." He was,
as one critic complained, "a chaos of clear ideas." By his masterly
demonstration of the farthest reach of reason, he finally showed how
much lies beyond it.

In conclusion, many factors went into making Voltaire the complex
individual that he was. He stressed moderation in all things yet his
outspokenness often got him into serious trouble leading to imprisonment
and exile. He criticized organized religion, yet the belief in God was
a major tenet of his philosophy. He was a devoted scientist and mathematician
as well as being a literary genius. He was a great humanitarian, yet
he was ruthless when he found something to censure. He stressed reason, yet he knew well its limits. He was often callous, but at times, tender.

Moreover, one final quotation from Elbert Hubbard's *Little Journeys to the Homes of the Great*, Volume 3, summarizes Voltaire's philosophy, his humanitarianism, and shows that his beliefs simply boiled down to basic human rights:

Voltaire sided with the weak, the defenseless, the fallen. He demanded that men should not be hounded for their belief, that they should not be arrested without cause and knowing why, and without letting their friends know why. We realize his faults, we know his imperfections and limitations, yet, through his influence, life throughout the world became safer, liberty dearer, freedom a more sacred thing. His words were a battery that eventually razed the walls of the Bastille, and best of all, freed countless millions from theological superstition, that Bastille of the brain."

And because he has freed us from the Bastille-- our own minds-- with his brilliant, though biting commentaries, and because they have withstood the test of time, we can wisely learn from them.
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