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VOLTAIRE: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Despite being considered a symbol of the eighteenth century and the mentor of both movements, “The Enlightenment” and “The French Revolution,” Voltaire had a very confusing and traumatic life. He became one of the most prolific writers of his day and in order to accomplish his ideological goals he transformed his pen into a powerful tool. His writing experience was always considered a battle against all injustices, oppressions, cruelties and superstitions of the clergy and state. His long life spans the last years of classicism and the eve of the revolutionary era (1694 – 1778); during this age of transition his works and activities influenced the directions taken by the European civilization. The purpose of this paper is threefold: (1) It purports to analyse the main ideas which Voltaire developed during his life; (2) To consider to what extent these ideas exerted an influence upon the history of his time and towards human history, and finally, (3) To assess the impact of his works on the destinies of the Church (Catholic) in those days and the fulfillment of the Bible prophecy of 1.260 days of Revelation 13:5.

I. THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

A. Voltaire’s Historical Background

Very few ideological personages of history had such a controversial life as Francois-Marie Arouet, better known as “*Voltaire*”. While living he was considered by some as the devil, while others used to call him a prophet of a new and true religion. His life was very confused since his birth. The biographers affirm that, “no one knows precisely when and where he was born and who was his biological father.”¹ As he had a very traumatic birth, his family thought he would not survive, so the family nurse baptized him very quickly. Later, this baptism complicated his life with the Church (Catholic), because the priest didn’t want to recognize it as an official ceremony. This event marked the first intricacy between Voltaire and the Church and it’s note-worthy that throughout his life this clash would get even worse.

The very priest “who, with a few drops of water, gave the name of Francois-Marie Arouet to this babe and saved his soul – little thought that before him, wrapped

in many folds, weakly wailing, scarcely breathing, was the one destined to tear from the white throat of Liberty the cruel, murderous claws of the *Triumphant Beast*.”²

At that time, the condition of the French people was the most disgraceful it had been for many generations. For more than a thousand years the reign of peace and good-will had been absolute. The laws were given by the Christian kings, and sanctioned by “wise and holy men.” Under the benign reign of universal love, every court nevertheless had its chamber of torture. To express honest thoughts, to teach fellow-men, to make private investigation, to seek the truth, were all considered crimes which were punishable by sword or flame.

As a consequence of this situation, “misery, poverty, ignorance and tyranny held the people in a viselike grip. No ray of light penetrated their dark and gloomy existence. There was no hope however remote to sustain their depressed and sunken spirits. They seemed doomed to this frightful condition in face of perpetual slavery. They despaired of any change for the better and resigned themselves and their lot in life to the divine plan. It was easy for priests to tell them that God’s ways were beyond their understanding and that whatever was, was best.”³

While the mass of people lived in serfdom the nation was dominated by the priest and the king – a threatening combination of ignorance and tyranny. It was hard to think of conditions more intolerable.

“Royalty lived in a wild extravagance of silks and satins; of diamonds and gold and precious jewels; of gilded palaces and magnificent halls, all wrung from the very life blood of the people. Sensuality was its consuming activity. And the Church walking arm in arm with Royalty, fed contentedly upon the fat of the land. When the state could no longer increase the servitude and when the state could no longer rob the people through pillage and taxation, the priests, sly, unscrupulous and heartless, completed the job. Superstition intermingled with brutality.”⁴

B. The Role of Magic and Superstition

Magic and superstition were the physicians of that time. It was a disrespect to seek for the help of medicine and a blasphemy to call the doctor. The Church dominated and controlled the cure of diseases. Medals, candles, holy oil and the like were sold to cure any sort of body disorders, from a simple sore throat to granulated eyelids.

In those days, dead saints were the best physicians: St. Valentine cured epilepsy; St. Gervasius was exceedingly good for rheumatism; St. Michael for cancer; St. Judas for coughs and colds; St. Ovidius restored the hearing; St. Sebastian was good for the bites of snakes and the stings of poisonous insects; St. Apollonia for toothache; St. Clara for any trouble with eyes and St. Hubert for hydrophobia.

In those times, “it was known that doctors reduced the revenues of the Church; that was enough – science was the enemy of religion.”⁵ All scientific information was regarded as evil. Investigators were considered very dangerous and thinkers were traitors, as the Church exerted its vast power to inhibit the intellectual progress of man. There was no real liberty, no real education, no real philosophy, no real science, no real Christianity – nothing but credulity and superstition.

Amulets, talismans, relics and charms were sold to protect people from harm or to bring good luck. Little pieces of consecrated paper were used for several different purposes.

“If you put them in a cradle, it would keep the child from being bewitched. If you put one in the barn, the rats would not eat the corn. If you would keep one in the house, evil spirits would not enter your doors and if you buried them in the fields, you would have good weather, the frost would be delayed, rain would come when needed and abundant crops would bless your labor.”⁶

Every fraud was practiced under the name of religion and accomplished with profit. Every act of corruption and crime that was made to promote the ends of the

church was applauded or at least overlooked; and every attempt to destroy those who protested was praised. These illogical ideas drove the people to an extreme situation of existential emptiness and meaninglessness. “Truly, every man was afraid of his own shadow. Every clap of thunder was a threatening warning and every bolt of lightning a flash of anger and vengeance.”⁷

These were the most important historically verifiable conditions that were evident throughout Voltaire’s life. It was a period of almost universal corruption, intolerance and tremendous superstition.

C. The Days of His Childhood and Youth and the Roots of His Deistic View

The very first person who had a remarkable influence upon Voltaire was the Abbé de Châteauneuf who took Voltaire at the age of three and tried to make him memorize a deistical poem about Moses (*La Moïsade by Lourdes*), “one of the first open attacks against religion in France.”⁸ The words of that poem were carried in Voltaire’s heart throughout his life and it sowed the seeds of doubt, establishing his opinion that in all countries religious dogmas and solemnities derived from the charlatanism of some false prophet.

The second most significant moment of his education came as a result of a book donation of two thousand French marks that were offered by Ma. Ninon de l’Énclos, who saw in Voltaire signs of intellectual skills. The accompanied reading of these books by a dissolute priest Jérôme Coignard, introduced to Voltaire another concept that was internalized and displayed in his subsequent years – skepticism.

Voltaire was a man that lived for and belonged to the people. In the language of his days, he had no ancestors. In his writings, the most voluminous ever left by any author of his day, he scarcely mentions his mother a half dozen times. He had a brother

and a sister whose names have only been rescued from oblivion by the luster of Voltaire. His mother, Marguerite d'Áumard died when he was seven years old and there is no doubt that this was a very traumatic incident that marked his entire life.

Voltaire's father Francois Arouet, "a well-to-do Parisian bourgeois"⁹, would have his name forgotten, except for his brilliant and talented son. As a father, he wanted Voltaire to become a lawyer, but he had no taste for law. To accomplish his dream, at the age of ten he sent his son to a Jesuit College, called Louis Le Grand where he remained until seventeen and from there on he never attended any other educational institution.

At that age he decided to devote his life to literature. Voltaire's decision drove his father to affirm: "I have a pair of fools for sons, one in verse and the other in prose."¹⁰ Mr. Arouet was in despair about his sons: "the elder seemed to be wasting his career and fortune on a proscribed religion and its penniless proselytes; the younger seemed to be dissipating his on pleasure and libertinism."¹¹

According to Voltaire, he learned nothing at school but a little Greek, a good deal of Latin and a vast amount of nonsense. At Louis Le Grand they did not teach geography, history, mathematics or any science. This was a Catholic institution and in those days religion was defended, protected and supported by the State.

D. A Polemical Man

There are several controversial interpretations of Voltaire's works. Some used to say that his secret philosophy was atheism. Others, assert that all of his works were marked by a very deep line of religiousness. Lastly, there are those who declare that Voltaire was not even a philosopher, because he did not leave a systematized doctrine, but instead, he left only some sparse ideas over a great number of topics.

In this way, Voltaire became a very polemic figure of his time. His biography shows that he was twice put into the Bastille state prison; on several occasions he was obligated to flee from his country; during the last twenty years of his life, he was confined in the border between Switzerland and France, and was forbidden to go to Paris. Finally most of his works were condemned by royal censure and some of them were even burned in public squares.

But there is another side that has marked Voltaire's life. He was a close friend of Louis XV of France, Frederick II of Prussia and of Catherine the Empress of Russia. Other than that, he was very much admired by the young philosophers of his time. From his exiles, he wrote many pieces of literature that were spread throughout France and Europe. He used to say that he was a soldier and his sword was his pen and paper. He wrote 99 books, hundreds of pamphlets and 20,000 letters.

E. Peace as a Consequence of Freedom of Thought and Tolerance

The main work of Voltaire was to write, and as a prolific writer he considered this experience as a form of a battle. During his life, he was constantly involved in several different combats and always in a position of attack. In 1767, writing to D'Alembert, he said: "I make war to the right or left wing. To some, I prepare my gun with salt, for others with big munitions. After I've fought, I laugh!"

But, to what battle is he referring? What's the sense of this battle? He felt he was trying to make human beings better, freer and happier. Through books that destroy religious superstitions and fanaticism he believed society would reach a state of virtuousness and integrity. They would feel that peace was a fruit of tolerance and freedom of thought. On one occasion he affirmed: "My profession is to say what I think."¹² This was one of Voltaire's greatest battles. He took this challenge to the

utmost extreme, moving his nation to a higher state of intellectual emancipation. In his book *Life of Voltaire*, Tallentyre said: "When a nation begins to think, it is impossible to detain it."¹³

F. The English Influence – (1726 – 1729)

It is evident that his concept of freedom of thought was deeply connected to religion. First, freedom of thought and expression means the right to choose a religion and the right to respect others' beliefs. There is no question that Voltaire's concept on freedom of thought was drawn from the English model. In 1726 he went to England where he stayed for three years. In his sixth *Philosophical Letter*, Voltaire wrote: "If it was only a religion in England, that would be despotism; if there were two religions, they would destroy themselves; but, as they are thirty, they live happily and in peace."

As in England, he was surprised by the freedom of thought that writers had, such as: Bolingbroke, Pope, Addison and Swift. To him, England was the symbol of liberty. In 1727, writing on his *Essay on the Topic of Poetry*, Voltaire said: "Liberty of thought is the life of the soul." In the same year, he wrote to Thieriot: "You will see a nation fond of their liberty, learned, witty, despising life and death, a nation of philosophers". The essence of English life, as Voltaire saw it, consisted in "talking with both Whigs and Tories, dining with a bishop and supping with a Quaker, going on Saturday to a synagogue and on Sunday to St. Paul's."¹⁴

England was by comparison so utterly free that the intelligent people of France looked upon her with both amazement and envy. But, "any attempt to imitate the freedom of expression which prevailed in England at that time was met with stern rebuke by the aristocrats of the French nation and their Catholic mentors."¹⁵

Never forgetting that, in those days nobility and the clergy were the lords and masters of people's destinies and no one was able to interfere with their plans. The mere rumor that an author had in his possession a manuscript containing something that might offend the clergy was sufficient reason for his confinement into the Bastille. Books on law, history, science, medicine and even biographies met the same fate. The authors were convicted and tortured as criminals.

*“Every great writer and thinker in France, it has been said, paid a penalty for his daring. Nearly every one suffered imprisonment. The works of Newton were forbidden publication. The encyclopedists were discouraged and finally barred. Rousseau was banished and his works burned. A book advocating religious tolerance was condemned as seditious, and actually sentenced to be burnt. **The idea of keeping religious toleration in a age when God had a personal representative, was occupying a room in the royal palace!**”¹⁶*

At this point, Voltaire began to absorb all that England could offer – its literature, science and philosophy. He took all of these various elements and passed them through the French spirit and culture in order to obtain a new paradigm for his nation.

II. THE PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

A. An Overall View of His Ideas

Most of Voltaire's biographers affirm that he was not an originator of ideas, but most of all a populariser of thoughts. For instance he never claimed to be a philosopher or even a scientist, but he did claim to be a strong proponent of philosophy in the sense of an enlightened love of wisdom.

In the sense of constructing his views, it is perceivable that he was deeply influenced by at least three major ideological characters of his day. Firstly, by Francis Bacon who was the founder of experimental philosophy. Secondly, by Isaac Newton

who was considered the Columbus of the cosmos. And finally, by John Locke who was the originator of modern psychology and the one whose ideas were most favorable to Voltaire.

The most predominant idea that dominated the minds of cultured people of his time was Rationalism. For some historians that period can be better described both as the Age of Reason or the Enlightenment. The movement argued that pure reason is the only way that ultimate reality can be revealed. This movement was very much opposed to superstition (ignorant beliefs or practices based on fear or mistaken feelings of reverence).

Some of the leaders of this movement differed on some of their views, but they all agree on one matter – the critical attitude towards any part of orthodoxy, especially orthodox religion. They were all defenders of Deism and, didn't believe in miracles, considering God as the mechanic of the universe – a sort of cosmic watchmaker; He built a superb machine, gave it laws to run by and then withdrew.

Voltaire became a defender and tried to champion these Deistic ideas. With those thoughts in mind, it followed that the only reliable road to knowledge of God's plan was through science, not religion, through observation and experiment, not dogma or revelation.

In those days, science had made great advancement. Naturalists collected and classified thousands of animals and plants. In astronomy, the motion of the planets was firmly established and explained. Geologists began to map the earth's crust. Chemists explained the phenomena of burning, the nature of air and the composition of water.

After all those achievements, perhaps the last man of literary to interpret and extend science to the world was Voltaire. He was truly a shining light of the Age of Reason. While looking to the past mistakes that happened to humanity, he persisted in

teaching that man is capable of shaping the future by achieving a true morality and by resisting arbitrary power and intolerance.

In summary, Voltaire defended at least four major ideas:

- (a) **Deism** – He proclaimed that Newton’s philosophy “leads necessarily to the knowledge of a superior being who has created everything, arranged everything freely. God is defined by Voltaire as the *“Supreme Eternal Machinist.”*
- (b) **Dialectical Materialism** – The material basis of reality is constantly changing in a dialectical process.
- (c) **Humanism** - He was deeply merged with the humanistic concept and this is demonstrated in his approach to life and in the way he treated his people.
- (d) **Rationalism** – Only scientific and especially materialistic methods could be used effectively in the pursuit of knowledge. *“Only what can be measured and counted is above doubt.”*

B. Voltaire’s Metaphysics

Several critics asserted that Voltaire had an attitude of ironic incredulity towards metaphysical matters. But at this, we could raise a question: “Did God exist to Voltaire?” There was no doubt in Voltaire’s mind as to God’s existence. To him God existed because of the ordered system of the world. In fact, one of his most famous statements says, “If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him.”

In his *Metaphysical Treat*, he affirmed that, “after we have been pushed by doubts and conclusions, we can consider the following proposition, *God exists*. To him, this is the most clear fact that a man can think of, and the contrary idea is one of the most absurd.” While observing the universe, he came to conclude that its order was not a casualty, because within it we can find an intelligent creator. *“When we are alone before the infinite, we feel poor. But, when we are before a beautiful machine, we say - there must be a mechanic and he is an exceptional genius.”*

In one of his responsive letters to King Frederick of Germany, he displayed some limits to the understanding of metaphysical concepts: *“In my opinion metaphysics is made up of two things; the first of what all men of good sense know, the second, what*

they will never know. We are equipped to calculate, weigh, measure and observe; that's natural philosophy; almost all the rest is chimera."

C. Voltaire and the Enlightenment

Most of the historians of the eighteenth century considered Voltaire as one of the greatest founders of the Enlightenment, from which he became a symbol of its thoughts and spirit. The movement was characterized by the defense of an autonomous reason in face of arguments and ideas that were taken from the authoritarian traditions. For the Enlightenment thinkers, reason must penetrate all the veins of human knowledge in order to destroy preconceptions that result in ignorance and obscurity. In this manner, the Enlightenment assumes a critical attitude towards cultural, religious and institutional traditions.

In the Portuguese dictionary *Novo Aurelio*, the word Enlightenment (*iluminismo*), is defined as, "the philosophical movement of the eighteenth century that was marked by trust in reasoning and progress, for challenging tradition and authority and for the incentive to freedom of thought."

This movement was not the product of a single mind, it has been recognized as the contribution of some important individuals of those days, such as: *D'Alembert, Crimm, Diderot, Rosseau and D'Holbach*. Interestingly though, they all belonged to the middle class of society.

D. The Advent of Secularization

At the very heart of the Enlightenment, originated an important phenomenon called Secularization, which brought to the world a new type of liberty and autonomy.

Some years later, this phenomenon would determine the *modus operandi* of modern society.

The concept of secularization brought many changes to humanity – there was a shift from the transcendency to the immanency and verticality to horizontality. These changes were articulated to the development of individualism and rationalism, and they provoked a great impact in different fields such as, politics, economics and ideology.

One of the most remarkable consequences of these changes was observed in the ideological domain, where emerged a dichotomized view and a radical separation between faith and reason – natural and supernatural. It brought as a result, severe criticism towards religious practices and beliefs, of which Voltaire became a key element in the whole process.

The waves and effects of that dichotomy can still be felt and sensed nowadays. The leaders of this movement worked in such a way that faith should lose its ground and give place to scientific reasoning. Though it is interesting to observe that since those days reason mostly obliterated faith from people's minds, and consequentially the image of God has been almost wiped from human domains, establishing an immense gap between God and His creatures.

In this sense, faith was put at such an extreme distance from reason – to an almost untouchable point. That happened as a consequence of this portrait that was depicted in this very critical and decisive moment of human history.

People were tired of what the clergy was doing with faith and its dogmas. In this manner, they decided to break with it and tried to find another way to explain the most complex matters of life. It was at that precise moment that the major philosophies which we know today originated and were propelled to the world, bringing with them all sorts of divergent ideas from those established by God since Creation. These

philosophies can be described as: deism, rationalism, humanism, positivism, naturalism, empiricism, modernism and evolutionism.

III. THE RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE

A. Voltaire's Religious View

Since his birth Voltaire had difficulties with religion. He never came to accept the religion of his days as a good idea to human beings. But at this point comes a question: Why? What was wrong with religion that made him so rebellious and intolerant to it?

As Voltaire looked to the past, he could not afford to be quiet and calm. During the first 1700 years of the Christian era, "about 17 million people died in the world because of religious matters, one million for every century."¹⁷ This created an uncontainable sense of anguish and distress within his heart.

Interestingly though, Voltaire attacked the system, not God or religion. In his poem entitled *La Henriade*, he remarked in the preface edition of 1730 that, "the most important point is religion." His strictures are directed against the Church as a political body, not against religion itself.

Voltaire devoted much of his life to attacking the control that the Church and "religion" held over society. "Moreover, he realized that many of the men who devoted their lives to religion did so for personal advantage, without any kind of dedication to sanctity or social service."¹⁸ He never became weary in denouncing the absurdities that the church was practicing towards his generation. Instead of presenting a rational God, the Church was presenting a "monster, that made people hate it."¹⁹

He did try with all vigor to combat and eradicate the superstitions that the church had seeded for more than a millennium. In his *Philosophic Dictionary* while answering a letter to Holbach, he said:

You've been saying that religion has produced innumerable misfortunes; but before you say this you have to look at the superstition that rules our unhappy world. That is, the most cruel enemy that hinders a pure adoration to the Supreme God. Let's us abominate this monster that has always torn down the breast of its mother; the ones who combat it are the benefactors of the human race. It is a serpent that suffocates religion; we have to crush its head without wounding its mother.

During the last twenty-five years of his life Voltaire decided to become serious and somber. He was a man who was not only a literate, but a man of action. He used all of his philosophical writings and words as a powerful and destructive explosive. It has been said that, "not even a smile could escape his mouth without deep self-recrimination as if he had committed a crime."²⁰

It was during this period that he adopted his famous motto: *Ecrassez l'Infame*, which means – Crush the Infamy. With that motto he awakened the soul of the French people against the cruelties of the Church. He began to spill out so much fire and sulphur that it melted scepters and robes. It destroyed the power of priests and helped to overthrow the throne.

In order to accomplish his goal, he wrote letters to several philosophers, inviting them to join him: "Come, brave Diderot, intrepid D'Alembert and let's join forces; ... crush the fanatics, the miserable sophistries, the false tales ... and the innumerable absurdities; the following generation will be grateful to us for their reason and liberty."²¹ Voltaire understood that the first step towards social welfare was to destroy the ecclesiastical power where intolerance had its roots.

B. The Influence of Voltaire Towards French Revolution

On April 02, 1764, in a letter to Chauvelin, Voltaire predicted: “Everything I see casts the seeds in the direction of a Revolution that will certainly happen, and which I won’t have the pleasure to witness.”²² Years later, the people made a statue to allude to him as “The Precursor of Revolution.” To the organizers of Voltaire’s pantheonization, he is considered as the herald of the revolutionary movement.

In his book *Voltaire and the French Enlightenment*, Will Durand claims that: “Italy had the Renaissance and Germany the Reform; but France had Voltaire. For his country he represented Renaissance, Reform and half of the French Revolution. He helped to prepare the gun powder from which Mirabeau, Marat, Danton and Robespierre used to explode the Old Regime.”

In those days, intolerance, fanaticism and superstition had reached their zenith. Everything was now pointing to an inevitable Revolution. “In many of the nations of Europe the powers that ruled the Church and State had for centuries been controlled by Satan through the medium of the papacy.”²³ For centuries, truth and error struggled for the mastery and evil was permitted to come to maturity. The war against the Bible, carried forward during so many centuries in France, culminated in the scenes of Revolution. “That terrible outbreaking was but the legitimate result of Rome’s suppression of the Scriptures.”²⁴

The policy Rome applied had damaged the social, political and religious domains that were driving France to ruin. The burden of supporting both the Church and the State fell upon the middle and the lower classes, whose were heavily taxed by the civil authorities and by the Clergy.

C. His Intentional Purposes Towards Revolution

Rome had misrepresented the character of God and perverted His requirements and now men rejected both the Bible and its Author. “In reaction, Voltaire and his associates cast aside God’s Word altogether and spread everywhere the poison of infidelity.”²⁵ The retributive character of the French Revolution was directed primarily against Catholicism, and it was Voltaire’s major dream and aspiration to see it destroyed.

His foremost revolutionary ideas predicted in 1764 had their axis towards the clerical dominance of Rome. “It was at the very heart of the Vatican that Voltaire had directed all of his arrows. It was precisely there that his politics were articulated.”²⁶ In order to reinforce this idea, Helvetius declared: “Voltaire had crossed the Rubicon River and he was just ready to face Rome.”²⁷

The French had learned painfully well the lessons of cruelty and torture that Rome had taught them. “A day of retribution had at last come.”²⁸ The examples of persecution that the clergy had exhibited for so many ages, was now angrily returned upon them with similar intensity and strength.

The long period of persecution drove the revolutionary leaders to another extreme. The very intolerance that they fought against became now a major weapon in order to accomplish their ideas. As the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, described: “the worst type of oppressors, are those who were once oppressed.”

D. The Fulfillment of the 1260 Days’ Prophecy

The hour of vengeance had come. “The French Revolution Directory demanded that the papacy revoke, retract and disannul all bulls, briefs, restricts and decrees affecting ecclesiastical affairs in France.”²⁹ The Pope Pius VI refused, declaring he

would oppose them with force. Finally, “the Directory, on January 1, 1798, ordered General Berthier, to march upon Rome in order to conquer it. Eventually, he arrived with a Republican army at the gates of Rome on February 10, 1798.”³⁰ The following statement confirms that the prophecy of Revelation 13:5,3 had been fulfilled:

“The papacy was extinct: not a vestige of its existence remained; and among all the Roman Catholic powers not a finger was stirred in its defense. The eternal City had no longer prince or pontiff; its bishop was a dying captive in foreign lands; and the decree was already announced that no successor would be allowed in his place”³¹

“(v5) The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. (v3) One of the heads of the beast seemed to have a deadly wound, but the fatal wound had been healed.

IV. CONCLUSION

In his very thoughtful essay entitled *On Voltaire*, Ingersoll noted: There were three mighty forces in France – the throne, the altar and Voltaire. There is no doubt that he played a crucial role in setting free his fellow citizens from an indescribable state of intolerance, superstition and ignorance. Other than that, he is considered as a pivotal mentor towards the foundational process of both movements, “The Enlightenment and The French Revolution.”

It is attributed to Voltaire that his writings and influence have produced a great impact upon the Western society, since it unsettled the fundamental ideas that the Church and State were applying towards people. “Voltaire shook the throne and the altar.”³²

In spite of that, he was a man of his day, therefore not a saint. He always had a sarcastic and ironic answer to the most frequent questions. He was never troubled about the salvation of his soul. All theological issues excited his laughter, creeds his pity and the conduct of bigots his contempt. He attacked the creeds of his time, but more than

that he attacked the Bible with all his weapons. “He assailed its geology, astronomy, ideas of justice, laws, customs, miracles, prophecies and promises.”³³

Apparently, he believed in God as it is declared many times in his works, but one of his most destructive philosophies can be identified as Deism. He recognized God’s existence but he didn’t convey an integrative or interactive relationship with Him. Apart from acknowledging His existence, Voltaire didn’t feel the need for God in his life.

Even though God can count on pagans and idolaters to demonstrate His will or even to accomplish a specific purpose, Voltaire is considered by E. G. White as an infidel, and while referring to him she said: “When Voltaire was five years old, he committed to memory an infidel poem, and the pernicious influence was never effaced from his mind. He became one of Satan’s most successful agents to lead men away from God. Thousands will rise up in the judgment and charge the ruin of their soul upon the infidel Voltaire.”³⁴

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- ²⁸ White, E. G., **Great Controversy – Pacific Press Publishing Association – Mountain View – CA** (1950); p. 283.
- ²⁹ Froom, Le R. E., **Prophetic Faith of Our Father – The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation**. Review and Herald, Washington, D.C (1948); p. 750.
- ³⁰ Maxwell, C. M., **An Exegetical and Historical Examination of the Beginning and Ending of the 1260 Days of Prophecy with Special Attention Given to A.D. 538 and 1798 as Initial and Terminal Dates - Masters' Thesis**, presented at the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews University – (August 1951); p. 66.
- ³¹ Trevor, G., **Rome: From the Fall of the Western Empire**, 440 – As quoted in the MA Thesis of Pr. Maxwell, p. 68.
- ³² Nascimento, M. G. S., **Voltaire: A Razão Militante – Editora Moderna, São Paulo (1993)**, p. 5.
- ³³ Ingersoll, p. 11.
- ³⁶ White, E. G., **Special Testimonies – November 3 (1881)**; paragraph 18.