

### **Voltaire's Advocation in *Candide***

Leibniz, the great mathematician and philosopher, developed a philosophy in Voltaire's time that soon became widely accepted. The philosophy itself was sound in logic, but was perverted by his followers to be a kind of callous optimistic outlook on the world. Voltaire was opposed to this trend in his society's ignorant way of thinking, so he wrote the satirical story of young Candide. This book makes clear that the perversion of Leibniz's philosophy to that degree angered Voltaire immensely.

In the final chapter of *Candide*, Candide visits with the Mussulman and his family. This visit presents the last clue that causes Candide to finally change his outlook on life, humanity, and happiness. The change is subtle, but important. In the last sentence of the book, in response to a long-winded optimistic paragraph from Pangloss, Candide says "That's true enough, but we must go and work in the garden." This is a profound statement to come out of Candide's mouth, as he has been through every conceivable horror and searched high and low for happiness in the human race, always to come back to what Pangloss taught him. The statement implies two things. First,

that Candide is finally starting to think for himself, and second, that he has come to the conclusion that there is a middle ground to Pangloss' incessant optimism, and Martin's gloomy realism. He realizes that the world is not as black and white as he was taught to think.

These two concepts seem to be important to Voltaire. He uses the story to poke fun at the stereotypical person who believes the first thing they hear without thinking about it for themselves. He also uses Candide's newfound freedom of thought to allow a compromise to surface for the first time in the book. Candide's last sentence agrees with Pangloss' statement, but then proceeds to add to it, implying that they need to continue to "banish those three great evils, boredom, vice, and poverty." With this statement, Voltaire is advocating that while a string of events certainly can occur to put a given set of people in a certain situation at a given time, those events themselves aren't necessarily what cause happiness. Instead, he is saying that the activities that one finds to do to banish the "three great evils" are all-important, and should be paid much attention.