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Starring Role and Contributions of Voltaire Towards Historiography

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ABSTRACT

This study is about the Voltaire historiography of the Enlightenment era. In this paper, twelve historiographic works of Voltaire are mentioned. The History of Charles XII and The Age of Louis XIV. Charles XII, the ruler of Sweden (1697-1718), and Louis XIV, the ruler of France (1643-1715). The purpose of the research is to learn about Voltaire and the historiography of Voltaire. This research employs qualitative, descriptive and analytical methodology drawing from both primary and secondary sources. Voltaire's historical work was "The History of Charles XII," published in 1731, which discussed Sweden and Finland as a kingdom and the initial wars of Charles XII, wars with Russia, the Ottoman forces and Sweden's weakness, and finally discussed his death. Another work is "The Age of Louis XIV", published in 1751, which Voltaire discussed different states and minorities of Louis XIV, civil wars and the state of France, the policy of expansion during the rule of Louis XIV, the magnificence of Louis XIV and the Nine Years' War, various incidents of the rule of Louis XIV and various aspects of internal government. The study recommended and discussed advancement and cultural achievements of historiography during the 18th century.

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Introduction

François-Marie Arouet, who later adopted the name Voltaire, was a prominent French Enlightenment writer, historian, and philosopher. He was born in Paris on November 21, 1694, and began his education at the Jesuit College, Louis-le-Grand, in Paris. Even though Voltaire attended a religious school, he didn't agree with everything it taught about religion. Instead, he spent time with other writers in Paris. People liked him because he was clever and often said things that made others think. Voltaire's father was a lawyer and government official. He rejected his father's desire to become a lawyer, and Voltaire decided to pursue a career as a writer. "Voltaire was the author of about a hundred books; his correspondence alone runs into 107 volumes" (Sreedharan, 2004, p. 114).

According to Will Durant, "Italy had a Renaissance, and Germany had a Reformation, but France had a Voltaire; he was for his country both Renaissance and the Reformation, and half the Revolution" (Sreedharan, 2004, p. 114). Voltaire was jailed for nearly a year in the Bastille in 1717. In 1726, Voltaire was again imprisoned briefly in the Bastille. Voltaire died between 11 o'clock and midnight on Saturday, 30 May 1778, in Paris, France (Besterman, 1969, p. 526).

Historiography is the key part of studying history. "Historiography literally means the art of writing history. Historiography is the history of history, or the history of historical writings" (Butterfield, 1973, p. 464).

It is difficult for a historian or historiographer to tell exactly when historiography began. Ancient Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt, Greece, and China each had their own ways of recording and studying history; these ways of recording history developed over time. Christianity had a big impact on how people thought in medieval Europe. The way history is written and understood, influenced by Christian beliefs, is called Christian historiography.

The Muslim tradition of recording history began with compiling the Quran and Hadith collections. Before the Renaissance, history was mostly written by Christian priests who focused on God. But during the Renaissance, a new way of thinking about history started, and it was more modern. The characteristics of historiography during the Renaissance in Europe included an emphasis on the role of individuals in shaping history and historical causes, as well as a focus on critical and analytical approaches to writing history. Enlightenment was a big change in thinking during the 18th century in Europe. People started using reason a lot more to understand the world. This era is frequently referred to as the Age of Reason. Many areas of knowledge, like philosophy, science, religion, and theology, saw a lot of progress. The Enlightenment thinkers really trusted reason, and they thought it was the main way to judge if our thoughts and actions are right. They questioned and rejected old ideas from the Middle Ages that could not stand up to reason. They changed the way people thought about humans, the universe, religion, society, and history. There were several historians of the Enlightenment era, but some prominent historians were Montesquieu, David Hume, William Robertson, Edward Gibbon and Voltaire. Despite the shortcomings of enlightenment historiography, Collingwood acknowledges certain positive aspects in the work of enlightenment historians. They were advocating for tolerance. They also highlighted the history of arts, sciences, industry, trade and culture. Voltaire contributed to historiography with almost 12 of great importance historical works. The monumental historical works of Voltaire were *The History of Charles XII* and *The Age of Louis XIV*.

Statement Of The Problem

This study is not an invention but a new kind of finding and a revisit to Voltaire's impact on the historiography of the Enlightenment era. A revisit of the writer is approximately a reminder of the Enlightenment philosophical thoughts and estimation of its impact on historiography. This study explores the contributions of Voltaire to the field of historiography.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the contribution of Voltaire in the historiography of the Enlightenment era.
2. To analyze the historical methods and themes used by Voltaire in his works.

Research Questions

1. What are the contributions of Voltaire to the historiography of the Enlightenment era? In what ways did his historical writings move beyond traditional religious and political narratives?
2. How did Voltaire apply historical methods and themes in his works? How did he introduce new themes such as culture, progress, and reason, moving away from traditional narratives of kings and battles?

Significance Of The Study

This research is simply an academic need to understand the philosophical approach of Voltaire. This research will guide the students and scholars to fulfil the need for understanding of Voltaire's historiography and his thoughts.

Literature Review

E. Sreedharan's *A Textbook of Historiography* covers historical writing from 500 BC to 2000 AD. It finds major changes in thought and introduces important historians. The book gives special attention to the Enlightenment and highlights Voltaire's role in changing how history was written. It places him within larger trends and recognizes his influence. However, this book only approaches a broad summary. It does not closely examine Voltaire's specific historical works or his methods in detail. The overview is useful for beginners but lacks a deeper critical analysis of his actual writings.

Will and Ariel Durant, *The Story of Civilization (The Age of Voltaire)*. This work holds great scholarly value, offering rich insight into both Voltaire and the broader context of his time. It is part of the *Story of civilization*, the admired (11-volume series) by Will and Ariel Durant. The ninth volume, *The Age of Voltaire*, is especially remarkable: it not only examines Voltaire's life and philosophy but also inserts him firmly within the wider cultural, intellectual, and social currents of the Enlightenment. In casting Voltaire as a central figure of the age, the volume illuminates both his individual influence and the larger historical dynamics that informed and were informed by his thinking. Importantly, the portrait that emerges is less than a methodological leader in historiography and more that of Voltaire as an emblematic Enlightenment thinker.

Theodore Besterman's book *Voltaire* gives a full picture of Voltaire's life and ideas. It follows his personal development and his role in the Enlightenment. The book is very thorough about his writing and philosophy. However, it does not spend much time on his new approach to history. This part of his work is not discussed in detail. As a result, readers learn a lot about Voltaire as a thinker and writer, but less about how he changed the way history was written. That side of his legacy remains mostly unexplored in this biography.

S.G. Tallentyre's *The Life of Voltaire* gives a fair and clear portrait of Voltaire as a person, his sharp mind, and his Enlightenment values. The book focuses on his strong support for reason, freedom of thought, and religious tolerance. It also shows his active role in pushing for social and legal reforms, and the lasting mark he left on European culture. However, the work does not pay much attention to Voltaire's methods as a historian or his influence on how history is written. This important part of his intellectual life is mostly left out, making the biography less complete.

Ian Davidson, *Voltaire: A Life*. This source offers an intense, well-rounded drawing of Voltaire, tracing his childhood, education, and ascent as a writer and thinker. It examines how exile and travel across Europe exposed him to new ideas and how his exchanges with fellow intellectuals shaped his philosophy. While rich in personal and intellectual detail, the work remains a biographical account rather than a historiographical analysis, emphasizing narrative over scholarly critique.

Tanvir Anjum, *Historiography: Study Guide*. This overview follows how historical writing changed over time. It looks at major shifts in methods and new ways of thinking that reshaped the field. It pays attention to the Enlightenment period and highlights the intellectual changes that helped shape modern approaches to history. The focus is on broad developments rather than deep analysis of individual historians or their works. It gives readers a clear sense of how the discipline evolved, but it does not go into detail about specific texts or methods. Overall, it serves as a helpful guide for understanding the bigger picture. Within this context, the work also discusses Voltaire, outlining his place among Enlightenment thinkers. The book gives only a brief overview of Voltaire's place in the Enlightenment without analyzing his historical work in detail.

Methodology

This research is qualitative and descriptive according to the research types and analytical in nature. The study relied on primary and secondary sources. Voltaire's historical works analyzed to explore his historical methods, themes, and writing style.

Voltaire's Historical Works

Several historical works of Voltaire are listed below:

1. History of Charles XII, 1731.
2. The Age of Louis XIV, 1751.
3. Annals of the Empire, 1753.
4. A History of the War of 1741, 1755.
5. Abridgement of Universal History, 1756.
6. Essay on General History and on the Morals and Spirit of Nations from Charlemagne to the Present Day, 1756.
7. History of Russia Under Peter the Great, Part I: 1759; Part II: 1763.
8. The Philosophy of History, 1765.
9. The Pyrrhonism of History, 1768.
10. Accurate from the Age of Louis XV, 1769.
11. A History of the Parliament of Paris, 1769.
12. Fragments on General History, 1773. Among Voltaire's historical works, the most famous are The History of Charles XII (1731) and The Age of Louis XIV (1751).

The History of Charles XII

Voltaire's first historical work was The History of Charles XII (1731). He studied documents and talked to people who knew Charles XII. The book tells the life of Charles, the king of Sweden, called the 'Lion of the North'. In the end, Voltaire said Charles was remarkable but not truly great (Sreedharan, 2004, p. 114). In the first chapter, Voltaire describes Sweden and Finland with

cold winters and short summers. The kingdom was 200 leagues wide and 300 long, up to the 55th degree north (Voltaire, 1908, p. 06).

The Swedes were strong and brave fighters. Power was shared between the King, the Council, and the Parliament to keep a balance. Voltaire also wrote about Gustavus Vasa,ⁱ who became a hero, fought unfair rulers, and brought Lutheranism.ⁱⁱ He made the king's power stronger and the government better. Voltaire also mentions Gustavus Adolphus,ⁱⁱⁱ called "the Great", who expanded Sweden by winning wars. When Charles XII became king at 15, his kingdom was safe, but his grandmother controlled the early rule (Voltaire, 1908, p. 14).

Denmark, Poland, and Russia threatened Sweden. Charles proved he was smart and brave. At 18, Charles XII changed. He attacked Denmark, Poland, and Muscovy. He quickly defeated Denmark and then beat a larger Russian army. He went to Poland to pick a new king. His council was surprised by his willpower. He lived simply and was strict. He helped his brother-in-law, the Duke of Holstein,^{iv} against Denmark and won. In Poland, he used clever moves to change power. His big challenge was Peter Alexiowitz,^v the Czar of Russia. Angry at betrayal, he attacked Narva (Narva is a historic city located in present-day Estonia, near the Russian border). Though outnumbered, he bravely led his army and used the enemy's confusion to win. After the battle, Charles XII treated captured Russians kindly (Voltaire, *History of Charles XII: King of Sweden*, 1851, pp. 44-49).

In chapter two, Voltaire wrote that Charles XII wanted to gain control of Poland by using the internal fights there. The Polish king, Augustus II, was weak and facing trouble from inside and outside the country. Charles tried to make his chosen person king of Poland, but he failed. Poland's politics were messy, with fights inside and pressure from Sweden and Russia. Charles and Augustus II both wanted power.

In chapter three, Voltaire said that Stanislaus Leszczynski,^{vi} became king after an election (Voltaire, *History of Charles XII*, 1859, pp. 267-69). Augustus II stepped down, but not everyone supported Stanislaus. He had many enemies, including Augustus II and some Poles. There were battles between the Swedish and Saxons,^{vii} with back-and-forth fighting. Sweden, Russia, and Poland sought shifting alliances, yet Czarist Russia grew ever mightier. Charles XII fought boldly, winning battles and negotiating adroitly amid constant conflict. Despite changing loyalties and persistent warfare, his resilience against swelling Russian power defined this turbulent era of Northern struggle. A major win for Charles was the Battle of Fraustadt,^{viii} where his smaller army won. He demonstrated resolve and command, engaging emperors and defending Stanislaus in Poland. Despite setbacks, he held his principles, resisted Russian power, and defied Church authority, even corresponding with Marlborough. Unyielding and politically daring, he shaped European affairs through personal conviction and fearless diplomacy.

Voltaire claimed Charles XII marched into Russia with more than 43,000 troops to battle the Czar (Voltaire, *History of Charles XII: King of Sweden*, 1908, p. 147). They surprised the Russians at Grodno^{ix} and kept chasing them. But things got hard, rivers, mud, and betrayal by Mazeppa,^x hurt their plans. Then came the Battle of Poltava, on July 8, 1709, between Charles and Peter the Great (Voltaire, *History of Charles XII: King of Sweden*, 1908, p. 169).

At first, Charles's army did okay, but then they faced cold, hunger, and lack of supplies. Charles got badly hurt, and his army made mistakes. The Russian army was stronger and smarter. Charles stayed brave, but the army was in trouble. During the battle, General Poniatowski helped Charles escape across a dangerous river. Many Swedes were captured and made slaves. The army broke apart, and Charles had to run to Turkey. He lost all the gains he made in the war.

In Chapter Five, Voltaire wrote that after the Czar won the Battle of Poltava, fights continued in Livonia^{xi} and Finland. Denmark struck Sweden, weakening its military. Internal discord and external threats mounted. A major clash between Swedish and Danish forces highlighted the courage of Sweden's local soldiers. Meanwhile, Ottoman grand viziers steered imperial policy, frequently confronting Russia in a parallel theatre of power and conflict. A prince from Moldavia,^{xii} named Dimitrie Cantemir,^{xiii} joined Russia and turned against the Ottomans. This caused a battle along the Pruth River.^{xiv}

The Russian army got stuck when Moldavia and Wallachia^{xv} supported the Ottomans. Surrounded and without food, the Russians had to agree to peace talks. Catherine I,^{xvi} helped convince Peter the Great. A treaty was signed on July 21, 1711, letting the Russians leave with their supplies (Voltaire, *History of Charles XII: King of Sweden*, 1908, p. 198). Charles XII arrived late, furious to have missed the battle against Russia, a lost opportunity he deeply resented.

In Chapter Six, Voltaire notes that Ottoman leaders ordered Charles XII to depart, yet he distrusted them and remained. Even after receiving funds for his journey, he still refused to fully withdraw. French, English, and Dutch envoys at the Porte complicated matters further. Though outnumbered, Charles and his Swedes fought valiantly. Captured for disobeying evacuation orders, he retained his composure and pride throughout.

The Pasha of Bender, Ishmael Bey,^{xvii} treated Charles well at first. Later, Charles was moved to places like Demirtash and Demotica.^{xviii} He was treated badly but stayed strong. He would not see Ottoman leaders and stayed in bed for ten months, refusing to give in. Only after French officer Villelongue intervened with the Sultan did key Ottoman leadership shifts occur.

After a gruelling secret return to Sweden, Charles XII found his empire dismantled. Augustus II had reclaimed Poland, Denmark seized Holstein, and Russia tightened its grip on the Baltic. Alone against a united front, Charles arrived in Stralsund to a hero's welcome and swiftly prepared for war. Meanwhile, Peter the Great's power swelled. On July 15, 1714, a major naval clash erupted near Aland, shifting the balance forever (Voltaire, *History of Charles XII: King of Sweden*, 1908, p. 296). Peter the Great won, captured Swedish soldiers, and was welcomed as a hero in St. Petersburg.^{xix} This showed that Russia was rising, and Sweden was falling.

Charles XII's Death

In Chapter Eight, Voltaire wrote that in 1715, Charles XII arranged a marriage between his sister, Ulrica Eleonora, and Frederic, Prince of Hesse-Cassel (a German state). The wedding happened on April 4, 1715 (Voltaire, *History of Charles XII: King of Sweden*, 1908, pp. 267-268). Sadly, Ulrica Eleonora died not long after.

Charles XII then faced many hard battles:

1. German and Danish armies tried to capture Wismar.
2. Prussian and Danish forces surrounded Stralsund.
3. Charles lost the island of Usedom to the Prussians, even though they fought hard.
4. In the Battle of Rugen, Charles led an attack but was pushed back and got injured.
5. He bravely defended Stralsund and showed strong leadership.

The people of Stralsund rallied behind Charles, aiding in the city's defence. When a bomb detonated near his quarters, he remained unshaken and escaped injury. Meanwhile, the Duke of Ormond sought an alliance with the Russian Czar, but his efforts failed. The Czar pursued his own ambitions, and external powers meddled, thwarting any potential agreement. After Charles XII was fatally shot at Fredericshall in Norway, some suspected foul play, though his death was ruled accidental. His passing soon ushered in major transformations across Sweden, shifting the nation's political and military direction forever.

1. His sister became queen, and Sweden created a more democratic government (Voltaire, *History of Charles XII: King of Sweden*, 1908, p. 310).
2. Baron de Gortz,^{xx} one of Charles's top advisors, was blamed for many things and sentenced to death by the Stockholm Senate. This chapter shows the final years of Charles XII, his struggles in war, and how Sweden changed after his death.

The Age of Louis XIV

Voltaire wrote *The Age of Louis XIV* in 1751. He wanted his book to be correct, but his main goal was to show how culture, art, science, and daily life changed under King Louis XIV. He respected poets, painters, and scientists for their creative work. He also admired the king for backing and encouraging all these talented people (Sreedharan, 2004, p. 115).

The book looks at Louis XIV's rule and how it changed France and Europe. Voltaire also describes Europe before Louis XIV's wars, rivalries, and changing alliances. He shows how power shifted through talks and fighting. He also covers Louis's early years, when his mother, Queen Anne, and Cardinal Mazarin ruled France for him (Voltaire, *The Age of Louis XIV*, 1779, pp. 25-26).

Voltaire wrote about the power fights and secret plots during the regency. These events helped shape Louis into a strong king. He also described the Fronde, a series of civil wars from 1648 to 1653, when Louis was still young. These wars showed France was deeply divided. Voltaire covered French history until Mazarin died in 1661 (Voltaire, *The Age of Louis XIV*, 1779, pp. 39 & 63-65).

He showed how things changed when Louis XIV took full power. Louis wanted full control and didn't rely much on ministers. Known as the "Sun King," he ruled directly and tried to make his power stronger in every part of government. In *The Age of Louis XIV*, Voltaire talked about France's expansion during Louis XIV's reign. He told the story of how Flanders was taken over. He showed that Louis made France more powerful by using both fighting and peaceful talks. Voltaire also wrote about another takeover of Franche-Comté in 1668. In both cases, Louis used clever methods to expand French control in Europe (Voltaire, *The Age of Louis XIV*, 1922, pp. 81-82).

This area was in eastern France, near Switzerland and Savoy.^{xxi} Voltaire showed how Louis XIV used clever wars and politics to gain power. He admired the king for making France strong, wealthy, and admired. Louis built grand works and displayed

France's glory through art and culture. Voltaire wrote about the Glorious Campaign, known as the Nine Years' War from 1688 to 1697. In this war, many European countries (like England, Spain, and the Dutch Republic) joined together to fight France. Voltaire explained Louis XIV's role as a strong military leader and how this war shaped Europe.

He also wrote about the time between the death of Marshal Turenne^{xxiii} in 1675 and the Peace of Nijmegen in 1678.^{xxiii} Voltaire showed how France kept fighting and making deals to stay powerful during these difficult years in Europe. In *The Age of Louis XIV*, Voltaire wrote about many key events in Europe during Louis XIV's rule. He discussed the capture of Strasbourg,^{xxiv} which happened on 30 September 1681, when French forces took the city from the Holy Roman Empire (Voltaire, *The Age of Louis XIV*, 1922, p. 128).

Voltaire showed how this event fit into Louis XIV's plan to grow French land and power in Europe. Voltaire also described how King James II of England was removed by his son-in-law, William III of Orange. James went into exile in France, protected by Louis XIV. Voltaire used this story to explain the power struggles in Europe and Louis XIV's role in supporting other rulers. He likely covered events in mainland Europe from 1688 to 1697 (Voltaire, *The Age of Louis XIV*, 1901, p. 241).

During the Nine Years' War, William III ruled England, Scotland, and Ireland, while Europe saw many battles. Voltaire explained the military and diplomatic efforts of that time and how they affected Europe. Voltaire also mentioned the Treaty of Savoy, also called the Treaty of Turin, signed in 1696 between Louis XIV and Victor Amadeus II, Duke of Savoy (Voltaire, *The Age of Louis XIV*, 1901). The treaty exemplified Louis XIV's skill at using diplomacy and strategic deals to navigate European politics. Voltaire also chronicled another major conflict, namely the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714), a sprawling war that had a lasting impact on the continent. In his writings, Voltaire detailed how this conflict fundamentally reshaped the European balance of power during the final decades of Louis's reign.

Voltaire also discussed the Battle of Blenheim (also called Hochstadt), fought on 13 August 1704 (Voltaire, *The Age of Louis XIV*, 1901, p. 36). The Grand Alliance, under the joint command of the Duke of Marlborough and Prince Eugene of Savoy, dealt a decisive blow to the Franco-Bavarian forces. As Voltaire later articulated, this catastrophic defeat severely undermined France's war effort and significantly eroded the authority of Louis XIV. Through his work *The Age of Louis XIV*, Voltaire used key historical events to illustrate how the king's rule transformed both France and the broader European landscape. He looked at both the wins and the losses of France. He paid close attention to the costly failures during the War of the Spanish Succession. Voltaire wrote about the defeats at Ramillies and Turin. He also described the other troubles that hurt France and Spain. He believed these losses made both countries weaker. They also changed the balance of power across Europe. In the end, these events made peace necessary. Through his writing, Voltaire clearly showed how power shifted between nations. He helped readers understand the changing political situation on the continent. His work gave a clear picture of Europe's new order after the war.

As the War went on, Louis XIV wanted peace because France was getting weaker and alone. Voltaire described the king's struggles in war and talks. He praised Marshal Villars for winning the Battle of Denain on July 24, 1712, (Voltaire, *The Age of Louis XIV*, 1901, p. 99). This was a big win for France and helped improve its situation near the end of the war. He also gave a detailed view of Europe from the Peace of Utrecht in 1713^{xxv} to Louis XIV's death in 1715. This part of the book shows how Europe settled down after years of war and what happened in politics, culture, and diplomacy during Louis's final years.

In his history of Louis XIV, Voltaire used vivid stories and personal details not just for fun, but to show the king's character and court life. He also studied France's legal system, economy, army, and navy, giving a complete view of the state. He looked at taxes, money problems, and how order was kept. Voltaire showed that the kingdom was strong and well-run. He also praised Louis XIV for supporting science, art, and literature. The king helped great thinkers and artists, and Voltaire admired this cultural growth. His work covered both the ruler and the whole nation.

Voltaire discussed religious issues, including Calvinism,^{xxvi} Jansenism,^{xxvii} and Quietism.^{xxviii} These movements caused debates and conflicts and shaped France's religious life during the 17th century. Finally, Voltaire believed that history should be written like a philosopher. In 1738, he said, "One must write history as a philosopher" (Sreedharan, 2004, p. 115), meaning history should be thoughtful and full of understanding, not just a list of events. Through all these topics, Voltaire gave readers a deep and rich look at Louis XIV's time, both in power and culture.

Conclusion

The historical masterpieces of Voltaire in the historiography of the Enlightenment era were "The History of Charles XII" and "The Age of Louis XIV." Voltaire discussed the history of Charles XII, Sweden and Finland as a kingdom, its area, climate and people, the initial wars of Charles XII, in which he became successful. Then he discussed the election of the new king of Poland and the wars of Charles XII with Russia. He provides information about the tussle between Charles XII and Ottoman forces. He showed himself to be unsuccessful in the last battles. After the defeats in the wars, Voltaire discussed the weakness of Sweden.

Lastly, Voltaire discussed the death of Charles XII and the changes after his death in Sweden. In “The Age of Louis XIV”, Voltaire not only wrote about politics and wars, but he also wrote about art, culture and how people thought. Voltaire thought highly of people who were good at creating beautiful things like poetry, paintings, and new ideas in science. The historical masterpieces of Voltaire in the historiography of the Enlightenment era were “The History of Charles XII” and “The Age of Louis XIV.” Voltaire discussed the history of Charles XII, Sweden and Finland as a kingdom, its area, climate and people, the initial wars of Charles XII, in which he became successful. Then he discussed the election of the new king of Poland and the wars of Charles XII with Russia. He provides information about the tussle between Charles XII and Ottoman forces. He showed himself to be unsuccessful in the last battles. After the defeats in the wars, Voltaire discussed the weakness of Sweden. Lastly, Voltaire discussed the death of Charles XII and the changes after his death in Sweden.

In “The Age of Louis XIV”, Voltaire not only wrote about politics and wars, but he also wrote about art, culture and how people thought. Voltaire thought highly of people who were good at creating beautiful things like poetry, paintings, and new ideas in science. He admired King Louis XIV because he supported and celebrated these kinds of talented people. In the work “The Age of Louis XIV”, Voltaire provides information about the introduction of different states of Europe, the minority of Louis XIV, the civil wars in France, and the policy of expansion during the rule of Louis XIV. Lastly, Voltaire wrote about the various aspects of the internal government of France. He detailed advancement and cultural achievement in science, literature, and art. Finally, in his work “The Age of Louis XIV”, he discussed various religious movements of the time. In 1738, Voltaire established a new principle: One must write history as a philosopher.

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Notes

ⁱ Gustavus Vasa was not a contemporary of Charles XII. Instead, Gustavus Vasa was a Swedish statesman who was instrumental in freeing Sweden from Danish control in the early 16th century. He later became King Gustav I of Sweden and is frequently called the “Father of the Nation.”

ⁱⁱ Lutheranism is a segment of Protestant Christianity based on the teachings of Martin Luther, a German monk and theologian from the 16th century. It highlights the Bible's authority, the belief in justification through faith alone, and the concept of the priesthood of all believers.

ⁱⁱⁱ Gustavus Adolphus was a Swedish king who reigned during the 17th century. He was known for his military reforms and successful campaigns during the Thirty Years' War.

^{iv} A Duke was a title given to a nobleman who held power over a specific territory, and Holstein was a region in northern Germany and southern Denmark.

^v Peter Alexiowitz was a prominent Russian Czar who ruled from 1696 to 1725. He is known for his efforts to modernize Russia.

- ^{vi} Stanislaus Leszczyński was a Polish nobleman who served as King of Poland from 1704 until his abdication in 1709. He was later exiled to France after his abdication.
- ^{vii} Saxon” typically refers to someone or something related to the German state of Saxony.
- ^{viii} The Battle of Fraustadt, also referred to as the Battle of Wschowa, occurred in 1706 during the Great Northern War. It was a conflict between the Swedish army, commanded by Charles XII of Sweden, and the coalition forces of Saxony and Russia.
- ^{ix} Grodno, alternatively spelt Hrodna, is a city located in western Belarus. With a history that stretches back to the Middle Ages, it has served as a significant hub for trade, culture, and administration in the area.
- ^x Mazepa was a Ukrainian nobleman recognized for his involvement in the Great Northern War. He is notably remembered for forming an alliance with Charles XII of Sweden in opposition to Czar Peter I of Russia.
- ^{xi} Livonia refers to a historical region in Eastern Europe. Livonia was a part of the Swedish Empire and later became a battleground in the Great Northern War.
- ^{xii} Moldavia, historically known as Moldova, is a region situated in Eastern Europe, primarily encompassing the territory of the present-day Eastern Romania and parts of Moldova.
- ^{xiii} Dimitrie Cantemir was a notable Moldavian statesman, scholar, and writer from the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Born in 1673 into Moldavia's ruling family, he served as the prince of Moldavia from 1710 to 1711 and later became an advisor to Peter the Great of Russia.
- ^{xiv} Pruth River, which is in Eastern Europe and flows through parts of modern-day Ukraine and Moldova, ultimately empties into the Danube River
- ^{xv} Wallachia refers to a historical region located in what is now Southern Romania. Wallachia was one of the three principalities, along with Moldavia and Transylvania, that made up the historical territory of Romania.
- ^{xvi} Catherine I is noted as the spouse of Peter the Great of Russia. Following Peter's death in 1725, she ascended to the role of Empress of Russia, governing from 1725 until her own death in 1727.
- ^{xvii} The Pasha of Bender refers to the Governor of Bender, and Ismael Bey was an official and commander during the time of Charles XII's stay in Bender. Ismael Bey played a role in negotiating with Charles XII and facilitating his stay in Bender during his exile.
- ^{xviii} Demirtash and Demotica are names of places. Demirtash is a Turkish fortress at a river junction, while Demotica is a town in Greece near the Turkish border
- ^{xix} St. Petersburg refers to the newly founded Russian city established by Peter the Great in 1703.
- ^{xx} Baron de Gortz was a significant figure during the reign of Charles XII of Sweden, acting as a diplomat, financier, and advisor to the king.
- ^{xxi} The Duchy of Savoy was a historical state in the Western Alps that existed from the early 11th century until 1860. It encompassed parts of modern-day Italy, France, and Switzerland.
- ^{xxii} Marshal Turenne was a renowned French military leader during the rule of Louis XIV. He served during the Thirty Years' War and later in various conflicts under Louis XIII and Louis XIV.
- ^{xxiii} The Peace of Nijmegen was a collection of treaties concluded in the Dutch city of Nijmegen between 1678 and 1679. These agreements brought an end to several conflicts stemming from the Franco-Dutch War (1672-1678) and broader ongoing European disputes. The treaties were signed by multiple European powers, including France, the Dutch Republic, Spain, and various German states. (For more details, see (Voltaire, *The Age of Louis XIV*, 1922, pp. 117-27).
- ^{xxiv} Strasbourg is a city situated in the Alsace region of France, near the Rhine River and close to the German border.
- ^{xxv} The Peace of Utrecht, named after the city of Utrecht in the Netherlands, was signed in 1713 and concluded the War of the Spanish Succession. The treaty sought to address several territorial and succession issues that emerged following the death of the Spanish king Charles II.
- ^{xxvi} Calvinism is a branch of protestant Christianity named after the theologian John Calvin. It says that God oversees everything, including who gets saved.
- ^{xxvii} Jansenism was a theological movement within Roman Catholicism, especially prominent in France during the 17th and 18th centuries. Named after Cornelius Jansen, a Dutch Roman Catholic bishop, Jansenism focused on original sin, human depravity, and the essential need for divine grace for salvation, bearing similarities to certain elements of Calvinism.
- ^{xxviii} Quietism was a spiritual movement within Christianity, particularly prominent in the 17th century, which emphasized inner stillness, passivity, and the contemplation of God.