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Julian Strube

SOCIALISM AND
ESOTERICISM IN JULY
MONARCHY FRANCE

If it seems strange to inquire about the relationship between socialism and esotericism, this is only so because the history of early socialism has rarely been an object of research in the field of religious studies. After the disastrous outcome of the February Revolution of 1848, the French socialist “schools” (*écoles*) that had been predominant under the July Monarchy—especially Saint-Simonism, Fourierism, and the “Icarian Communism” of Etienne Cabet—have been eclipsed by other socialist currents whose attitude toward religion was at least critical. Denounced as “utopian socialism” by Engels and Marx in *Das Kommunistische Manifest* and their subsequent writings, the doctrines of the July Monarchy socialists soon obtained the status of mere “predecessors” of a socialism that had yet to emancipate itself from its juvenile illusions. For many socialist historians and theoreticians, the topic of “religion” became a matter of particular embarrassment. In the twentieth century, after the October Revolution and two world wars, the religious ideas of the French socialists were usually marginalized or ridiculed.¹ In contrast, a number of valuable studies have shown the central importance of the relationship between socialism and religion.² In fact,

¹ For example, George D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1959), 56; Frank Edward Manuel, *The Prophets of Paris*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 152, 63–64, 84; George Lichtheim, *The Origins of Socialism* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 8–10, 54.

² See, e.g., Henri Desroche, “Messianismes et utopies: Notes sur les origines du socialisme occidental,” *Archives des Sciences Sociales des Religions* 8 (1959): 31–46; Frank Paul Bowman, “Religion, Politics and Utopia in French Romanticism,” *Australian Journal of French Studies* 11, no. 3 (1974): 307–24; Paul Bénichou, *Le temps des prophètes. Doctrines de l’âge*

socialist ideas have played a significant role for the emergence of new religious identities in the nineteenth century and consequently deserve more attention from a religious studies perspective than has been the case so far.³

When the followers of the two major founding fathers of French socialism, Henri Saint-Simon (1760–1825) and Charles Fourier (1772–1837), developed into organized movements in the early 1830s, religion was central in the formation of a “socialist” identity. This was no coincidence. In his famous *Nouveau christianisme* in 1825, Saint-Simon had openly declared himself a prophet who would realize “true” Christianity.⁴ This New Christianity would be both a return to the unadulterated doctrine of Christ and the fulfillment of a progressive providential evolution into a new, rational, scientific, *positif* form of religion. It has later been argued that this idea was an aberration from Saint-Simon’s earlier “rational” thought, or that it was a “religion” only in a superficial, pragmatic way.⁵ However, the *Nouveau christianisme* was the result of a development that can be traced back to Saint-Simon’s earliest writings.⁶ From the beginning, religion played a key role in the emergence of his social thought.

Certainly many of his disciples understood Saint-Simonism as an essentially religious doctrine. After the death of Saint-Simon, they declared themselves the “apostles” of their “Messiah” or “Revelator,” and turned their school into a “church,” the *église saint-simonienne*. Saint-Amand Bazard (1791–

romantique (Paris: Gallimard, 1977); Gareth Stedman Jones, “Utopian Socialism Reconsidered,” in *People’s History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel, History Workshop Series (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 138–45; Edward Berenson, *Populist Religion and Left-Wing Politics in France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); Frank Paul Bowman, *Le Christ des barricades* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1987); Pamela M. Pilbeam, *French Socialists before Marx: Workers, Women, and the Social Question in France* (Teddington: Acumen, 2000), 39–53; Iorwerth J. Prothero, *Religion and Radicalism in July Monarchy France: The French Catholic Church of the Abbé Chatel*, Studies in French Civilization (Lewiston, ME: Mellen, 2005); Pierre Musso, *La religion du monde industriel: Analyse de la pensée de Saint-Simon* (La Tour d’Aigues: Editions de l’Aube, 2006); Lynn L. Sharp, *Secular Spirituality: Reincarnation and Spiritism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006); Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch, *Religiöse Hingabe oder soziale Freiheit: Die saint-simonistische Theorie und die Hegelsche Sozialphilosophie* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2007).

³ Compare Julian Strube, “Socialist Religion and the Emergence of Occultism: A Genealogical Approach to Socialism and Secularization in 19th-Century France,” *Religion* 46, no. 3 (2016): 359–88.

⁴ Henri Saint-Simon, *Nouveau christianisme: Dialogues entre un conservateur et un novateur* (Paris: Bossange/Sautelet, 1825), 87–88: “je suis convaincu que moi-même j’accomplis une mission divine en rappelant les peuples et les rois au véritable esprit du christianisme.”

⁵ See, e.g., the seminal study by Frank Edward Manuel, *The New World of Henri Saint-Simon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 260.

⁶ Emile Durkheim, *Le socialisme: Sa définition, ses débuts, la doctrine Saint-Simonienne* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1971), 208–18; Henri Desroche, *Le nouveau christianisme et les écrits sur la religion* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1969), 5–44; Musso, *La religion*, 247–81; cf. the more cautious assessment by Antoine Picon, “La religion saint-simonienne,” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 87, no. 1 (2003): 23–37.

1832) and Prosper Enfantin (1796–1864) were chosen as “Supreme Fathers.” In highly successful public lectures, the apostles of the *religion saint-simonienne* heralded the Golden Age that would bring a final “synthesis” of religion, science, and philosophy, as well as a *unité* of the religious and political orders.⁷ This *association universelle*, a hierarchical order led by a class of priests, would fulfill the *perfectibilité* of humanity and result in nothing less than the creation of the Kingdom of God on Earth. After several schisms, quarrels, and interventions by the authorities, the *église* was put to an end as early as 1831, but its ideas and members remained influential.⁸

Soon the Fourierist *école sociétaire* rose to the ranks of the leading socialist movement. Fourier’s attitude toward the Christianity of the churches had always been hostile, although he had at the same time called for the realization of a scientific religion and regarded himself as the successor of both Isaac Newton and Jesus Christ.⁹ By the end of the 1830s, his most important disciples had begun to express their reformist ideas in religious language and openly identified as Christians.¹⁰ Victor Considerant (1808–93), who became the leading figure of the *école sociétaire*, introduced the second volume of his famous *Destinée sociale* (1838)—a writing that was significantly more widely read than the publications of Fourier—with a chapter about “The Doctrine of Salvation and the Return to the Christianity of Jesus Christ” that denounced the allegedly corrupted doctrines of the churches and called for the restoration of “the unity of the social and religious law.” The goal of this law would be to overcome “the separation of the worldly and the spiritual,” and thus lead humanity to salvation *on Earth* by the realization of justice, love, brotherhood, harmony, and association.¹¹

⁷ See the compilation in *Religion saint-simonienne*, 2 vols. (Paris: Aux Bureaux du Globe, 1832), e.g., 1:13–14, 2:53–54, and 2:233. Also see Prosper Enfantin, *Religion saint-simonienne: Cérémonie du 27 novembre* (Paris: Au bureau du Globe, 1831).

⁸ The development of the Saint-Simonian school is best described in the classic studies by Georges Weill, *L’Ecole saint-simonienne: Son histoire, son influence jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris: Alcan, 1896); Henry-René d’Allemagne, *Les Saint-Simoniens, 1827–1837* (Caen: Malherbe, 1930); and Sébastien Charléty, *Histoire du Saint-simonisme, 1825–1864* (Paris: Hartmann, 1931). Compare Manuel, *The Prophets of Paris* and the recent overview by Pamela M. Pilbeam, *Saint-Simoniens in Nineteenth-Century France: From Free Love to Algeria* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁹ Jonathan Beecher, *Charles Fourier: The Visionary and His World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 334; Bowman, *Le Christ*, 181. Usually Fourier’s ideas about religion are merely regarded as a “logical axiom” and a “beneficial illusion.” See, e.g., Claude Morilhat, “Charles Fourier, Dieu, la religion,” *Cahiers Charles Fourier* 5 (1994): 17–27. Fourier’s rationalistic understanding of religion would deserve a closer and more nuanced examination that takes into account the very fact that Fourier argued for a synthesis of religion and science resulting in a new form of religion.

¹⁰ Jonathan Beecher, “Fourierism and Christianity,” *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 22, nos. 3/4 (1994): 391–403.

¹¹ Victor Considerant, *Destinée sociale*, 3 vols. (Paris: Au bureau de la Phalange, 1838), 2: xli–lxxxvi.

By the early 1840s, this religious self-understanding was constitutive of socialist discourse. The socialist Pierre Leroux (1797–1871), who had coined the term *socialisme* in 1833/34—originally in a rather derogative way as the opposite extreme of *individualisme*—noted in 1847 that the term had come to describe every form of *démocratie religieuse*.¹² Most socialists regarded themselves as Christians but were hostile toward the established forms of Christianity. Even those expressly identifying as “Catholics” showed themselves highly critical of the church, or at least of its status quo.¹³ They shared a belief in the imminent realization of “true” Christianity, the creation of the Kingdom of God on Earth, the unity of the political and the religious orders, and the synthesis of religion, science, and philosophy. They saw themselves struggling not only against the government, the upper classes, and the clergy, but also against the destructive individualism, egoism, materialism, and atheism that had allegedly been produced by the excesses of Enlightenment philosophy and had shattered social bonds.

The historical influences of those ideas have been discussed especially within the scholarship on Romanticism.¹⁴ Clearly the Romantic critique of the Enlightenment and the wish for an authentic universal religion form a large part of the background of July Monarch socialism—it is telling that the Saint-Simonian “priests” were identified as artists.¹⁵ It has also been noted that Catholic discourse constituted a decisive influence on socialist ideas, be it in the vein of the Catholic Traditionalism of Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821),¹⁶ or in the vein of a younger generation of so-called Neo-Catholic thinkers surrounding the priest Félicité Lamennais (1782–1854).¹⁷

¹² Pierre Leroux, “De l’individualisme et du socialisme,” in *Œuvres de Pierre Leroux (1825–1850)* (Paris: Société typographique, 1850), 376. For the origin of the word *socialisme*, see Jacques Gans, “L’origine du mot ‘socialiste’ et ses emplois les plus anciens,” *Revue d’histoire économique et sociale* 30 (1957): 79–83; cf. Carl Grünberg, “Der Ursprung der Worte ‘Sozialismus’ und ‘Sozialist,’” *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung* 2 (1912): 372–79.

¹³ The most prominent Catholic socialists were Philippe Buchez and the Abbé Châtel. See François-André Isambert, *Buchez ou l’âge théologique de la sociologie*, Genèses (Paris: Editions Cujas, 1967), and Prothero, *Religion and Radicalism*.

¹⁴ For a concise summary, see Jonathan Beecher, *Victor Considerant and the Rise and Fall of French Romantic Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 1–9. Important pioneering studies include, among those by Bowman and Bénichou, Herbert J. Hunt, *Le socialisme et le romantisme en France: Etude de la presse socialiste de 1830 à 1848* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1935); David Owen Evans, *Le socialisme romantique: Pierre Leroux et ses contemporains* (Paris: M. Rivière, 1948), and *Social Romanticism in France, 1830–1848* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951).

¹⁵ Socialist ideas were extremely popular not only among the old generation of Romantics (who, like Lamartine, sometimes took a leading role in the social reform context), but especially among the young artists of the July Monarchy. See, e.g., Hunt, *Socialisme et romantisme*, 339.

¹⁶ Carolina Armenteros, *The French Idea of History: Joseph de Maistre and His Heirs, 1794–1854* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 283–314.

¹⁷ Strube, “Socialist Religion,” 9–10; cf. Julian Strube, “Ein neues Christentum: Frühsozialismus, Neo-Katholizismus und die Einheit von Religion und Wissenschaft,” *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 66, no. 2 (2014): 140–62. For the Neo-Catholic context,

Very little is known, however, about the actual characteristics of the various forms of socialist religion. Remarkably, many contemporary sources described the particular religiosity articulated by the socialists with the terms *mysticisme*, *théosophie*, and *illuminisme*. Literally all French studies about the socialists in France that have been published between the mid-1830s and the early 1850s employed such descriptions to discuss the Saint-Simonian and Fourierist doctrines. Observers from the other side of the Rhine and the English Channel came to similar conclusions. It is well known that Friedrich Engels (1820–95), writing from London, expressed his scorn for the “unintelligible mysticism” of the Saint-Simonians and the Fourierists.¹⁸ The socialist Karl Grün (1817–87) referred to Pierre Leroux as “theosophist,”¹⁹ and the liberal Lorenz von Stein (1815–90), in his seminal study about the social movements in France, discussed a current of “theosophical socialism.”²⁰ However, it remains unclear what those contemporaries meant when they referred to the socialists as mystics, theosophists, or *illuminés*, and why they did so in the first place. Have the socialists merely been denounced as irrational mystics in a polemical context, or have they actually been interested in such ideas? If yes, what exactly were those ideas? Why were they of interest for social reformers?

If socialists have indeed been interested in *mysticisme*, *théosophie*, and *illuminisme*, the question arises if the early French socialists could be regarded as “esotericists,” because those signifiers are, from today’s perspective, clearly related to esotericism. The term *ésotérisme* appeared in French as late as in the 1820s and was only frequently employed in the second half of the century. Consequently, it must be kept in mind that the meaning of that signifier was anything but clear, and as a matter of fact is still being debated.²¹ However,

see also Carol E. Harrison, *Romantic Catholics: France’s Postrevolutionary Generation in Search of a Modern Faith* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 111–48, and the seminal study by Jean-René Derré, *Lamennais, ses amis et le mouvement des idées à l’époque romantique* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1962).

¹⁸ Friedrich Engels, “Progress of Social Reform on the Continent,” in *MEGA I*, 3 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1985), 496–500. Engels was much more sympathetic toward the Fourierists, who were, in his eyes, more scientific but nonetheless infected by mysticism.

¹⁹ Karl Grün, *Die soziale Bewegung in Frankreich und Belgien* (Darmstadt: Carl Wilhelm Leske, 1845), 105–11. See also his article about “Theologie und Sozialismus,” in *Rheinische Jahrbücher zur gesellschaftlichen Reform*, ed. Hermann Püttmann (Konstanz: Verlagsbuchhandlung zu Belle-Vue, 1846).

²⁰ Lorenz von Stein, *Geschichte der sozialen Bewegung in Frankreich von 1789 bis auf unsere Tage*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1850), 2:421–27.

²¹ Regarding the discussion, see Michael Bergunder, “What Is Esotericism? Cultural Studies Approaches and the Problems of Definition in Religious Studies,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 22 (2010): 9–36; Kocku von Stuckrad, *Locations of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Esoteric Discourse and Western Identities* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), and *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

a relevant connection between socialism and esotericism is indeed indicated on a semantic level. None other than Pierre Leroux has prominently employed the term *ésotérisme* in his famous *De l'humanité* (1840).²² Maurice La Châtre (1814–1900), an influential socialist publisher who later edited *Das Kapital*, defined the word *ésotérisme* in his *Dictionnaire universel* (1853) as “a philosophical ensemble of a secret doctrine, communicated only to affiliates. A fraction of the Saint-Simonians wanted to turn the elevated part of their doctrine into a kind of esotericism.”²³ This indicates that contemporaries thought of some socialists as esotericists.

The relationship between socialism and esotericism has been addressed by several scholars in the context of spiritualism and occultism in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially at the fin de siècle. It has been shown that many esotericists at that time were highly interested in socialist ideas.²⁴ But barely any attention has been paid to the context of pre-1848 socialism.²⁵ This is particularly important because scholars have usually regarded the histories of socialism and esotericism separately, with certain overlaps only taking place individually in the second half of the nineteenth century. The interest of fin de siècle occultists or spiritualists in socialist ideas appears in a different light, however, if pre-1848 socialists had already shared an interest in the same kind of mystical or theosophical authors. It is known that numerous Saint-Simonians and Fourierists became enthusiastic spiritualists or occultists after 1848, and that both currents—at least in France—heavily relied on the doctrines of Fourier, Leroux, and other social-

²² Jean-Pierre Laurant, *L'ésotérisme chrétien en France au XIXe siècle* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1992), 19–20; cf. Laurant, “Esoterisme et socialisme 1830–1914,” *Revue Française d'Histoire des Idées Politiques* 23 (2006): 147. However, it is not correct that Leroux can be credited with the “paternity” of the term *ésotérisme*, as suggested by Laurant.

²³ Maurice La Châtre, ed., *Le dictionnaire universel: Panthéon littéraire et encyclopédie illustrée*, 2 vols. (Paris: Administration de Librairie, 1853), 1:1446: “Esotérisme, s. m. (du gr. *eisothēō* [εἰσοθεῶ], je fais entrer). Philos. Ensemble des principes d'une doctrine secrète, communiquée seulement à des affiliés. Une fraction des saint-simoniens voulait faire de la partie élevée de leur doctrine une sorte d'ésotérisme.” Compare Laurant, *L'ésotérisme*, 133.

²⁴ In addition to the article by Laurant, see especially the contributions to the special issue of *Political Hermetica* 9 (1995), as well as James Webb, *The Flight from Reason* (London: Macdonald, 1971); Ulrich Linse, *Geisterseher und Wunderwirker: Heilssuche im Industriezeitalter* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1996); David Allen Harvey, *Beyond Enlightenment: Occultism and Politics in Modern France* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005); Sharp, *Secular Spirituality*, 91–122; John Warne Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith: Mesmerism, Spiritism, and Occultism in Modern France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 48–63; Matthew Beaumont, “Socialism and Occultism at the Fin de Siècle: Elective Affinities,” *Victorian Review* 36, no. 1 (2010): 217–32.

²⁵ The rich scholarship on French Romanticism has discussed many of the relevant aspects, however. See especially the classic study of Auguste Viatte, *Victor Hugo et les illumineés de son temps* (Montreal: Les Éditions de l'Arbre, 1942). Next to the works of Bowman and Bénichou, the studies by Ernest Seillière, Georges Brunet, Léon Cellier, Brian Juden, and Yves Vadé may be mentioned here.

ist thinkers.²⁶ Can certain socialist ideas, then, be seen as precursors of spiritualism and occultism?

In order to understand this relationship, the present article seeks to clarify what “esotericism” in the context of July Monarchy socialism meant, by discussing the employment of the signifiers *mysticisme*, *théosophie*, or *illuminationisme* and placing them in their historical context.²⁷ This will first be carried out on the basis of contemporary historiographies that regarded socialism and communism as the outcome of a heretical religious tradition. Second, the term *ésotérisme* in the work of Pierre Leroux will be examined in the context of the contemporary debates about the origin of Christianity. It will then be discussed why Saint-Simonians and Fourierists were attracted by certain theosophical ideas, and how they understood them. It will be argued that many socialists were indeed enthusiastic about mystical or theosophical ideas, but that those ideas did not constitute a single “esoteric tradition.” Instead, the French socialists actively took part in discourses about the meaning of religion and its place in postrevolutionary society, thus contributing to a pluralization of new religious identities since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

CONTEMPORARY HISTORIOGRAPHIES OF SOCIALISM

At the end of the 1830s, the liberal author Louis Reybaud (1799–1879) wrote a series of articles in the *Revue des deux mondes*, later published in book form as *Études sur les réformateurs ou socialistes modernes* (1840). This highly influential work, which saw no less than seven editions until 1864, was the first to subsume the Saint-Simonians, Fourierists, and the British Owenists under the term *socialistes*. Reybaud noted the great differences between the different socialist systems but declared that they shared the striving for a *science universelle*, an unprecedented *synthèse* whose aim was nothing less than divination. According to Reybaud, the socialists were

²⁶ It should be noted that Fourierist doctrines had already played a key role in the emergence of US-American Spiritualism, for example, in the works of Andrew Jackson Davis. See Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007). For the German context, see Daniel Cyranka, “Religious Revolutionaries and Spiritualism in Germany Around 1848,” *Aries* 16, no. 1 (2016): 13–48.

²⁷ This follows a genealogical, poststructuralist approach that is mainly based on Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 139–64; Michael Bergunder, “What Is Religion? The Unexplained Subject Matter of Religious Studies,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 26 (2014): 3–55; Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2001); Ernesto Laclau, “Why Do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?,” in *The Lesser Evil and the Greater Good: The Theory and Politics of Social Diversity*, ed. Jeffrey Weeks (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1994), 167–78, and *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005).

“philosophers, legislators, religious revelators, political and industrial organizers, moralists, philanthropists, and economists.” Consequently, the socialists were not merely seen as politicians or economists, but as the title of the study indicates, as religious *réformateurs* who were discussed by Reybaud in the same context as contemporary Christian reformist movements in England, France, and Germany.²⁸ Reybaud regarded the Saint-Simonians as the heirs, not only of the revolutionary Theophilanthropy,²⁹ but also of a certain religious tradition that had already been represented by the kabbalists: “In the spheres of mysticism and illuminism they copied, without mastering them, Saint-Martin and Swedenborg; in their theogony they touched upon the ancient pantheism; in their theocracy they imitated the Hierophants, the Brahmans, the Mages, the Druids, the Skalds.”³⁰ In an article “about the communist ideas and sects,” published in 1842, Reybaud expressed similar opinions about the communists. He regarded them as the successors of a long tradition of “mystics” that stretched back to the medieval chiliasts and millenarists, to the Moravians, Anabaptists, to the adherents of John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, and Thomas Müntzer, and finally to the Therapeutae, Essenes, Philo, and Josephus.³¹ This heretical genealogy might seem remarkable from a present day’s perspective, but it was common sense among contemporary historiographers. Similar versions can be found in practically all critical or polemical studies of socialism and communism: in Alfred Sudre’s *Histoire du communisme ou Réfutation historique des utopies socialistes* (1848), Adolphe Franck’s *Le communisme jugé par l’histoire* (1848), and Jean Joseph Thonissen’s *Le socialisme depuis l’antiquité jusqu’à la constitution française du 14 janvier 1852* (1852). All those authors traced back socialist and communist ideas to the late ancient context of the School of Alexandria and the Gnostics whose ideas were handed down to medieval heretics and eventually to early modern theosophists, whose main exponents were Jakob Böhme (1575–1624), Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), and Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743–1803).³²

²⁸ Louis Reybaud, *Études sur les réformateurs contemporains ou socialistes modernes* (Paris: Guillaumin et Compagnie, 1840), VII, 303–4.

²⁹ During the French Revolution, Théophilanthropie had been an attempt to establish a “philanthropic” cult on the basis of a “natural religion.” The idea was later taken up by Saint-Simonians. See Manuel, *New World*, 122–23.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

³¹ “Des idées et des sectes communistes,” in *Revue des deux mondes* (Paris: Au Bureau de la Revue des deux mondes, 1842), 12–18. The differentiations between socialism and communism were unclear at the time and remain so up to the present day. In the early 1840s the terms were often used interchangeably, although many socialists quickly began to distance themselves from the plans for the abolishment of private property, a major characteristic of communism.

³² These highly diverse authors did not form a single “theosophical” tradition but were only grouped together in retrospect. The “Martinist” current of Saint-Martin and Martines de Pasqually, which will be discussed in more detailed below, was especially influential in France. For a concise overview of those currents, see Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism*.

Such narratives of tradition also formed part of controversial identity formations *within* the social reform movements. This can be exemplified by the passionate polemics of the Italian federalist democrat Giuseppe Ferrari (1811–76), who denounced the Fourierists as “mystical” enthusiasts whose ideas could be traced back to the Rosicrucians and practitioners of the *sciences occultes*: of magic, astrology, and alchemy. To prove his point, Ferrari propounded a tradition starting with Moses, Hermes Trismegistus, Jesus Christ, Apollonius of Tyana, Salomon, Orpheus, and “the magicians,” including Guillaume Postel, Jakob Böhme, Paracelsus, Robert Fludd, Raimundus Lullus, and Francis Bacon.³³ Similar to Reybaud, Ferrari accused the Fourierists and the Saint-Simonians of *mysticisme* and *illuminisme*, enthusiastic errors that resulted from their reception of the theosophists Böhme, Swedenborg, and Saint-Martin, but also of the philosophies of Schlegel and de Maistre.³⁴

The picture gains in complexity as several social reformers have taken up the same narratives in a positive way. The most impressive example can be found in the *Histoire des Montagnards* (1847) by Alphonse Esquiros (1812–76).³⁵ The radical socialist described a rebellious tradition of *démocratie évangélique* beginning with Jesus Christ, which had struggled against the “barbaric” alliance of the clergy and the kings ever since. Esquiros clearly named the exponents of that tradition: the “kabbalists,” the practitioners of the *sciences occultes*, of astrology, alchemy, and magic.³⁶ According to Esquiros, this oppositional knowledge was taken up by the Rosicrucians, the adherents of Saint-Martin, and the *illuminés*.³⁷ Similar genealogies can also be found in the multivolume works of Alphonse de Lamartine, Louis Blanc, and Jules Michelet, which were also published in 1847.³⁸ This shows how the narrative of a heretical tradition was adopted in a self-referential way. In those cases, the exponents of the *démocratie évangélique* were indeed heretics, but they represented a glorious progressive struggle against a false Christianity that had been perverted by the ruling classes.

Whatever their intentions, those “heretical historiographies” show that the socialists and communists were perceived as the heirs of a decidedly religious

³³ Giuseppe Ferrari, “Des idées et de l’école de Fourier depuis 1830,” in *Revue des deux mondes* (1845), 389, 402–6.

³⁴ *Essai sur le principe et les limites de la philosophie de l’histoire* (Paris: Joubert, 1843), 206–7, 20–21, 496, 505–6.

³⁵ *Montagnards* was a term for the “extreme Left” that resulted from their seating on the upper ranks of the National Assembly.

³⁶ Alphonse Esquiros, *Histoire des Montagnards* (Paris: Victor Lecou, 1847), 26–27.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 37–39.

³⁸ These are Lamartine’s *Histoire des Girondins*, 8 vols. (Paris: Furne et Compagnie/W. Coquebert, 1847); Blanc’s *Histoire de la Révolution française*, 12 vols. (Paris: Langlois et Leclercq, 1847–62); and Michelet’s *Histoire de la Révolution française*, 5 vols. (Paris: Chamerot, 1847–50).

tradition.³⁹ The similar groupings of names that constituted that tradition can be traced back to religious polemics of the eighteenth century, when Protestant authors directed their attacks against the very same individuals or groups: the *Theosophicis* following Jakob Böhme and the kabbalists, as well as their predecessors like Paracelsus, Robert Fludd, or the Rosicrucians.⁴⁰ They were seen as the representatives of a false philosophy and/or Christianity that had been contaminated by pagan elements, dating back to Late Antiquity. These theological attacks against Catholicism and certain “heresies” thus revolved around the question of the authentic Christian tradition, which makes it understandable why similar narratives were also picked up when socialists began to identify as Christians and referred to certain heretical traditions.⁴¹ But why exactly did they do so in the first place?

ESOTERICISM AND THE TRADITION OF TRUE RELIGION

The socialist and antisocialist references to heretical traditions are closely related to the question of the meaning of esotericism. This can only be understood against the background of contemporary critical-historical Bible studies and the scholarship about ancient religions. The substantive *ésotérisme* first appeared in the French language in a study by Jacques Matter (1791–1864).⁴² In 1820, the Alsatian scholar had published an *Essai historique sur l'école d'Alexandrie* that was devoted to the environment of the School of Alexandria where early Christians and pagans had engaged with each other. Matter employed the word *ésotérisme* in the second volume of his subsequent *Histoire critique du gnosticisme* (1828) to characterize the doctrines of the school of Pythagoras as well as those of the Gnostics.⁴³ According to Matter, the doctrine of nascent Christianity was opposed to the differentiation between an *ésotérique* and an *exotérique* religion that had been commonplace among the pagans—a distinction that can be traced back to the

³⁹ A similar approach can still be found in German-speaking studies as late as in the 1890s, most notably in Karl Kautsky, *Die Vorläufer des neueren Sozialismus*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Dietz, 1895), and Georg Adler, *Geschichte des Sozialismus und Kommunismus von Plato bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Hirschfeld, 1899). The First World War and the October Revolution put an end to this kind of socialist historiography.

⁴⁰ Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 77–152.

⁴¹ A more detailed genealogy of this process can be found in Julian Strube, “Revolution, Illuminismus und Theosophie: Eine Genealogie der ‘häretischen’ Historiographie des frühen französischen Sozialismus und Kommunismus,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 304, no. 1 (2017): 50–89.

⁴² Laurant, *L'ésotérisme*, 7–13; cf., with caution, the etymology in Pierre A. Riffard, *Qu'est-ce que l'ésotérisme? Anthologie de l'ésotérisme occidental* (Paris: R. Laffont, 1990).

⁴³ Jacques Matter, *Histoire critique du gnosticisme et de son influence sur les sectes religieuses et philosophiques des six premiers siècles de l'ère chrétienne*, 2 vols. (Paris: F.-G. Levrault, 1828), 2:83, 489.

eighteenth-century polemics mentioned above.⁴⁴ In 1840, a massively extended and revised version of the *Essai* from 1820 appeared under the title *Histoire de l'école d'Alexandrie*. Matter used it to further explain that the merging of Christian and pagan ideas had led to the emergence of a “Gnostic” school that propagated an emanatistic doctrine of creation in the Jewish-platonic Tradition of Philon that was opposed to the Christian *creatio ex nihilo*. Consequently, two opposing traditions emerged, and their struggle has continued to the present.⁴⁵

The *Histoire* fueled the debates about David Friedrich Strauß's *Leben Jesu* (1835–36), which had reached its peak around 1838–39.⁴⁶ In the preceding decades French scholars had become well aware that they had fallen behind the historical-critical Bible studies and the study of religions that were emerging especially in Germany. Since Madame de Staël's famous *De l'Allemagne* (1810) had familiarized the French with Lessing's *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* (1780), an outright enthusiasm had spread among intellectuals about the history and philosophy of religion. Liberal thinkers like Edgar Quinet (1803–75) and Benjamin Constant (1767–1830) propagated an evolutionary historical understanding of religion that did not only question the meaning and role of Christianity, but also the religious future of humanity as a whole.⁴⁷ Matter had passionately joined into those debates and written a foreword to Constant's posthumous *Du Polythéisme romain considéré dans ses rapports avec la philosophie grecque et la religion chrétienne* (1833), in which he articulated his conviction that the nineteenth century would bring about a new, progressive, and eventually perfect form of religion.⁴⁸

Matter's studies of ancient Christianity clearly were motivated by his search for a pure religion on whose basis the perfection of humanity would be realized. It is remarkable that he had married the daughter of Friedrich Rudolf Salzmänn (1749–1821, also Saltzmänn), a disciple of Louis-Claude

⁴⁴ Ibid., 1:13–14. About the “esoteric distinction” in the eighteenth century, see Monika Neugebauer-Wölk, “Historische Esoterikforschung,” in *Aufklärung und Esoterik: Wege in die Moderne*, ed. Monika Neugebauer-Wölk, Renko Geffarth, and Markus Neumann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).

⁴⁵ Jacques Matter, *Histoire de l'école d'Alexandrie*, 2 vols. (Paris/Leipzig: Hachette/Brockhaus et Avenarius, 1840), preface and introduction, esp. 1:29–32, 291–94, 305–11, 352–53.

⁴⁶ Bowman, *Le Christ*, 128–35; François Laplanche, *La Bible en France entre mythe et critique, XVIe–XIXe siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994), 140–45; Michel Despland, *L'émergence des sciences de la religion: La Monarchie de Juillet, un moment fondateur* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), 221–27.

⁴⁷ Benjamin Constant, *De la religion considérée dans sa source, ses formes et ses développements*, 5 vols. (Paris: Bossange Père et al., 1824), 1:1–100. Compare Bowman, *Le Christ*, 147; Despland, *L'émergence*, 65–70.

⁴⁸ Benjamin Constant, *Du Polythéisme romain considéré dans ses rapports avec la philosophie grecque et la religion chrétienne*, 2 vols. (Paris: Béchét Aîné, 1833), 1:xxiv–xxv.

de Saint-Martin and eager student of Jakob Böhme.⁴⁹ Evidently, Matter had contacts with the high-degree Freemasonry and leading Martinists in Strasbourg.⁵⁰ Apparently his understanding of emanation was derived from the writings of Martines de Pasqually (17??–1774), the founder of Martinism and teacher of Saint-Martin.⁵¹ Matter's interest in such teachings is underlined by the fact that he subsequently published several studies about Saint-Martin, Swedenborg, and the history of mysticism.

The discussions about the origins of Christianity and the tradition of its true form were not only subjects of mere historical curiosity. They touched upon the core of Christian identity at the beginning of the nineteenth century, all the more so because many Catholics saw the emerging new religions, and especially those of the socialists, as a threat. Several Catholic apologists such as Henry Maret (1837–81), a former disciple of Lamennais, felt obliged to point out that the “modern pantheism” of the Saint-Simonians and of the other “disciples of the *progrès humanitaire*” was by no means a continuation of the original spirit of Christianity, but a heretical aberration that reached from the School of Alexandria to the mystics and the German idealists like Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel.⁵²

It cannot be stressed enough that those debates about the origins of Christianity were deeply interwoven with the emergence of socialist religious identities and related polemics. For example, Jean-Jacques Thonissen, in his *Le socialisme depuis l'antiquité*, reproduced Matter's passage about *ésotérique* and *exotérique* religion practically word by word to describe the origin of socialist ideas.⁵³

It is against this background that Pierre Leroux employed the term *ésotérisme* in his major work from 1840, whose full title illustrates its inten-

⁴⁹ Alice Joly, *Un mystique lyonnais et les secrets de la Franc-Maçonnerie, 1730–1824* (Mâcon: Protat Frères, 1938), 105; Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994), 73; Jules Keller, *Le théosophe alsacien Frédéric-Rodolphe Saltzmann et les milieux spirituels de son temps. Contribution à l'étude de l'illuminisme et du mysticisme à la fin du XVIIIe et au début du XIXe siècle*, 2 vols. (Bern: Peter Lang, 1985).

⁵⁰ Laurant, *L'ésotérisme*, 42; René Le Forestier, *La franc-maçonnerie templière et occultiste aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne/Éditions Nauwelaerts, 1970), 419–20, 516–19, 94–95, 651–56, 803–10, 909–12.

⁵¹ Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 335–36. He was in the possession of several manuscripts of Pasqually that were later used by Adolphe Franck in his study of *La philosophie mystique en France à la fin du XVIIIe siècle: Saint-Martin et son maître Martinez Pasqualis* (Paris: Germer Baillière, 1866), 203.

⁵² Henry Maret, *Essai sur le panthéisme dans les sociétés modernes* (Paris: Sapia, 1840), 50, 96–174; and Jean-Marie Prat, *Histoire de l'éclectisme alexandrin, considéré dans sa lutte avec le christianisme* (Lyon: Périsse Frères, 1843), xix–xx. Maret situated the origin of the doctrine of emanation in India.

⁵³ Compare Jean Joseph Thonissen, *Le socialisme depuis l'antiquité jusqu'à la constitution française du 14 janvier 1852*, 2 vols. (Louvain/Paris: Vanlinthout et Compagnie/Sagnier et Bray, 1852), 1:151, and Matter, *Histoire de l'école d'Alexandrie*, 1:13–14.

tion: *De l'humanité, de son principe et de son avenir, où se trouve exposée la vraie définition de la religion, et où l'on explique le sens, la suite et l'enchaînement du mosaïsme et du christianisme*.⁵⁴ In a chapter about metempsychosis—which would later inspire spiritualists⁵⁵—Leroux explained that the doctrine of Pythagoras had been the embodiment of the “metaphysics, science, and politics” of ancient India and Egypt.⁵⁶ In accordance with the rules of the Egyptian priesthood, it was only reserved to initiates: “[Pythagoras] had the *ésotérisme*, the secret school, the religious and political sect, a sort of superior caste which was raised by initiation and intelligence and whose mission was to moralize, teach, and govern the vulgar.”⁵⁷ This politico-religious secret doctrine had not come to an end with the advent of Christianity but was handed down by the Gnostics and Essenes.⁵⁸ In recent times it was represented by the “theosophist” and “mystique remarquable” Fabre d'Olivet, whose preferences for magic, theory, and the *sciences occultes* were scolded by Leroux but nonetheless appreciated on a “philosophical level.”⁵⁹

Antoine Fabre d'Olivet (1768–1825), a disciple of Böhme and the author of an influential work about *Les vers dorés de Pythagore* (1813), was a major source of inspiration not only for Leroux but also for the French Romantics.⁶⁰ It has even been argued that Leroux's understanding of “Christianity” was practically identical with that of Fabre d'Olivet.⁶¹ According to Leroux, the “theosophist” was, next to thinkers like Boethius, Böhme, Lessing, and Leibniz, one of the few who had penetrated the secret tradition of true religion. But more recently, in the nineteenth century, it was first and foremost

⁵⁴ “About Humanity, its principle and future, where the true definition of religion is to be found, and where the meaning, result, and succession of Mosaism and Christianity is explained.”

⁵⁵ This was noted polemically by René Guénon, *Le Théosophisme: Histoire d'une pseudo-religion* (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1921), 116–18.

⁵⁶ Pierre Leroux, *De l'humanité, de son principe et de son avenir, où se trouve exposée la vraie définition de la religion, et où l'on explique le sens, la suite et l'enchaînement du mosaïsme et du christianisme*, 2 vols. (Paris: Perrotin, 1850), 1:389. See also 1:392, where this is related to the doctrines of Hermes and Moses.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:397. For his differentiation between an esoteric and an exoteric doctrine, Leroux referred to the works of the *Dissertations sur l'union de la religion, de la morale et de la politique* (1742) by the English bishop William Warburton (1698–1779), here 2:20–21. The *Dissertations* contained excerpts of his famous *Divine Legation of Moses* (1738, here 2:310), which was, in turn, influenced by the Cambridge Platonists. His main source was the *Arcanaeologiae philosophicae sive doctrina antiqua de rerum originibus* (1692) by Thomas Burnet (1635–1715); see esp. 2:84.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:582.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:407–14, 22–25. Fabre d'Olivet is quoted extensively.

⁶⁰ Léon Cellier, *Fabre d'Olivet: Contribution à l'étude des aspects religieux du romantisme* (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1953), 196–200; Brian Juden, *Traditions orphiques et tendances mystiques dans le Romantisme français 1800–1855* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971).

⁶¹ Cellier, *Fabre d'Olivet*, 337–81.

one particular thinker who had carried the torch: Saint-Simon.⁶² The core of that noble doctrine consisted of the *perfectibilité* of humanity whose way of spiritual ascent had been directed by providence throughout the centuries. Now it was the duty of France to carry the “banner of perfectibility,” after the “chain of initiates” had finally established the “universal truth.”⁶³ Leroux thus established a direct lineage from Pythagoras to Saint-Simon.

Leroux’s thoughts in *De l’humanité* illustrate how the old theological quarrel about the purity of Christianity and its relationship to its early pagan environment had entered socialist discourse in the first half of the nineteenth century. The notion of an “esoteric” tradition of true religion was combined with the doctrine of *perfectibilité* and put into a sociopolitical context. In this light, Saint-Simon appeared as one of the great initiates who had guarded the one and only true creed throughout the centuries. Now, at the dawn of a new age, the time had come to realize this true religion and elevate humanity to a higher level.

THE SAINT-SIMONIANS

Leroux had been a Saint-Simonian until the schism between Bazard and Enfantin at the end of 1831.⁶⁴ Not surprisingly, his thoughts mirrored typical Saint-Simonian ideas. The “apostles” of the *église saint-simonienne* had publicly declared that their goal was “the successive realization of perfectibility in the ascending march of the human spirit.”⁶⁵ This doctrine had been developed against the background of eighteenth-century French philosophy, notably Condorcet, but also against the background of the reception of German Idealism, which was at that time only known to most French by the writings of Madame de Staël and other authors. The Saint-Simoniens and their sympathizers, like Heinrich Heine,⁶⁶ soon took a significant role in the transmission of German philosophical writings to France.⁶⁷

When the first French translation of Lessing’s *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* was published in 1829, one of the leading Saint-Simoniens, Olinde

⁶² Leroux, *De l’humanité*, 1:415.

⁶³ That chain was formed, in recent times, by Lessing, Leibniz, Krause, Turgot, Condorcet, and eventually Saint-Simon. *Ibid.*, 1:141–42.

⁶⁴ Leroux had taken sides with Bazard. From that point on, Leroux polemicized against the *socialisme absolu* of the Saint-Simoniens, which he regarded as a “parody of monarchy and papacy,” a new form of tyranny and demagoguism: See Pierre Leroux, “Aux Politiques: De la politique sociale et religieuse qui convient à notre époque,” in *Œuvres de Pierre Leroux (1825–1850)* (Paris: Société typographique, 1850), 91–288.

⁶⁵ *Religion saint-simonienne*, 1:13–14. Compare Leroux, *De l’humanité*, 1:144.

⁶⁶ Heine had written a work, *De l’Allemagne* (1834–35), dedicated to Enfantin.

⁶⁷ Recently some attention has been paid to the Saint-Simoniens’ reception of Hegelianism: Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch, ed., *Hegelianismus und Saint-Simonismus* (Paderborn: Mentis, 2007), and *Religiöse Hingabe*.

Rodrigues (1807–30), wrote a long introduction to it. In the “*Lettres sur la religion et la politique*,” he stressed the necessity for a new social order that Saint-Simonism was to establish. This “religious future of humanity” would constitute the perfection and rehabilitation of Christianity, based on the “work that God has given humanity through Saint-Simon.”⁶⁸ Rodrigues was convinced that the successive historical stages of religion would, in the near future, result in the “identity of religion and politics,” and thus in “the reign of God on Earth.”⁶⁹ Like other Saint-Simonians, Rodrigues was convinced that Saint-Simon had been one of the great *révélateurs* who had initiated a new stage in the *régénération* of humanity. As the Saint-Simonian *Globe* declared in March 1831, he had been one of the few outstanding initiates who, like Moses, Orpheus, and Jesus, had proclaimed a new “general law.”⁷⁰ It becomes clear that the Saint-Simonian reception of philosophy of history obtained a religious, providential character that was highly political. In one of their lectures the Saint-Simonians declared: “following Saint-Simon, and in his name, we will proclaim that humanity has a religious future; that the religion of the future will be greater and more powerful than all those of the past; that it will be, like those which have preceded it, the *synthesis* of all conceptions of humanity, and moreover of all its ways of being; that it will not only dominate the political order, but that the political order will be, in its entirety, a religious institution.”⁷¹ On the “ruins” of society, the Saint-Simonians would found an order “whose realization the Christians only could imagine in Heaven but whose establishment we predict on a renewed globe, by realizing the reign of God himself on Earth, associating politics and religion forever.”⁷² In view of those statements it does not come as a surprise that some contemporaries accused the Saint-Simonians of wanting to establish a “theocracy.” It is striking that the Saint-Simonians did not even attempt to repudiate this accusation. Instead they affirmed that they indeed wanted to establish a theocracy “if one understands *theocracy* as the state in which the political and religious laws are identical, where the leaders of society are those who are speaking in the name of God.”⁷³

It has already been mentioned that the most famous French “theocrat,” Joseph de Maistre, was a major influence on Saint-Simonism and other so-

⁶⁸ Olinde Rodrigues, *Lettres sur la religion et la politique, suivies de l'éducation du genre humain* (Paris: Au Bureau de l'Organisateur/A. Mesnier, 1831), v–xii.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 19–26, 34–42.

⁷⁰ “Religion: Des difficultés qui s’opposent aujourd’hui à l’adoption d’une nouvelle croyance religieuse,” *Le Globe*, March 3, 1831.

⁷¹ Saint-Amand Bazard, ed., *Doctrines de Saint-Simon: Première année*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Au bureau de l'Organisateur, 1831), 334.

⁷² *Religion saint-simonienne*, 1:317.

⁷³ *Doctrines de Saint-Simon: Deuxième année* (Paris: Au bureau de l'Organisateur et du Globe, 1830), 139.

cialist doctrines. The Catholic thinker is by far one of the most cited authors in Saint-Simonian publications, and his philosophical writings were discussed side by side with those of Lessing, Leibniz, or Newton.⁷⁴ The social order of the *association universelle* was decisively inspired by the Maistrean “spiritual authority” as it was described in *Du Pape* (1819).

In order to understand the role of “mystical” ideas in this context, it is important to point out that the Saint-Simonians were especially impressed by de Maistre’s redemptive understanding of history with its focus on expiation and suffering as the prerequisites for the “regeneration” of humanity.⁷⁵ This philosophy of history had been influenced by the millenarianism of Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1135–1202), who had subdivided history in three stages: the age of the Father, the age of the Son, and the final age of the Holy Spirit, which would see the realization of the heavenly Jerusalem on Earth, preceded by the advent of the Antichrist, which de Maistre identified with eighteenth-century philosophy and the French Revolution.⁷⁶ Although the Catholic traditionalist’s political intentions stood in stark contrast to those of the Saint-Simonians, and his philosophy often functioned as a foil for their ideas, they could agree with the Maistrean notion of the revolution as a necessary expiatory act of providence heralding the imminent coming of the Golden Age.

The Maistrean philosophy of history was influenced by “theosophical” ideas, especially by those of the Martinists.⁷⁷ His doctrine of the successive *régénération* of humanity can only be understood against the background of the teachings of Saint-Martin and Martines de Pasqually, which revolved around the postlapsarian ascent of man from matter to spiritual perfection.⁷⁸ De Maistre was a renowned Freemason, known in his lodge as Josephus a Floribus. In his *Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* (1821), one of the most important sources of the Saint-Simonians, de Maistre praised the Martinists not only as true Christians but also as those “working on elevating themselves to

⁷⁴ See, e.g., Rodrigues, *Lettres*, 38–39, 55–56, 63–65; cf. Bazard, *Doctrine de Saint-Simon: Première année*, 40–41.

⁷⁵ For a comprehensive study of the Maistrean philosophy, see Armenteros, *French Idea*.

⁷⁶ Henri de Lubac, *La postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore*, 2 vols. (Paris/Namur: Lethielleux/Culture et vérité, 1979), 1:289–325. Joachim of Fiore had also influenced the philosophies of Lessing, Herder, Hegel, and Schelling. *Ibid.*, 266–87, 359–93. This certainly contributed to the attractiveness of those diverse philosophies in the eyes of later socialist and other recipients. See also *ibid.*, 2:7–282.

⁷⁷ Emile Dermenghem, *Joseph de Maistre mystique: Ses rapports avec le martinisme, l’illuminisme et la franc-maçonnerie, l’influence des doctrines mystiques et occultes sur la pensée religieuse* (Paris: La Connaissance, 1923); Paul Vulliaud, *Joseph de Maistre franc-maçon, suivi de pièces inédites* (Paris: Emile Nourry, 1926); Robert Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre: Étude sur la vie et sur la doctrine d’un matérialiste mystique*, Travaux d’histoire éthico-politique 14 (Genève: Droz, 1968).

⁷⁸ Armenteros, *French Idea*, 23–24.

the most sublime loftiness of this divine law [of Christianity].”⁷⁹ It is no wonder, then, that the Saint-Simonians and their critics could see fundamental parallels between the Maistrean, Martinist, and German Idealistic philosophies.

This is also so because de Maistre put a heavy emphasis on the notion of a final *synthèse* that would be realized in the last age of humanity. He had prominently declared that the synthesis of religion and science would happen after an *homme de génie* would have appeared in the immediate future. In his *Soirées*, de Maistre argued for the existence of a primitive divine science that would soon be reestablished after the upheavals of the eighteenth century.⁸⁰ His famous dictum “Newton leads us back to Pythagoras” was one of the most frequently quoted phrases in Saint-Simonian writings.⁸¹ The Saint-Simonians could easily identify the Maistrean *homme de génie* with Saint-Simon who had “revealed the natural affinity between religion and science.”⁸² The crucial difference to de Maistre was, of course, that the Saint-Simonians did not want to reestablish a perfect primordial ideal and restore humanity to its status before the Fall, but they firmly looked into the future—the motto of the Saint-Simonian newspaper *Le Globe* read: “The Golden Age, which a blind tradition has until now placed in the past, lies in the future.” Nevertheless, it becomes clear why socialists could draw a line from the teachings to Pythagoras to Saint-Simon.

The relevance of “theosophical” ideas for Saint-Simonism can be further understood by the reception of Pierre-Simon Ballanche (1776–1847), whose philosophy of history was of a more progressive kind than de Maistre’s (whom Ballanche referred to as *prophète du passé*).⁸³ Ballanche had been influenced by the writings of de Maistre, but he maintained close contacts to the Romantics and a progressive political milieu, although he certainly did not qualify as a socialist or even liberal thinker. Firmly believing in the course of Providence, Ballanche condemned any political action.⁸⁴ Like de Maistre, he emphasized the expiatory role of suffering that is essential for the progress of humanity. According to Ballanche, the Fall of Man had been a necessary providential act that enabled the “rehabilitation” of humanity in their “reintegration” into the lost “unity” that must occur by a successive *initiation*. This philosophy was strongly influenced by the teachings of Saint-Martin, Böhme,

⁷⁹ Joseph de Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg ou Entretiens sur le gouvernement temporel de la providence: Suivis d’un traité sur les sacrifices*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie Grecque, Latine et Française, 1821), 2:305.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:317.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*; cf. Armenteros, *French Idea*, 211. It may be mentioned that de Maistre was influenced by the writings of the Cambridge Platonists. See *ibid.*, 203–4.

⁸² Bazard, *Doctrine de Saint-Simon: Première année*, 347–48.

⁸³ Arthur McCalla, *A Romantic Historiosophy: The Philosophy of History of Pierre-Simon Ballanche* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 325.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 126–27, 382.

Swedenborg, and Fabre d'Olivet.⁸⁵ It was most famously expounded in the *Essais de palingénésie sociale* (1827–29) that contained a cyclical doctrine of progress in which times of crisis marked the decisive leaps of advancement. This notion of *palingénésie* had originally been conceptualized by Charles Bonnet (1720–93) as an alternative to a linear theory of evolution.⁸⁶ By combining it with the ideas of Böhme, Swedenborg, and Saint-Martin, Ballanche turned it into a theodicy and mystical philosophy.⁸⁷ He envisioned a final unity of the religious and political orders, proclaiming the dissolution of the church and of all religion in humanity. The Saint-Simonians eagerly adopted those notions and regarded them as parts of a vast progressive intellectual current that had emerged since the end of the eighteenth century.⁸⁸ In 1831 it was declared in *Le Globe*:

There was no shortage of prophets anymore who announced the event that prepares itself in the world . . . In Germany, Kant, Lessing, Hegel, Goethe; in France, de Maistre de La Mennais, Madame de Staël, Chateaubriand have predicted a very imminent new religious era.

Monsieur Ballanche has written all his works to proof that we have reached a *palingenetic* epoch, an epoch of ending and renewal; that the moment of a new emancipation, a new religious initiation has come for society.

When, since the end of the last century, all strongly sympathetic souls, all sublime intelligences announced a new revelation, the disciples of Saint-Simon, by unwinding the complete history of humanity, preached and taught this so impatiently awaited new *unity*.⁸⁹

This eclectic Saint-Simonian blend of Catholic Traditionalism, German Idealism, and the Christian *mysticism* often referred to as *théosophie* or *illuminationisme* illustrates that the Saint-Simonian philosophy of history and some of their political concepts like the *association universelle* were influenced by ideas that were regarded by contemporaries as theosophical and mystical. This especially concerns the notions of the creation of the Kingdom of God on Earth, the final universal unity, the synthesis of religion, science, and philosophy, as well as the progressive regeneration of mankind by successive initiation.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 80–86, 216–49.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 150–63.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 164–71. McCalla characterized this philosophy as “romantic historiosophy,” a mixture of “historical-mindedness and Illuminist reintegration”: *ibid.*, 289–318.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 231–44.

⁸⁹ “Religion: Des difficultés qui s’opposent aujourd’hui à l’adoption d’une nouvelle croyance religieuse,” *Le Globe*, March 3, 1831.

THE FOURIERISTS

A look at the other major French socialist school, the Fourierist *école socialiste*, shows that the ideas expressed by the members of the *église saint-simonienne* were no exception. A growing number of Fourier's disciples was enthusiastic about the writings of theosophical and mystical authors. This was the case already with Fourier's very first disciple, Just Muiron (1787–1881).⁹⁰ After he had been healed by magnetism, Muiron had begun to study the works of Mesmer, Puységur, and Lavater. Deeply interested in Martinism, he had found Fourier's *Théorie des quatre mouvements* (1808) in the library of a Martinist Freemason, Raymond de Raymond (1752–1838).⁹¹ In his *Nouvelles transactions sociales, religieuses et scientifiques* from 1832, Muiron described his discovery of the works of Fourier—whose name he used to print in capital, extra-large letters—which had been for him the same like “the ethereal voice had been for Paul, the Apostle of Jesus,” the ultimate “key to wisdom [science].”⁹² Using the name of “Virtomnius” to refer to himself, he explained: “The sublime thought of the theosophical authors . . .; the pages of Fénelon, of Swedenborg, of Claude-Louis [sic] St.-Martin d'Amboise; then, the so luminous and erudite books of Fabre d'Olivet, so full of ointment, so replete with universal truths, so exalting, were for Virtomnius a second preparation. They enabled him to fully understand the Bible, the old and new testaments.”⁹³ In Muiron's eyes, the works of the magnetists and the theosophists had opened the path to the universal true science, but Fourier's writings were the ultimate crowning of those sublime doctrines. This interpretation would become highly influential among Fourierists who began to recognize striking similarities between Fourierism, Magnetism, Swedenborgianism, and Mesmerism—much to the dislike of Fourier, who had always claimed the originality and uniqueness of his ideas.⁹⁴

Nonetheless, discussions of those doctrines can be found in the leading Fourierist publications from the early 1830s on, for example when Philippe Hauger (1798–1838), the son of the famous Pietist Juliane von Krüdener,⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Alexandre Erdan, *La France mystique: Tableau des excentricités religieuses de ce temps*, 2 vols. (Paris: Coulon-Pineau, 1855), 2:581–86; Auguste Viatte, *Victor Hugo et les illuminés de son temps* (Genève: Slatkine, 1973), 74; Beecher, *Charles Fourier*, 160–67.

⁹¹ Raymond de Raymond was a high dignitary of Pasqually's Ordre des Elus Coëns and had participated in the masonic convent of Wilhelmsbad. See Gérard van Rijnberk, *Martines de Pasqually: Un thaumaturge au XVIIIe siècle*, 2nd ed. (Hildesheim: Olms, 1982), 96, 107, 36–37, and Le Forestier, *La franc-maçonnerie*, 884–94.

⁹² Just Muiron, *Les nouvelles transactions sociales, religieuses et scientifiques*, vol. 1 (Paris: Bossange Prère, 1832), 149ff.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁹⁴ He became increasingly irritated by Muiron's repeated inquiries about authors like Saint-Martin and Swedenborg; cf. Beecher, *Charles Fourier*, 160–67.

⁹⁵ Debora Sommer, *Eine baltisch-adlige Missionarin bewegt Europa: Barbara Juliane v. Krüdener, geb. v. Vietinghoff gen. Scheel (1764–1824)* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2013), 124, 428.

wrote an enthusiastic review of Muiron's work in the major Fourierist journal *Le Phalanstère* in January 1833.⁹⁶ In 1834, Hauger contributed an article to the *Revue du progrès social*, a journal led by the former Saint-Simonian Jules Lechevalier (1800–1850) who had joined the *école sociétaire*.⁹⁷ In an “Examination of the teaching of J. Böhme and Saint-Martin,” Hauger argued that the recent philosophical movements had stimulated the necessity to “study the mystics.” He explained that disregarded authors like Charles Fourier, Ballanche, de Maistre, and Fabre d’Olivet should finally gain recognition in order to restore the fragmented modern sciences to a “new synthesis.”⁹⁸

According to Hauger, the path to this “immense scientific restoration” had been opened by the philosophical works in Germany and, more recently, by Fourierism. It was now necessary to study the “mystical and eccentric schools” to comprehend the universal, transcendental “mystical philosophy” that he called *théosophie*.⁹⁹ This concerned not only the authors named above, but also Kant, Fichte, and Schelling—for whose philosophies Hauger's source was Madame de Staël's *De l'Allemagne*—as well as Böhme, Swedenborg, and Saint-Martin.¹⁰⁰ Ultimately, those efforts would bring by the perfection of a long tradition of thought, which will be familiar to the reader of the present article: “one will find in the teachings of the Gnostics, Kabbalists, and Neo-Platonists of the School of Alexandria, as well as in those of the modern schools of the Martinists and Swedenborgians, a more comprehensive philosophy than the most powerful attempts in present-day Germany could produce. This philosophy will magnificently crown these efforts, and legitimate all tendencies of the new science, tendencies which are still feeble and obscure because they are themselves not yet conscious of their true character and destination.”¹⁰¹

This reference to the School of Alexandria recalls the question of *ésotérisme*, and indeed the same volume of the *Revue* contained a long excerpt of Ballanche's famous *Ville des expiations* (1832–37), which contains a discussion of that term.¹⁰² The introduction by an editor of the *Revue* emphasized that the “social and religious work of Monsieur Ballanche” was of

⁹⁶ *Le Phalanstère*, January 18, 1833, 33–34.

⁹⁷ Compare Bowman, *Le Christ*, 183, and Laurant, *L'ésotérisme*, 55–56.

⁹⁸ Philippe Hauger, “Examen de la doctrine de J. Böhme et de Saint-Martin,” in *Revue du progrès social*, ed. Jules Lechevalier (Paris: Au Bureau du Journal/Bachelier, 1834), 408–9, 27.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 411–12.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 415–19, 22–25, 29–35. Hauger had maintained contacts with French Swedenborgians. About his correspondence with Le Boys des Guays, one of the most influential Swedenborgians, see Karl-Erik Sjöden, *Swedenborg en France* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1985), 104–6.

¹⁰¹ Hauger, “Examen,” 421.

¹⁰² A detailed discussion of this work can be found in McCalla, *A Romantic Historiosophy*.

paramount importance for the *école sociétaire*. This was shown on the basis of a fragment dealing with the “initiation” into the “*ésotérique*, that means transcendental” doctrine of the temple of the *Ville des expiations*.¹⁰³ In the quoted excerpt, Ballanche had explained that the School of Alexandria had taught their disciples “two theosophies, one founded on the historical Christianity, the other founded on the Christianity that is contained in the general traditions of humanity.” But now the time would come when all *ésotérisme* would come to an end and “Christianity is equal for everybody, for the master and for the servant, for the subject and for the monarch.” After humanity had gone through successive stages of initiation, the final establishment of a “universal philosophy” was now at hand.¹⁰⁴ This philosophy would not be based on the doctrines of the present churches, but the perfection of a deeper, universal tradition of divine truth, as it was preserved in the “mysticism of the theosophists.”¹⁰⁵

The division between a historically developed Christianity and a universal religion was appealing for the Fourierists because they could reject the doctrines of the churches as degenerated and corrupted, while positioning themselves as the propagators of an eternally true religion. This also becomes evident in the context of Saint-Simonism and the ideas expressed by Leroux in *De l’humanité*, whose differentiation between the esoteric and the exoteric doctrines of Pythagoras and Plato can almost identically be found in Ballanche’s *Palingénésie sociale*.¹⁰⁶ As Ballanche had explained, the true Christianity would be identical with *humanité* after the final initiation, and all differentiation between “esotericism and exotericism” would “only reside in the difference of the spirits.”¹⁰⁷ In this respect, authors like Ballanche and the socialists shared a fascination of “humanity,” for a social totality and universality that would be realized by a synthesis of religion, science, philosophy, and politics. The “social,” that is the political component, becomes clear: the true Christianity, the universal religion of humanity, would lead to a total equality and thus to the perfect, harmonious unity desired by the socialists.

Against this background, so-called theosophical writings revolving around the regeneration of humanity and a final mystical unity were adopted by socialists in a radical political way. As Hauger explained in the *Revue*, the teachings

¹⁰³ “Théorie de M. Ballanche: Fragment de la Ville des Expiations, Séance d’initiation sur les traditions générales d’humanité,” in Lechevalier, *Revue du progrès sociale*, 1:499.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:500–501.

¹⁰⁵ Ballanche had also expressed this in his *Essai sur les institutions sociales dans leur rapport avec les idées nouvelles* (Paris: P. Didot l’Ainé, 1818), 225.

¹⁰⁶ Pierre-Simon Ballanche, *Essais de palingénésie sociale*, vol. 1 (Paris: Jules Didot Ainé, 1827), 13. For a discussion of the similarities between Ballanche’s and Leroux’s doctrines of metempsychosis, see Sharp, *Secular Spirituality*, 12–21.

¹⁰⁷ Pierre-Simon Ballanche, *Essais de palingénésie sociale*, vol. 2 (Paris: Jules Didot Ainé, 1829), 45–46.

of Fourier, Böhme, Saint-Martin, and Swedenborg only differed by the fact that Fourier had applied his doctrine to the “social order,” while the latter had applied theirs “mostly to the religious order.”¹⁰⁸ Hauger pointed out that their mysticism was marked by a specific “activeness” that formed the basis for political action: “One of the most beautiful ideas of Monsieur Fourier, which he shared with the mystics, was the regeneration of nature as a direct consequence of that of humanity.”¹⁰⁹ Hauger argued that the mystical Christianity and the doctrine of Fourier would finally free humanity from its fatalistic passivity toward evil, taught by the false religions. Instead, man would be the administrator of Earth and solely be responsible to dispose of all suffering and disorder.¹¹⁰

There are concrete reasons for the ease with which authors like Hauger or Muiron could identify the doctrines of the “mystics” or “theosophists” with those of their leader: Fourier’s doctrine revolved around the concepts of *correspondances*, *analogies*, *harmonie*, and *perfection*. In his *Théorie des quatre mouvements*, Fourier had declared that, “on the ruins of the inexact sciences,” he would now establish the “theory of universal harmonies” that would eventually lead to a *nouveau monde*.¹¹¹ This “exact science” would be based on the correspondences and analogies of the “four movements” deriving from the “effect of the mathematical laws of God on the universal movement.”¹¹² It was now time to herald the final synthesis and lead humanity—and, eventually, the whole of nature and the universe—to harmony and perfection. In the eyes of many recipients, those ideas were identical with some of those expressed by Swedenborg, Saint-Martin, Mesmer, and their disciples.

CONCLUSION

It has been shown that the Saint-Simonian and Fourierist interest in “theosophical,” “mystical,” or “illuminist” authors revolved around certain key aspects: the providential progress of history, the regeneration of humanity, the creation of a universal unity, and the realization of a synthesis of religion, science, and philosophy. July Monarchy socialists regarded themselves as the opposition to the “individualism” and “egoism” that had allegedly disrupted the social bonds and left society in ruins. Not only in reformist circles, the notion of a *maladie contemporaine* was ubiquitous at that time and can

¹⁰⁸ Hauger, “Examen,” 426: “M. Fourier, d’accord avec eux, n’en diffère qu’en ce qu’il applique ses analogies à l’ordre social, tandis que Böhme, Saint-Martin et Swedenborg les appliquent surtout à l’ordre religieux, et s’en servent comme de principal flambeau pour interpréter les antiques et obscures traditions de l’humanité.”

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 427.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 427–29.

¹¹¹ Charles Fourier, *Théorie des quatre mouvements et des destinées générales* (Leipzig, 1808), 268.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 21, 48–50.

be seen as a clear sign for a deep social dislocation that followed the series of upheavals since the late eighteenth century.¹¹³ As a solution for this “social question,” the socialists wanted to combat the fragmentation of society and of human knowledge—that is, the fragmentation of the modern sciences—by the creation of a universal science leading to a universal unity. These ideas were obviously prone to the *unio mystica* of Christian mysticism, as well as to the *régénération* of the Martinists and their quest for a universal divine science. From a socialist perspective, the theosophists and mystics had shown that it was wrong to passively endure the malady of humanity and await redemption in the afterlife. Humanity had to actively engage the ills of society, ascend the path to its regeneration, and create paradise on Earth.

Hence contemporary observers had good reasons to maintain that the socialists had adopted ideas from *théosophie*, *mysticisme*, and *illuminisme*. It must be stressed, though, that those terms did not denote coherent traditions, and certainly not one single esoteric tradition. The contents of those signifiers varied drastically and were, as has been indicated above, the outcome of polemical discourses since the eighteenth century.¹¹⁴ However, it can be said that they all, from the beginning on, revolved around the question of “true” religion. Since the eighteenth century, the notion of a “theosophical sect”—be it derogative or appreciative—was related to the claim of an access to superior and authentic divine knowledge. When socialists began to make similar claims in the first half of the nineteenth century, they referred to the constructed tradition of “theosophy” all the more so because of its “oppositional” character. Many socialists saw in those “heretics” the representatives of the true Christianity, which had been violently suppressed since the late ancient schisms in the environment of the School of Alexandria.

This socialist fascination with a tradition of true Christianity must be regarded in the historical context of the early nineteenth century. As it was declared in *Le Globe*, the Saint-Simonians understood their doctrine as the perfection of a greater movement that had anticipated the final step in the providential unfolding of history, and they clearly addressed which thinkers they thought to be part of this movement. The highly heterogeneous blend of German philosophers, French Romantics, Catholic traditionalists, and pro-

¹¹³ Compare Strube, “Socialist Religion.”

¹¹⁴ They were often used interchangeably, but it can be said that *théosophie* was frequently identified with *mysticisme*, while the term *illuminisme* had a considerably more negative character. Just Muiron maintained that the theosophists were “qualified as *illuminés* by the narrow-minded and cold spirits who do not understand them at all.” De Maistre resolutely maintained that the theosophists were not identical with those “condemnable men” and their “criminelle association.” See Muiron, *Les nouvelles transactions*, 1:148, and de Maistre, *Les soirées*, 2:305. This is due to the fact that the *illuminés* had, since the end of the eighteenth century, become part of several influential conspiracy theories about the French Revolution, especially linked to the German Illuminatenorden.

gressive Neo-Catholics clearly shows that theosophical ideas cannot be isolated among it. De Maistre evidently was influenced by Saint-Martin and Martines de Pasqually, but he hardly can qualify as a theosophist. The same applies to Ballanche, who was influenced by Swedenborg, Saint-Martin, or Fabre d'Olivet, without simply being a theosophist or illuminist.¹¹⁵ Rather, those diverse thinkers and their socialist recipients shared some fundamental beliefs that can best be understood against the background of French Romanticism. In *De l'Allemagne*, Madame de Staël—one of the Saint-Simonian “prophets”—had expressed her conviction that the emergence of an authentic “mystical” religion in opposition to a “dogmatic” religion was at hand.¹¹⁶ As she explained, “the idealistic philosophy, the mystical Christianity, and the poetry coming from the soul [i.e., Romanticism] share, in many respects, the same goals and sources”: the replacement of an “artificial society” with an “intellectual culture” that would lead to the “perfection of the *lumières*.”¹¹⁷

This search for a new, authentic meaning of religion and its decisive role in postrevolutionary society was shared by the most diverse thinkers at the beginning of the nineteenth century, including the Saint-Simonians and Fourierists.¹¹⁸ The fascination for theosophical authors among the latter should not lead to the conclusion that Saint-Martin was the “*spiritus rector* of Fourier’s social theory.”¹¹⁹ Instead, authors like Fourier, Saint-Simon, de Maistre, Fabre d'Olivet, or Ballanche shared the conviction that the enlightened belief in reason, progress, and quality had been flawed, and that a deeper understanding of humanity and society was necessary. They all were searching for a divine providential plan, a comprehension of the world, and the creation of “universal systems.”¹²⁰ In the eyes of many contemporary observers, the socialists were thus not only social and economic reformers, but also, as *réformateurs*, part of a large wave of religious or mystical reawakening.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ McCalla, *A Romantic Historiosophy*, 224, 344.

¹¹⁶ Anne-Louise Germaine de Staël, *De l'Allemagne*, 3 vols. (Paris: H. Nicolle, 1807), 3:329.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 332.

¹¹⁸ Strube, “Ein neues Christentum,” 160–62.

¹¹⁹ Compare the introductions by Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch in Charles Fourier, *Über das weltweite soziale Chaos: Ausgewählte Schriften zur Philosophie und Gesellschaftstheorie* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2012), 12, and Martin Burckhardt in *Der Philosoph der Kleinanzeige: Ein Fourier-Lesebuch* (Berlin: Semele-Verlag, 2006), 11–12.

¹²⁰ Beecher, *Charles Fourier*, 71–74.

¹²¹ See the fascinating account in Alexandre Erdan, *La France Mystique: Tableau Des Excentricités Religieuses De Ce Temps*, 2 vols. (Paris: Coulon-Pineau, 1855). According to Erdan, who was friends with many of the social reformers, the *mysticisme philosophique* of the socialists formed part of the great “mystical” movement that had emerged as a reaction to the upheavals of the eighteenth century since Chateaubriand’s *Génie du Christianisme*. Erdan discussed the socialists right next to the Mormons or the Moravian Church, the Romantics, the Neo-Catholics, the Swedenborgians and Mesmerists, and the emerging Positivism of Auguste Comte.

In this light, it cannot simply be said that the socialists were esotericists. But in many respects, the contexts of the emergence of socialism and of what would become known as “esotericism” in the second half of the nineteenth century are inherently intertwined. It has become obvious that socialism was discursively related, in the first half of the century, to the virtually identical constructed tradition that is today associated with esotericism.¹²² It has also been shown that many socialists derived their understanding of the role of humanity and its relationship to the divine from theosophical writings whose ideas would also be constitutive of esoteric identities in the second half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, contemporaries observed that a particular mixture of Swedenborgianism, Mesmerism, Fourierism, and Theosophy formed the basis of spiritualist and occultist ideas.¹²³ This does not imply that some socialist ideas can be derived from a certain esoteric tradition, but it certainly shows that July Monarchy socialism was part of a complex pluralization of religious identities that determined the religious landscape of Europe up to the present day.

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¹²² This understanding of “esotericism” as the result of polemical discourses has been discussed most profoundly in Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, and Stuckrad, *Locations of Knowledge*.

¹²³ As noted, e.g., by Félix Fabart, *Histoire philosophique et politique de l'occulte: Magie, sorcellerie, spiritisme* (Paris: C. Marpon et E. Flammarion, 1885), 116–17, who established a fundamental affinity between “Swedemborgiens, Mesmériens, Fouriéristes, Kardécistes, Théosophes, etc.” Compare the judgment of Guénon, *Le Théosophisme*, 116–18, which has already been indicated above. For a contextualizing case study, see Strube, “Socialist Religion.”