



# The French Idea of History: Joseph de Maistre and His Heirs, 1794-1854

*Carolina Armenteros*

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"A fierce absolutist, a furious theocrat . . . the champion of the hardest, narrowest, and most inflexible dogmatism . . . part learned doctor, part inquisitor, part executioner." Thus did Émile Faguet describe Joseph-Marie de Maistre (1753–1821) in his 1899 history of nineteenth-century thought. This view of the influential thinker as a reactionary has, with little variation, held sway ever since. In *The French Idea of History*, Carolina Armenteros recovers a very different figure, one with a far more subtle understanding of, and response to, the events of his day.

Maistre emerges from this deeply learned book as the crucial bridge between the Enlightenment and the historicized thought of the nineteenth century. Armenteros demonstrates that Maistre inaugurated a specifically French way of thinking about past, present, and future that held sway not only among conservative political theorists but also among intellectuals generally considered to belong to the left, particularly the Utopian Socialists.



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