The rift between Mill and Carlyle came in 1840, when Carlyle delivered an onslaught on Bentham in ‘The Hero as Prophet’. Their parting demonstrated how, although they were both striving to escape the sterility of sectarian philosophical debate, they did so in terms of dissimilar personal experiences, which gave them irreconcilable perspectives on both logic and life. In 1831, Empson mentioned Mill to Carlyle as ‘a converted Utilitarian who is studying German’, and this elicited an enthusiastic response from Carlyle: in 1832, Carlyle claimed Mill was his ‘partial disciple’. The friendship flourished at a time when both were cultivating open-mindedness; they shared, said Carlyle, ‘a common recognition of the infinite nature of Truth’.

Specific interests related to the debate on logic drew them together. Carlyle was writing on Voltaire, and Mill spurred on his interest in the Encyclopaedist tradition, and sent him material from his own collection on the French Revolution. Yet the nature of their interests in eighteenth-century France varied. The articles on French themes which Mill contributed to the Examiner from 1830 onwards, drew didactic parallels with events in England: Carlyle uttered aphorisms, saying that the ‘right History’ of the French Revolution ‘were the grand Poem of our Time’, and commented that the Revolution had revealed the essential human character. Initially, Carlyle conceded limited approval to Utilitarianism, as affording some kind of belief, but he overestimated Mill’s hostility to Benthamism. On the value of speculation, they also differed. Carlyle wrote that in an age of transition, ‘speculation is not wanted, but prompt practical insight, and courageous action’; he complained that Mill’s letters were ‘too speculative’, and then modified his opinion, deeming speculation tolerable, if ‘it is of the very highest sort; or when, as itself a historical document, I find it interesting for the sake of its interesting author’.

Concern for the Saint-Simonian troubles of 1830 also drew the two together; Mill supplied news of the sect, and material for Carlyle’s projected articles on the subject. They agreed about the
movement’s imaginative appeal, and suspected Enfantin’s methods. Both countered Socialist theories with pleas for the importance of the individual. Yet the looseness and breadth of the Saint-Simonian synthesis allowed them to stress varying aspects of it. Mill focused upon its political and historical ideas, Carlyle upon its religious notions and implications for perception. Saint-Simonian historicism influenced Mill’s views on representative government, Carlyle translated *Nouveau Christianisme*. Both transformed Saint-Simonian ideas: Mill’s ideal society merged critical and organic trends, and Carlyle assimilated the critical/organic thesis to Goethe’s notions on belief and unbelief.

Over specific issues raised by Saint-Simonianism, they disagreed. Carlyle saw little value in political machinery: if truth was ever-evolving, the perfect society could never be realised. Mill was committed to the political process. He did not share his father’s enthusiasm for the Reform Bill, but he had friends in the Commons, and, from 1833 onwards, was a political journalist. On religious issues, the two also revealed significant differences. Carlyle pleaded, like an Old Testament prophet, for sternly moral beliefs; Mill came close to the Unitarians, whom Carlyle disliked. Mill fell in love with Harriet Taylor, and wrote for the *Monthly Repository*. He was also sympathetic to the Coleridgian latitudinarianism of F. D. Maurice and Sterling, whilst Carlyle always abhorred the Broad Church and admired the Scottish Church. Mill was severely critical of established churches. Their vision of the surrounding world also differed. Mill considered that mind endowed nature with beauty: *Sartor Resartus* incorporated a powerfully-expressed pantheism, which Carlyle continued to propound.

The writings of the two men between 1831 and 1834 show common areas of interest. On the eve of the Reform Bill, both surveyed contemporary society – Mill in ‘The Spirit of the Age’, and Carlyle in ‘Characteristics’. Their analyses, terminology and conclusions were, however, strikingly different. Mill wrote on the French Revolution in August 1833 in the *Monthly Repository*, whilst Carlyle was reading French history, but Mill’s reflections on the Encyclopedia tradition were channelled into articles which dealt with issues current in English political life. There was also obvious divergence of interests. Carlyle wrote six articles on Goethe in 1832, and still considered that the Germans had made belief possible. Mill’s interest in German, which he had learnt in the 1820s and