

generally contained within the binding of a single volume it is "a book," but in no other. It is in fact an extremely heterogeneous collection of works of different characters and designs, written by different persons, at various times extending over a period, assuming Moses to have been the first compiler, of about sixteen hundred years. Compiled and re-compiled, revised and garbled, so that, supposing the original sources to have been of greater intrinsic value than they possibly could have been, that value must, by all the laws of evidence, have become greatly deteriorated—lost for hundreds of years, and only ultimately thrown together into the shape which they are popularly known, at the Council of Carthage. Within the last decade of the fourth century, the canonical character of the books decided by vote, in which process the Revelations, a wild, visionary outburst of philosophies far older than the book of Genesis, mixed with the later speculations of the highly spiritual Alexandrian school, was only declared to be inspired by a majority of one, yet so dense is the ignorance, so blank the critical faculty, in Mr. Carlyle's innumerable majority, that the great mass of the orthodox world regards this miscellaneous compilation as one inspired volume, which has somehow come to them direct from God, in the dress in which it was clothed by King James' translation, and I do not doubt that inspiration is, by many, attributed even to the fulsome dedication of those venerable and reverend sycophants.

It is not to be wondered at that—in view of the approaching advent of a new translation, which cannot but tend to rationalize the existing beliefs, and which must inevitably divide the allegiance now monopolized by the present fetich—the orthodox should "so furiously rage." Macaulay, criticizing Mr. Gladstone's early work on Church and State, describes that versatile writer's style as characterized by a vast command of a kind of language grave and majestic, but of vague and uncertain import; of a kind of language which affects us much in the same way in which the lofty diction of the chorus of clouds affected the simple-hearted Athenian." Again, he says: "Here are propositions of a vast and indefinite extent conveyed in language which has a certain obscure dignity and sanctity, attractive, we doubt not, to many minds. But the moment we bring them to the test by running over but a very few of the particulars which are included in them, we find them to be false and extravagant." Had Macaulay been criticising the so-called sacred writings, he could scarcely have altered his phraseology to advantage. The ordinary cultivated religious mind is carried away by a certain grandeur, simplicity and brevity which pervade the Hebrew literary style, a great part of the effect of which is due to that perfectly cool assumption of the marvellous and impossible, as simple matters of fact, which is a characteristic of the oriental mind in all ages, and which is co-incidentally apparent in the "Arabian Nights." As regards the Book of Judges especially, both the Arabian Nights and the Iliad at once present themselves to the mind as keys, the one to the eastern love of the supernatural, the other to the exaltation of popular heroes to a mythic grandeur. The half or wholly fabulous early histories and early poetry of all rude nations and tribes, which have proved themselves possessed of a national imaginative soul fitted for survival, lend themselves to this analogy. Grecian and Roman Epic, Scandinavian Saga, German, Frankish and Iberian legend and ballad, and ancient Jewish record, are identical in their faithful witness to the intuitions of tribes in their earliest stages of approach to civilization. As Sampson, Gideon, Jephtha, Joshua, so were Hector, Achilles, Romulus Curtius. Far down the stream of time the hero-worship scarcely changes an iota in character. Siegfried, Frithiof, Charlemagne, Roland, Bernard *del carpio*, and the Cid, are but reproductions, tinted and suffused with the glamour of the later chivalry, all were the embodiments of a rude but strong sense of patriotism. The Jewish legends are only distinguished by the monotheistic, and theocratic ideas which ruled and pervaded their literature, and it is remarkable that these apparently pure ideas, grafted on an exclusive and savage national temperament, led to the glorification, as a religiously patriotic action, of an atrocity such as no pagan nation would have dreamed of reckoning as meritori-

ous. I mean the teaching of Jael. The assimilation of Old Testament ideas of God, produced, as we all know singular manifestations of a dreary and sordid ferocity in the Puritans of England and Massachusetts, and in the Covenanters of Scotland, remnants of which yet assert their vitality in modern Presbyterianism. It might have been supposed, however, that the blind votaries of the anthropomorphic God of an obscure early race, much given to the cultivation of systematized vengeance, had reached the acme of truculence in the Presbyterian murder of the unfortunate Thos. Aikenhead, in 1697. But it is not generally known that an ignorant veneration of the Bible legends had, so late as within the last eight years, borne its diabolical fruit in full perfection. During the advance of the German troops into France in 1870, a German soldier wounded to the death, staggered into a cottage of a French peasant begging a drink of water and to be allowed to lie down. He fell on a bed, and presently sunk into the sleep of utter exhaustion, when his hostess, a young woman, presently conceived the idea of picking out the unfortunate man's eyes with a fork, and forthwith carried it into execution. This horrible act was performed in direct imitation of that for which Deborah poured forth her splendid rhapsody of praise to God.

It is impossible to predicate whether the company of translators now at work, will prove sufficiently courageous to give full effect to the different interpretations of various important passages, which are known to be required.

Much is to be hoped from the cumulative impact of truth for its own sake, on the higher planes of intellect. Much is to be feared from the ponderous *vis inertia* of the orthodox mind, which is a compound of the exaggerated characteristics attributed in old Natural History books, to the crocodile, the hyena, and the sloth.

The general result cannot but tend to weaken dogma; but, as there is little good to be perceived totally unalloyed with evil, it is probable that from time to time, the advocate of inspiration may fondly imagine a vain thing, viz.: that some new light on a word or sentence may prove a gain to the theological cause.

Such a claim has, indeed, already been set up. In the course of that increased stringency of enquiry to which men are daily more strongly impelled, it has been asserted that the words "In the beginning" should be rendered "In former duration," i.e. in the "duration or time previous to creation." On the strength of this alteration, a writer in the *Quarterly Review*, in an article entitled "Modern Philosophers on the Probable Age of the World," reproduced in the New York *Eclectic* for October, 1876, endeavors to show that the Mosaic cosmogony is in accord with the hypothesis of the nebular vortex-ring. I have already, in these preliminary remarks, taken up as much space as I imagine is convenient. In the succeeding issues I hope to expose the weakness and fallacy of the specious arguments adduced by the orthodox reviewer, and to demonstrate that it is not even open to the plenary inspirationists to wriggle out of literal interpretation as regards the six days of creation, but that the writer of the first chapter of Genesis wrote with no broader idea than that he was constructing a plausible account of the beginning of things, and with no notion of his account being ever interpreted otherwise than as literal matter of fact.

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Hell appeared to me like a great town kitchen with an endlessly long stove, on which were placed three rows of iron pots, and in these sat the damned and were cooked. In the third row sat the heathen, who, like the Jews, could take no part in salvation, and must burn forever. I heard one of the latter, as a square-built, burly devil put fresh coal under his kettle, cry out from his pot: "Spare me! I was once Socrates, the wisest of mortals. I taught truth and justice, and sacrificed my life for virtue." But the clumsy, stupid devil went on with his work, and grumbled: "Oh, shut up there! All heathen must burn, and we can't make an exception for the sake of a single soul.—*Heinrich Heine*."