Thomas Carlyle accorded the Prophet Muhammad a special place in the book "Heroes and Hero Worship" under the chapter title "Hero as a Prophet". In his work, Carlyle declared his admiration to prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to a great extent, insisting on his sincerity and commenting 'how one man single-handedly, could weld warring tribes and wandering Bedouins into a most powerful and civilized nation in less than two decades. WONDERFUL BOOK. Hero-worship endures forever while man endures. Boswell venerates his Johnson, right truly even in the Eighteenth century. The unbelieving French believe in their Voltaire; and burst out round him into very curious Hero-worship, in that last act of his life when they “stifle him under roses.” It has always seemed to me extremely curious this of Voltaire. Truly, if Christianity be the highest instance of Hero-worship, then we may find here in Voltaireism one of the lowest!

Abstract

The Scottish essayist Thomas Carlyle might be considered a surprising influence on the Young Ireland movement of the 1840s and its most militant leader, John Mitchel. Carlyle has become notorious for his anti-Irish sentiments, expressed most forcefully in his Reminiscences of my Irish journey in 1849. Yet his critique of the Benthamite and liberal Zeitgeist was a significant influence on Mitchel. This article examines what it was in Carlyle’s thought that appealed to Mitchel. Carlyle’s antagonism to liberal conceptions of progress informed Mitchel’s intellectual development and prompted specific political perspectives that can in some measure be viewed as a Carlylean response to Ireland’s crisis in the 1840s. Mitchel made many of the same historic and philosophical assumptions as Carlyle, legitimising the present struggle for Irish nationality via a critique of contemporary laissez-faire doctrine. Thus, Swift’s saeva indignatio was inflected in Mitchel by his encounter with Carlyle’s work, shaping Mitchel’s anger in terms of the spiritual-material polarity at the heart of Carlyle’s Signs of the Times (1829). This ‘sacred wrath’ helps explain why Mitchel is often seen as someone who hated England more than he loved Ireland.

Full Text:

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