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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

THE story of Jephthah's daughter is always with us. Since the notes appeared in our last issue we have received some interesting contributions to the subject, one of which may be touched on here. It is a pamphlet printed for private circulation. The only indication of the author's name is the letters X. Q. K., which appear at the end; but it is sent us by a reliable scholar in the North of England.

X. Q. K. argues skilfully and patiently for the *un*bloody sacrifice. But the strength of his argument (to do it the injustice of extreme compression) lies in the moral character of the God to whom Jephthah made his vow. As a responsible and dependent creature in God's sight, Jephthah could never do more than make a *conditional* vow. There were others who had rights and responsibilities in God's sight as well as Jephthah; and Jephthah's daughter was one of these. Thus "Jephthah's vow, in several particulars, made certain a violation of these rights before it could be performed, and involved also a breach of God's laws." It could therefore be no more than a "promise conditional upon God's disposition in fulfilling His divine order for His glory and the good of His creatures."

And it is just this that gives the story of Jephthah's vow its importance. It is no matter of idle curiosity whether Jephthah's daughter was offered up in sacrifice or not. It is a matter of great historical and theological import. For Jephthah was accepted by the God of Israel to lead the Israelite army against their heathen foes, and the God of Israel gave him signal victory in the battle. If, then, this man was capable of offering up his only daughter in sacrifice to God, what shall we say of the choice of such a man for this undying honour? What, in short, shall we think of Jehovah, the God of Israel, who chose him for it, and thus already accepted the human sacrifice which he was destined to offer?

It is in that aspect that the matter comes home to us. And it comes home to us with peculiar force at this present time. For it is on the strength of such passages as this (and they are exceedingly few) that even Kuenen has come to the conclusion that Jehovah, the God of Israel, was "a severe Being, inaccessible to mankind, whom it was necessary to propitiate with sacrifices and offerings, and even with human sacrifices." Elsewhere he says: "To the question whether the Jahveh of the prophets is a counterpart to Molech, we have no hesitation whatever in returning a negative answer. But as fearlessly do we assert that the conception of Jahveh originally bordered upon that of Molech, or at least had many points of contact with it." And what Kuenen hesitates on the borders of, Daumer and Ghillany wholly and unreservedly accept. "Fire

and Moloch worship," says the former, "was the ancestral, legal, and orthodox worship of the nation of Israel." And the latter: "Moses never forbade human sacrifices. On the contrary, these constituted a legal and essential part of the state-worship from the earliest times down to the destruction of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah."

Now there is not a little that can be said for the view of this event which denies the bloody sacrifice altogether. There is so much that can fairly and accurately be said for it, that, yet at least, it is not possible for any one to use this story unreservedly in favour of the practice of human sacrifice among the Israelites. But it is of great consequence for us at present to know that, even if it should be established that Jephthah did slay his daughter, we are not in any way bound to lower our conception of the God of Israel. Let us quote the words on this subject which Professor Robertson of Glasgow has used in his recent volume on *The Early Religion of Israel* (a volume, by the way, which the advocates of the Higher Criticism of the Old Testament must reckon with more seriously than they have hitherto done):—

"Just as little, I think, as the offering of Isaac, does the story of Jephthah and his daughter prove that human sacrifice was the custom in Israel at the time of the Judges, or at any time. Even if we admit that Jephthah contemplated the possibility or probability of a member of his household being the first to come out to meet him,—even if we admit that when he "did with her according to his vow which he had vowed" (Judges xi. 39), he actually offered her as a sacrifice,—I maintain that by any sober criticism of the passage, nothing is proved beyond the solitary act. No doubt we must admit that Jephthah may have been acquainted with human sacrifice as practised by the nations about him. The writer of the narrative, if we place him in the early "literary age" of Israel, could not but have known of it. But all the details of the narrative, all the circumstances associated with the event,—the sadness and grief of the father, the pause before the execution of the vow, the annual ceremony of a four days' lament for Jephthah's daughter,—show that the thing was regarded as quite unusual, and had stamped itself in the national mind as an occurrence rare in history. Possibly, nay probably, a certain glory encircled the name of Jephthah's daughter for her extraordinary devotion, but this was just because the devotion *was* extraordinary, not because it was an instance of a common usage. It is idle, in such a connexion, to talk of this as a proof that the Mosaic law forbidding human sacrifice was not known to Jephthah. Such a law, or a hundred similar, may have existed, and not have been known to this Gileadite chieftain; but even if the law was known, he was not in a mood to regulate his actions by such considerations. The man was burning with passion for revenge, and to nerve himself to his utmost effort, he bound himself by the most solemn vow he could think of. Thenceforth, when the victory was secured, there was no question, to a superstitious man, of Mosaic laws—nay, he repressed his strongest human instincts; but the act was not, as our critics would make us believe, the performance of an ordinary rite to a bloodthirsty God. Jephthah's god for the time was his own feeling of revenge and injured pride, and his law was the honour and sacredness of the vow."

When Professor Max Müller delivered his third series of Gifford Lectures in Glasgow, there were some audible murmurings there. Nor did this seem unaccountable to those who read the book when it appeared under the title of *Anthropological Religion*. For there were found in it excursions into the realm of theology that still seemed remarkable, even to those who had followed Professor Huxley's recent rambles therein. The murmurings were not without their influence on Professor Max Müller. When the lectures were published, he wrote a Preface to them.

In the course of St. Paul's great argument for the resurrection of the body, in the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, he reaches the point

where he is confronted with the question of the nature of the risen body. "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" One sometimes hears the verse read with the emphasis placed on "body" instead of on "what," as if the reader understood that only at that verse did the apostle begin to speak of the resurrection of the body. But Professor Max Müller's Bible-reading leads him far beyond such an opinion as that. He holds that the Apostle Paul did not believe in the resurrection of the body at all. Here are his words: "Has not St. Paul declared, 'If Christ is not risen, our faith is in vain'? Yes, but what did risen mean to St. Paul? Was it the mere resuscitation of a material body, or was it the eternal life of the spirit?"

And there are stranger things in this strange Preface than that. Professor Dickson of Glasgow University, who is known everywhere as the translator of Mommsen and the editor of Meyer, but is best known in Scotland for his proficiency in his own proper department of theology, has just published a lecture upon it (*Professor Max Müller's Preface on Miracles.* Maclehose, 6d.). Born of the immediate occasion, this lecture seeks to do no more than meet it. But apart from the fact that without doubt the thing had to be done, it will be found that Professor Dickson has spoken a most seasonable word at this present time.

For he has shown, beyond all possibility of question, that Professor Max Müller has condescended in this Preface, in order to find support for his unparalleled theological doctrines, to misrepresent the opinions of others. Now, the search after truth is of wider interest than its attainment, and it is of more consequence that we should seek it with clean hands and a pure heart than that we should hold a correct opinion upon some department of it. Therefore it is a matter of comparative indifference that Professor Max Müller's position upon miracles has been proved untenable and absurd; it is of deepest concern to us all that he should have sought support for his position by misrepresenting the attitude of others.

The two writers whom he thus misrepresents are the late Cardinal Newman and the present Bishop of London. He does it by a method which he himself describes as "careful selection." "It can easily be said," he remarks, "that my extracts are garbled; but I can only admit that they were carefully selected." The sentence has that flavour about it which, in an irresponsible paragraph writer, we might (using his own language) designate as "chaff"; but Professor Max Müller himself prevents us from doing him that injustice. He is serious throughout. We have never seen him more seriously anxious to make out his case. Indeed, it is evident that it was that very anxiety that drove him upon the desperate expedient which he thus describes. Several examples of it are referred to by Dr. Dickson, but we shall rest content with one of them.

On page vii of the Preface we read: "Let me refer my opponents again to Dr. Newman, who says in so many words, 'Most miracles are a continuation or augmentation of natural processes. For instance, there is said to be something like manna in the desert ordinarily, and the sacred narrative mentions a wind as blowing up the waters of the Red Sea, and so in numerous other miracles;' that is to say [this being Professor Max Müller's addition], the manna from heaven was not a physical miracle, but an ordinary event ignorantly mistaken for a miracle, and the passing of the Red Sea was simply the effect of the wind blowing up the waters."

Upon this Dr. Dickson remarks: "Nothing can be more engagingly candid than this reference of opponents to Newman, or more explicit than the assertion 'in so many words.' But, when I turn to the *Contemporary Review* for July 1891, where the words are given by Mr. Wilfrid Ward from a

memorandum left by Dr. Newman, I find that the passage runs thus: 'Some miracles, as the raising of the dead, certainly are not a continuation or augmentation of natural processes, but most are—*e.g.* there is said to be something like manna in the desert ordinarily, and the sacred narrative mentions a wind as blowing up the waters of the Red Sea—and so in numerous other miracles. It is a confirmation of this to look at Gibbon's *Five Causes of Christianity*. We do not deny them, but only say they are not sufficient — *i.e.* the spread of Christianity was something more than natural.'"

It is at once manifest that by this singular process, which he calls "careful selection," Professor Max Müller represents Newman as supporting the very position which in reality he is endeavouring to refute. He might as well have said at once that, on the question of miracles, Newman and Gibbon were at one. But Newman writes to prove that they are not at one, but in irreconcilable antagonism on this subject. "Careful selection," however, first omits the statement that "some miracles, as the raising of the dead, certainly are not a continuation or augmentation of natural processes." And then it succeeds in making Newman give the *whole* credit for most miracles to natural causes, and assert that they were ordinary events ignorantly mistaken for miracles, while Newman distinctly states—and it is the point of his argument—that these natural processes were *not* sufficient to account for the miracle.

"Most miracles are a continuation or augmentation of natural processes." Those words by John Henry Newman might have been chosen as the text of what, with all its limitations and antagonisms, is perhaps the most instructive work that we have ever received from Germany, Wendt's *The Teaching of Jesus*, the first volume of which has recently appeared. (*The Teaching of Jesus.* By H. H. Wendt, D.D., Heidelberg. In two volumes. T. & T. Clark. 8vo. Vol. i., pp. 408. 10s. 6d.)

The great miracle with which Professor Wendt deals is the teaching of Jesus. And the extraordinary freshness and vitality of his volume lies in this, that he shows how the miracle of Jesus' teaching comes forth at every point out of natural and pre-existing processes, however far it may sail away beyond them. He has taught us to know how marvellously fertile a principle this is which Newman has thus expressed, a principle which, if the present generation cannot claim its discovery, yet certainly can claim its recognition and fruitful application. Our fathers had their "economy of miracle." They saw that miracles come only when they are needed. They taught us, therefore, to look for them chiefly at great crises, like the deliverance from Egypt, the apostasy under Ahab, the incarnation of the Eternal Word. The economy of miracle was not without its use and interest. But even Dean Milman never claimed that freshness and fertility for the economy of miracle which must henceforth always be associated with this newer principle—this principle which we have quoted in the words of Newman, and which for the moment we may call the modesty of miracle.

We owe that to Professor Wendt. We have been familiar for some time with the modesty of miracle in its application to individual miracles both in the Old Testament and in the New. It is part of the common stock of the modern commentator to point out that a wind was sent forth to bring up the quails from the sea, and that the purifying pots were first filled with water before the wine could be poured out of them. We have even been introduced to the principle, in its application to the person and work of Christ, by such titles as "Books which Influenced our Lord." But it has been left to the genius of Professor Wendt, unfettered by the inevitable risk he ran, to bring this principle of interpretation to its maturity and gather the abundant fruit from off its branches.

"Most miracles are a continuation or augmentation of natural processes." Let us choose the special miracle of Christ's doctrine of God.

"Speaking paradoxically," says Professor Wendt, "we can say that Jesus taught no new doctrine of God, but adopted and built upon the Old Testament Jewish view; and, at the same time, that His conception of God stands on a specifically higher level than the Jewish view." Here, then, the "natural process" is the Jewish conception of God in the time of Jesus Christ. What was it? "The customary title under which, in the Old Testament, God was designated, in view of His position and attitude towards Israel, was that of *King*; and, in correspondence with this, the Israelites style themselves the *servants of God*." "This predominance of the kingly designation of God is not accidental, but arises out of the conceptions which the pious Israelites had of the government of God."

Jesus knew and spoke of God as Father. Neither the name nor the conception was absolutely new. But the Fatherhood of God had found only occasional expression in the Old Testament; and it had never been completely carried out in its consequences. Later, Judaism developed more and more the ideas of God's transcendent greatness and judicial authority over men, till, in the times of Jesus, thoughts of the grace and faithfulness of God had almost passed away from the consciousness of pious Israelites. "If we take note of this tendency of Jewish theology in the time of Jesus, and consider how ready it lay to the hand of Jesus, in view of the traditionary notion of the kingdom of God which He accepted, to designate God as the *King* of His kingdom, we gain a right estimate of the fact that Jesus chose much rather the use of the name of *Father*, for Himself and His disciples, as the usual term for God, and has made the idea of the paternal love of God the foundation of His proclamation of the kingdom of God. No doubt He found the basis of this apprehension and appellation of God in the Old Testament, but His original and significant achievement was that, in opposition to the religious tendencies of His time, He should have so taken hold of that connecting link as to bring into a position of sole sovereign authority in His teaching that view of God which exalts His gratuitous love and faithfulness, and which, therefore, uses the name of Father as its comprehensive expression."

Or again, let us choose Christ's teaching about Angels. "We must consider," says Professor Wendt, "what importance the idea of the agency of the angels and demons had for the popular piety of the Jews of that period, and how it arose among them from the tendency to conceive the idea of God in the most abstract and transcendental form, so that the idea of the number and potent influence of angelic beings ever increased and appeared more necessary, in order to mediate between that God who was absolutely exalted above the world, and who stood in essential opposition to all that is material and transient. Thus we shall be able to measure the importance and grandeur of this point in the teaching of Jesus, that He has allowed neither the idea of angels nor of devils to exercise influence on the devout trust of men. We ought not, in discussing the teaching of Jesus, to lay stress on the fact that He adopted the Jewish ideas of the existence of angels and their activity in the service of God; but we must, above all, emphasise the fact that, all through, He found no support for faith in the thought of angels; far less did He allow trust in angels to take the place of trust in God."

Or, finally, let us choose our Lord's teaching respecting man's love to man. "The duty of spontaneous and merciful kindness towards Israelites, and towards the strangers dwelling in the land, and the duty of forgiving love towards private foes was not foreign even to the Old Testament Jewish consciousness, as will be evident from many expressions of the Old Testament. The ground of the originality and significance of the teaching of Jesus on this point did not lie in His giving the command of love an application and extension hitherto unknown. Indeed, not only those Old Testament expressions in regard to widows and

orphans, strangers, and even enemies, and even utterances of heathen philosophers regarding universal human love, could be adduced to prove that in this respect the teaching of Jesus was not original. But the newness and importance of this teaching of Jesus lies in the fact that He has *established on a firm religious basis* this command of love, and specially of spontaneous forgiving love, so that this duty has attained an essential place in the moral consciousness of men."

These are three examples of Professor Wendt's method. They are in some sense a working out of that true principle which we have called the modesty of miracle. But here we are bound to say that these examples have something in them, or something lacking from them, which cannot but excite a certain antagonism in those whose hope is in the evangelic faith. That antagonism seems to arise from the feeling that Professor Wendt comes perilously near to ascribing certain parts of the great miracle with which he deals altogether to natural processes. Max Müller wholly and wonderfully resolves all his miracles into natural processes. Professor Wendt is not as Professor Max Müller. But surely the natural is less, and the supernatural more, than sometimes he makes it to be.

Yet the book is marvellously stimulating and instructive. And there is one large element in it which is as pleasing as it is instructive. It abounds in expositions of Scripture of the freshest and most suggestive character.

Thus Professor Wendt will help not a few to a firmer footing on that most difficult passage in the Gospels, in which Jesus builds an argument for the resurrection from the dead upon God's words to Moses: "But as touching the dead, that they are raised, have ye not read in the book of Moses, in the place concerning the Bush, how God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living: ye do greatly err" (Mark xii. 26, 27). Who but our Lord would have seen anything more in that passage than the statement that the God who now appeared to Moses was the same who had appeared to his fathers? Visibly to all men it is a proof of the continued existence of God. But Christ uses it as a proof of the continued existence of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. For, says Professor Wendt, He had the certainty that fellowship with God is a life-bringing relation. Whoever truly belongs to God, so that God regards that one as His, cannot really experience the destructive power of death, or be in an unblest condition, but must have and maintain a blessed life granted by God. Such a one, by virtue of this enduring life in fellowship with God, in spite of earthly death and in spite of Hades, shall at length be awakened to a heavenly life with God.[1]

Few passages are more frequently quoted in modern sermon literature than John xvii. 3: "This is life eternal, that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent?" For the old question, What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? has largely resolved itself into a speculative curiosity as to what *is* eternal life: and an exact scientific definition like that is seized upon as precisely the thing that is wanted. And it is not only scientific; it is also in a line with that modern spirit whose passionate motto is—

"Let knowledge grow from more to more."

Forgetful of the apostle's warning that "whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away," we do not merely carry our knowledge in prospect into the life to come, but we make the heavenly and eternal life consist in knowledge.

But Professor Wendt finds in this passage no definition of the nature of eternal life. To him it is but an example of that familiar form of speech which states the means of obtaining a thing as if it were the thing to be obtained. The Jews searched the Scriptures because in them they thought

[1] Compare a most interesting letter by the Rev. Edward White in the *Christian World* of Dec. 10, 1891.

they had eternal life. Not that a knowledge of Scripture was itself eternal life to the Jews, but because they regarded the instructions of Scripture as the means of certainly obtaining eternal life. This pregnant mode of expression is chosen in order to indicate that the means in question is not merely a possible one alongside of other means, but is the sole possible one which fully guarantees the end striven after. Using the same form of speech, St. Paul says (1 Cor. i. 30): "Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," where he means that Christ has been made for us the Mediator, and indeed the sole and perfect Mediator, of those benefits. And in Col. i. 27: "Christ in you, the hope of glory;" that is, Christ who is the sole and perfect foundation and support of our hope of glory. And, finally, when our Lord describes Himself as the Resurrection and the Life, He simply means, says Dr. Wendt, that He and He alone is the perfect *Mediator* of the resurrection-life.

Is there, then, no definition in the Gospels of the nature and essence of eternal life? Yes; and Professor Wendt finds it anew where it was found at the very beginning, in the third chapter of St. John. And more than that, he finds that the very purpose of the definition which is given there is to destroy the notion that eternal life consists in knowledge. Nicodemus came with this idea. "We know that Thou art a *teacher* come from God;" as if he had said (and perhaps did say, for no doubt the conversation is condensed), What increase of knowledge must I gain that I may have eternal life? Jesus replies at once that the necessary condition of participation in the kingdom of God lies not in any new knowledge, but in a new birth. "Except a man be *born* again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

English Literature in its Religious and Ethical Aspects.

James Russell Lowell.

By the Rev. G. Milligan, M.A., B.D., Edinburgh.

"There is Lowell, who's striving Parnassus to climb
With a whole bale of *isms* tied together with rhyme,
He might get on alone, spite of brambles and boulders,
But he can't with that bundle he has on his shoulders,
The top of the hill he will ne'er come nigh reaching
Till he learns the distinction 'twixt singing and preaching;
His lyre has some chords that would ring pretty well,
But he'd rather by half make a drum of the shell,
And rattle away till he's old as Methusalem,
At the head of a march to the last new Jerusalem."

These lines of Lowell's own, half-humorous, half-serious, from "A Fable for Critics," in which he had to mention himself if he was to preserve his anonymity, indicate very clearly what the poet thought likely to be the verdict of posterity regarding him. And, though an author is not usually the best judge of his own works, there has been a wonderful consensus of opinion in the same direction in the numerous notices which have appeared since his death. For it is not as a poet pure and simple, nor even as a satirist and humorist of the first rank, that Lowell seems most likely to be remembered, but rather as a religious teacher, one whose constant aim it was—

"To write some earnest verse or line,
Which, seeking not the praise of art,
Shall make a clearer faith and manhood shine
In the untutored heart."

To an age which delights in the doctrine of heredity, it is not difficult to explain this in part at least. Descended from that gallant "little shipload of outcasts who landed at Plymouth two centuries and a half ago," and whose influence upon the future, not only of New England, but of the world, he was never tired of extolling, himself the son of a Massachusetts clergyman, Lowell had as the basis of his character to the last his native Puritanism. Not, of course, that we are to as-