

na'ar, stands in Deuteronomy, as well as in the other books of the Pentateuch, for both *lad* and *lass*, with one solitary exception; but the feminine form נַעֲרָה, *na'arah*, is employed for that sex in all other parts of the Bible. This is another evidence of an early age. A word which must have been of frequent use among a nomad race signifying a *sheep*, presents the archaic form of כֶּשֶׁב, *keseb*, in this and the other Mosaic books, but in all others the two last letters are transposed כֶּבֶשׂ, *kebes*. Many other distinctive marks in the phraseology and verbiage might be adduced which go far to show that Deuteronomy is one of the five sisters which constitute the Pentateuchal family, and that the period which witnessed their birth is that which is denoted in the register of Israel's earliest records, and witnessed by the handwriting and signature of no other author than Moses.

This is but a brief sketch of a controversy of no small importance. The alteration of a date or ascription of a book to an author other than the one universally accepted may appear at first sight a matter of little moment, but it involves so much that must follow. If this book be an allegory, a myth, or an idealization, a drama, or a deception, or in plain speech, a forgery, perpetrated, though it may be, with the best intentions, why should not the other books of the Bible, Old and New Testament alike, be called into like question and doubt? It is mere mockery to profess loudly faith in the Incarnation, and then to cut away all the foundation on which the doctrine rests. If this book and the residue of the Pentateuch be reduced to dust and ashes in the fires of sceptical criticism, how can we believe and reverence the witness of Him who said, "Moses wrote of Me;" and "if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words"?

F. TILNEY BASSETT.



ART. V.—NOTES AND COMMENTS ON ST. JOHN XXI.

No. 3.

VER. 12. *Jesus says to them, Come, break your fast. None of the disciples ventured to question Him, Who art thou? knowing that it is the Lord. So Jesus comes, and takes the bread and gives it to them, and the fish in the same way. This was the now third manifestation of Jesus to his disciples, as risen from the dead.*

The fishes were numbered, and Peter's work was done.

And now the solemnly reticent Master speaks again; and with the word *He* approaches (ver. 14) the fire, evidently from a position beyond it, as the disciples looked from the beach landwards. And as they sit near Him He personally dispenses the morning meal. Apparently it was a silent time. A spell was upon the Seven; a sense of awe even greater than on former occasions of interview in these blessed days. And no wonder; for at each successive time, surely, something said to them as they looked and listened that the Lord was nearer to His glory.

So He, none other than Himself, and by no intermediary, fed them. And He is the same still. From some points of view there is and must be much intermediate agency in the carrying about in the world the message and the ordinances of the Lord. Men must translate the Scriptures, and labour in their publication and exposition. Men must minister to other men the sealing Rites of the blessed message. But in the ultimate truth of the matter nothing but Christ is the soul's aliment, and none but Christ, in the work of His Holy Spirit, is the Host, the Provider and Dispenser of Himself. "I will come in, and will sup with him, and he with me."

This then was the third appearance, the third time. The statement is meant, of course, to stand in relation to the whole of this Johannine narrative of the Resurrection period. It thus means obviously that this was the third appearance to any considerable gathering of the disciples, as on the Easter evening and on that day week, when Thomas was brought to believe. Neither John nor the Synoptists record, for certain, any other appearance to a company beside these three occasions and—what surely followed later than this—the meeting on the Galilean mountain (Matt. xxviii.), and then the meeting before and at the Ascension. This "third time" needs notice only as an example of the way in which Scripture expects us, if I may say so, to use our common sense in its explanation. Pressed literally, these words of St. John may seem to contradict other records. Taken with remembrance of the context, which the thoughtful reader is assumed to remember, the agreement with the whole record is complete.

Such, then, was that third interview. There sate that favoured group before the Master, on the grassy border of the lake, in the stillness of the morning, after the night of toil; and "ate and drank with Him after He had risen from the dead," and knew it was He. A silence, as we have said, seems to lie upon them. It was a silence of awe, yet also of rest. In that hour they asked Him nothing, because they saw, because they knew.

Toil was over, and so also was unconsciousness of His

presence, and doubt about it. There is much in the whole fair scene to make us believe it to be, besides its inestimable value as a record of fact, a picture drawn by the Saviour's own hand of the eternal festival beyond the waves of labour and strife, where "they hunger and thirst no more," and where yet "the Lamb shepherds them, and leads them to the living fountains." That blissful hour "is prepared as the morning," silently as the rising of the day, but as surely too, it is coming, it will be here. Shall we not all be found there through grace, leaving the night and the deep behind us, and feeling the Sun of eternal joy upon us and on the land of our desire, as we feast in and on the manifested presence of the beloved Lord?

But St. John leaves the lesson, the mystery, to be drawn out by the reader, and passes on at once.

Ver. 15. *So when they had broken their fast, Jesus says to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonah, am I dear to you more than to these? He says to Him, Yes, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He says to him, Feed my lambs. Again He says to Him, a second time, Simon, son of Jonah, am I dear to you? He says to Him, Yes, Lord. Thou knowest that I love Thee. He says to him, Shepherd my dear sheep (προβάτια). He says to him the third time, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me? Peter was pained that He said to him the third time, Do you love me? And he said to Him, Thou knowest (οἶδας) all things; Thou seest (γινώσκεις) that I love Thee. Jesus says to him, Feed my dear sheep.*

The silent meal was over, then, and Jesus speaks. He speaks so as indeed to answer fully the unspoken question, had they felt it stir within them. *Who art Thou?* He who now speaks is indeed the LORD.

Peter is addressed. He has been already conspicuous in the scene; plunging into the lake while the others row shoreward, climbing into the beached boat and drawing in the net. Now he is singled out to be for a while the one figure, with Jesus, in our view. And this is done (the Lord often does so still in His grace and providence) so as to leave the disciple at once humble and happy.

We may suppose that Peter needed both humiliation and happiness specially just then. His haste to reach the shore may have had in it some slight trace of personal display of devotion. And on the other hand there was a deep wound in his soul, left by the denials of that remembered and recent night of terror. In the complexities of that human heart there was possible room for both feelings at once; for a yielding once more to a self-asserting impulse and for a sore sickness of soul in memory and conviction. Self-assertion and inmost sadness

sometimes lie near together. And to both maladies the blessed Lord knows how to apply His searching, healing hand.

We are not to think that this was the first moment of Peter's restoration and acceptance. He was present on both the previous occasions when Jesus had met His disciples and had blessed them with His peace. He had enjoyed one secret interview, on the great Easter Day itself; "*the Lord appeared unto Simon*;" an appearance which assuredly conveyed to the penitent Apostle, *in private*, a blessed restoration. But very deep griefs, especially of the conscience, may well ask for more than a solitary act and word of reassurance. In his pain and exhaustion the sufferer is thankful if the message may be "doubled unto him." And besides, in this case, the secret welcome back and the general benediction could not fully take the place of a public reinstatement of the lapsed Apostle, in view of his association with his brethren and, in some sense, leadership amongst them.

So the Lord deliberately and solemnly restored him, with His own lips, and before six apostolic witnesses. The mighty wound needed a proportionate remedy. And the remedy was to be such as to remind him for ever of his snares and his weakness, that he might watch and stand.

"*Simon, son of Jonah, am I dear to you?*"

"Simon, son of Jonah." It is almost exactly the same phrase as that used in St. John's first chapter (verse 48), only a little briefer, by the omission of *νίός*, as was natural in a direct appellation. The appellation occurs nowhere else in this Gospel, often as Peter is referred to in its narratives. The use of the words here is assuredly by design, and observable; the Lord uses on purpose in this restitution of the Apostle the name which He had used at his institution. He reminds Peter thus that he must be content to start anew, to begin again as the catechumen; not Cephas now, not Peter now, but just Simon, Jonah's son.

And the question put by the Lord is as elementary as the appellation: *ἀγαπᾷς με πλείον τούτων*; "*Do you love me more than these others do?*" It is possible, grammatically, I hardly need say, to explain the Greek either thus, or "*Do you love me more than you love these men?*" But surely of the two renderings the latter is not to the purpose of the occasion. Nothing in the narrative suggests any special need that the Lord should, as it were, lay His hand on Peter and ask him if he could prefer Him to his apostolic friends. But the other explanation fits exactly into the picture as we have it: "Is your love to me warmer, stronger, higher than theirs?" The old weakness of Peter's heart was its tendency to profess a peculiar and superior love. "Though all should deny Thee, yet

will not I; I will never be offended." So he had said just before his fall; self-assertion had gone before, close before, what had indeed seemed to be his utter ruin. He had not been willing to love, to trust, to follow, quite simply; he must needs do so with a mind full of estimates of comparison favourable to himself: "my love, my obedience, see what they are; admire the devoted Apostle!" It is a mysterious possibility, the lingering of such thoughts in the same soul which at the same time in a measure feels, and utters, true love to its Redeemer. But it is as true as it is mysterious. And what shall be the antidote? Nothing but such a God-given view of Him in His beauty and glory as shall draw the soul clear off from its centre in itself to rest, not in an abstract self-oblivion, but in Him. To shake off the consciousness of our personality is the dream of the pantheist. The self-denial of the Gospel comes when the individual so sees and receives Christ that He occupies and fills the personality with the power and peace of His living presence. Then, indeed, it lives; lives individually, lives with rich developments of character, yet lives purely and simply, because in and by the Lord. The more it is thus with the man the less will he be betrayed into the hollow and unhappy thought, "I love Him better than others do; I serve more, I bear more in His name, than others."

Such surely, be it said with all reverence for the blessed Apostle's sacred memory, had been the special risk for St. Peter. And upon this now the Master lays His firm and loving hand, in the question: "*Am I dear to you, more than to these?*"

I venture to render ἀγαπᾶς με thus: "*Am I dear to you?*" It may at least remind us that there *is* a difference here in the Greek words rendered "love" in our version: ἀγαπᾶν, φιλεῖν. But it can only express imperfectly the generally recognised distinction, that ἀγαπᾶν, on the whole, denotes the more deliberate affection and φιλεῖν the warmer emotion. Archbishop Trench gives careful attention to the distinction in his *New Testament Synonyms*, a book which is often the best of commentaries on a difficult text; and his conclusion is as I have just said. Thus here the Lord asks the Apostle, in His first two queries, whether he loves Him in the clear, exalted way of the soul's full choice and calm satisfaction, and the Apostle, surely as owning himself unworthy to assert so serene and sublime an affection, feeling himself inadequate to it, sinner that he is, replies in the other word, so warm, so personal, but also humble; φιλῶ σε, I love Thee with my poor heart's love. My paraphrase does but doubtfully express this, but it can point to it. Let me only add, as regards the study of the two words, that the distinction is by no means to be pressed generally.

The two verbs, when either occurs apart, are apt each to absorb something of the other's meaning. It is when placed together, as here, that their distinction must be carefully remembered.

"*Simon, son of Jonah, am I dear to you?*" So says the Lord Jesus twice over to His servant. Am I dear to you? Does your heart, with a strong, full choice of love and gladness, choose me? Does it rest in Me, as all its salvation and also as all its desire? *Ἀγαπᾷς με*; Wonderful question! We cannot but remark it, as we pass on, as an instance of the mysterious, persistent "self-assertion" of the Lord. He mentions not the word GOD. It occurs but once in this chapter, and then not in His utterances. It is "I," "me," "till I come," "my sheep," "my lambs," "lovest thou me?" Observe this with reverent attention. It is one of the deepest implicit proofs of the Divine Oneness of the Father and the Son, this tone and claim of the Son about Himself which, but for the truth of the *Homöision*, the Co-essentiality, would be nothing else than the intrusion of an alien medium between the soul and the Maker, the claim of a love for the creature, however exalted a creature this might be, which is due only to the Creator, who is blessed for ever.

"Am I dear to thee, in the dearness of this lofty affection, this *ἀγάπη*?" Wonderful question, let us say again; wonderful from this other point of view, that it shows such a care on HIS part for the love of such poor hearts as ours. It is indeed lovable in JESUS CHRIST that He loves us to love Him; that it is something to HIM that the sinful human being who a few weeks earlier had denied acquaintance with Him should return now, not with terror and despair, but with love, to His blessed side. "Give me thine *heart*" is the most searching, as it is the most characteristic, of the demands of the God of Revelation, of the God of Christ, of Christ the Son of God. But it is also a demand infinitely amiable. He who thus asks for the gift of the heart has on His part a heart to give. "Lovest thou Me? I care that thou shouldst love Me. Read in My question the truth, the certainty, that I loved thee, that I love thee."

Let me quote the words of one of the greatest of modern preachers, as he was one of the most devoted and loving of modern believers, Adolphe Monod; words in his Sermon entitled, *Dieu demandant le cœur à l'Homme*: "No other religion presents anything which resembles this invitation to give God the heart. Give me thy observances, says the God of Pharisaism. Give me thy personality, says the God of Hegel. Give me thy reason, says the God of Kant. . . . It remains for the God of Jesus Christ to say, give me thy heart. . . . He makes it the essence

and the glory of His doctrine. With Him, to give the heart to God is not merely an obligation of piety; it is its root, its beginning, its middle, and its end. It is the unmistakable feature (*le caractère non équivoque*) of a genuine conversion. You tell me that a man believes the gospel of grace; he does well, but does he believe it with a living faith? You tell me that he is in the front of every Christian effort; ay, but does he bring with him a Christian spirit? But tell me that he has given his heart to God, and every other question is superfluous. Faith, works, grace, holiness, the new creation, all is there. Will you enter on the possession?"

"Am I dear to you?" Such was the question put by Jesus to Peter, on the shore, by the fire, in the presence of Peter's six listening friends. It was a strangely searching moment. The night was over, with all its movements, its excitements, its lassitude; his stirring, leading spirit is for a while in check; and now, before his Master and his friends, he is faced by this question altogether of the heart, the inner heart, not of the outer act: "Am I dear to you?" Let us sit reverently down beside the Apostle, and humbly put ourselves also in the line of that question. Let us often listen for it; and not least after some hour of vivid interest, of strong exertion, of rich intercourse. Then, if ever, let us sit down before the Lord and hear Him say, "Am I dear to you?" Do not ask others whether they think you love Christ. Let Christ ask you. Friends will be very kind and indulgent in their answers for us; at least, so it will be if they are themselves humble believers. They will give us more than full credit for every work we try to do under the banner of religion, for every sacrifice we seem to make in a Christian cause. Yes, they will be kind; and so will the Lord Jesus be. Only, He will be omniscient also, and will not for a moment mistake act for motive, hand for heart. When He puts the question, we shall have to reply with Peter, *Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest—what shall it be?—that I love Thee?* Why should it not be so? If you love, not worthily (impossible) but really, you may surely *know* it. And why not love really? Nothing can prevent it but blindness to what Jesus Christ is, oblivion of what Jesus Christ is and does for you.

Oh, sweet it is to know, most simply, that the soul loves Him; not as it should love Him, truly, and not "more than these," with a glance of self-consciousness around; but that indeed it does love Him—whether *ἀγαπᾶ* or *φιλᾶ* be its chosen word.

St. Peter, happily, could answer at once, before his Lord and his companions, *Yes, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. Φιλᾶ σε.* The stress is on *φιλᾶ*, not on *σε*. And the *φιλᾶ* is

emphatic, as I have said above; it indicates a certain avoidance of the other verb. "I love Thee, with such love as this poor heart can feel. I speak not of the heights of heavenly affection now. But Thou knowest, my Lord, my Saviour, that I do love Thee with most personal devotion."

No utterance could have been more beautifully in keeping with that hour of mysterious agitation and solemn joy. It was otherwise with Peter in later days. In his first epistle, that golden document of the Gospel, he says without reserve, of all true believers, "*Him having not seen ye love*" (ἀγαπάτε). But here, by the lake, what could have been more true to all the wonderful surroundings than this φιλω σε? And we observe that the Lord, in His third inquiry, concedes this word to the Apostle: He meets him, He condescends to him, half-way. "*Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me? φιλεῖς με*; I note your chosen word; I understand your choice; and now I am content to put my question in your way. I ask you now for one final assurance thus—φιλεῖς με?"

Let us too hear our blessed Master put to us His question in those terms. If indeed φιλεῖν is in so far lower than ἀγαπᾶν that it indicates less of insight and more of emotion, yet the word, though lower by comparison, is in itself a precious word. "Do you feel a loving affection for me?" Do we? Are we not somewhat too easily content to dispense with that experience? In a just anxiety not to build our salvation on our feelings (and indeed we need to be very clear upon that matter) let us not forget the other side. Let us not forget that exactly because our peace is built not on our feelings but on our most adorable and loving Lord, therefore it is for us to draw from it, in the glad necessity of a true spiritual sequence, the result of an ardent affection in the inmost heart.

I love Thee for the glorious worth
 In Thy great Self I see;
 I love Thee for the shameful cross
 Thou hast endured for me.

If we believe, if we enter into the truths, let me say, of the Nicene Creed, that blessed summary of truth and love, worthy of often repetition in private, as well as before the Table of the Lord, shall not the words of our confession of His Name be inbreathed all through with the secret consciousness, strong and reverently tender, ἀγαπῶ σε, Κύριε, φιλω σε, Κύριε?

I have not attempted to take up *seriatim* the three questions and three answers. The *thrice*-repeated inquiry seems to carry so manifest a reference to the threefold denial, and a reference of that suppressed and implicit kind characteristic of St. John's record, that it is surprising that a doubt should

ever have been cast on the reference. What to my own mind makes the reference certain is the whole character of the scene. It is a solemn reinstatement of St. Peter, not merely into right relations with his Master generally, but into apostolic relations with Him. Certainly it was *not* a commission to him to be the Prince of the Apostles, the universal Bishop.¹ Were it so, Peter was most unfaithful to his commission; for never, by written word or recorded deed, did he claim even the shadow of such a power. But the saint, though he receives no commission here to be lord over his brethren, does receive a threefold assurance of his full restoration to a sacred place among his brethren. "Be a feeder of my lambs, the weak, the young; be a tending watchman of my dear flock. In all the fulness of the privilege, the labour, and the peril, be again my own Apostle, till at the last you are my Martyr."

I must not at present follow out further the details of this part of the passage. I close now with one obvious remark of application to ourselves. The Lord's questions to Peter about love to Himself are each at once followed by a command, a command to help the souls of others. From this, two reflections naturally arise, and with them we will once more withdraw for a season from that holy group on the Galilean beach.

First, the great qualification for work for Christ in the hearts of others is love to Christ in the worker's heart, real, personal love in the conscious individual experience.

Then, secondly, where that love is present, kindled by His free and wonderful love to us, there we may expect as the sure sequel that some work for Him in the hearts of others will be put by Him into our hands. He lights the holy flame. He also lays on the fuel which will draw out its life and power.

Happy the Christian who, in the path not of self-choice but of the guidance of God, finds evermore both truths exemplified; love of the Saviour animating work for Him, work for Him giving movement and expansion and permanence to the sense of love.

H. C. G. MOULE.

. In the previous number, p. 245, line 16 from the foot of the page, "quite full, quite full," is a *lapsus plumæ* for "quite full."—H. C. G. M.

¹ It is curious to read here in M. Lasserre's often excellent modern French rendering of the Gospels the significant words, *Sois le pasteur de mes agneaux, Sois le pasteur de mes brebis.*