ARTICLE VIII.

"LOVEST THOU ME?"

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In the *Independent* of Nov. 2, 1882, the present writer presented under the title above, a brief statement of the results of a fresh investigation of the biblical usage of the verbs ἀγαπάω and φιλέω and their derivatives. As that article seems to have somehow escaped the notice of scholars, and learned authors have gone on repeating in standard works the errors which that investigation exposed, it seems proper to present the facts again in greater detail in these pages.

In the dialogue between Jesus and Peter (John xxi. 15–17), is there any significance in the fact that Jesus begins with ἀγαπᾷς, repeats it, and finally says φιλεῖς, while Peter every time protests φιλῶ? A patient study of the concordances compels us to answer that there is no significance.

Such a question requires a purely inductive answer. The question is not whether an imaginative writer, like Trench, can construct an ingenious theory involving "subtle and delicate play of feeling", but, What was usage? Dr. Ezra Abbott has shown in another case (The Distinction between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω. Critical Essays. 1888) how the learned archbishop could construct, on purely sentimental grounds, and right in the face of abundant facts of usage, an artificial distinction and secure the unwary assent of distinguished scholars. We are convinced that he has done so here.

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"Φιλέω, we need not say, is as early as the earliest Greek literature itself, and as wide in its meaning as our verb *to love*, running through all kinds and degrees of the feeling, from the love of family and friend down to mere liking and *being wont* to do a thing; and passing over from the sphere of innocent to that of licentious love, whether passionate or merely sensual."[1] In modern Greek all this definition is just as true of ἀγαπῶ which has completely superseded φιλῶ in all its senses, except that of kissing. The venerable and learned Professor E. A. Sophocles, in a private letter written in 1881, said: "The modern ἀγαπῶ means simply *to love*. In general it corresponds to the classical φιλῶ, ἐρῶ, ἔραμαι. As to the modern φιλῶ it retains only the meaning *to kiss*." Accordingly, Byron sings to the "Maid of Athens", Ζώη μοῦ σὰς ἀγαπῶ (not φιλῶ). At some time or other, for some reason or other, one verb went out of fashion and the other verb came in. The ideas to be expressed remained, like the human heart, the same, but a different vocable was chosen to express them. Such supersessions occur constantly in all languages and are the commonplaces of philologists. The substitution of *know* for *wot*, in English, is one illustration out of hundreds. The study of these substitutions is a chief charm of Comparative Semitic. Of this the history of the usage of the two words for *love* in Hebrew and Aramaic (אהב and רחם) furnishes an apposite example.

While the substitution of one word for another is in progress there must be an interval of time when both are in use together, one waning and the other waxing, not as the expression of a better idea, but as a better expression of the common idea. For as long as they are felt to express different ideas each has its own *raison d' être* and inviolable domain, and supersession cannot occur. If ἀγαπῶ has superseded φιλῶ in Greek, as undeniably it has, then there was also undeniably a time when to Greek speakers the two verbs meant the same, but people preferred to say

[1] T. D. Woolsey, Andover Review, Aug. 1885.

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ἀγαπῶ just as in English many persons now prefer to say *begin* rather than *commence*, not from any feeling of difference in the meaning of these familiar words, but from taste.

It is easy to show that the substitution of ἀγαπάω for φιλέω, as the general verb for all kinds and degrees of love, had advanced so far among Hellenistic Greeks as long as two or three hundred years before the gospels were written, that the classic distinction, perhaps never very clear, was completely lost, and the one verb was simply the rare, and the other the common, expression for the same meanings. In that tender last interview at the sea of Galilee, it is altogether improbable that Jesus (who afterward addressed the learned Saul of Tarsus "in the Hebrew language", *i. e.* Aramaic) spoke to Peter in Greek. Aramaic was as incapable of expressing the supposed distinction as is the English. The Peshito version has the same word throughout. But whoever first expressed those questions and answers in Greek, whether Jesus and Peter, or John, so far as we can infer from the entire range of biblical usage, had as little consciousness of purpose in varying the words for *love* as we should have in writing *begin* in one sentence and *commence* in the next. The production of the Septuagint version is generally placed between B. C. 280 and B. C. 150. It is sufficient for our purpose that it was the most familiar Greek book in the hands of Jews for a long time before the Christian era. Its influence on the writers of the New Testament outweighed, of course, that of all other Greek literature. What Trench and his successors have wholly failed to see is the decisiveness of the evidence of the Septuagint as to the history and significance of the words in pre-christian Hellenistic Greek.

In discussing the usage of the Septuagint we shall refer only to the books which the Palestinian Jews accepted as canonical, since the New Testament shows the influence of no others, and consideration of the Apocrypha would add complexity to the discussion without affecting the result. In the canonical books of the Septuagint then, ἀγα-

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πάω occurs very nearly two hundred times, while φιλέω (excluding those cases where it signifies *to kiss*) occurs but nine times; and ἀγαπάω fully and freely occupies the whole field of meaning so well defined by Woolsey, in the words quoted above, as belonging to φιλέω. It is the word in constant use to express (1) God's love to man, (2) God's love for truth and other virtues and worthy objects, (3) man's love for God, (4) man's love for salvation and worthy objects, (5) man's conscientious love for man, (6) ordinary human friendship, (7) parental and filial affection, (8) the love of husband and wife, (9) impure sexual love, (10) man's love for cursing and other vices and sinful objects.

Φιλέω, as we have said, is used with the meaning *to love* but nine times in the whole canonical Septuagint. But when used, it is not to express some subtle and delicate distinction out of the power of ἀγαπάω. It is simply used in the same senses, namely, once for parental partiality, four times of fondness for food and slumber, twice of the love of wisdom, and twice in a wholly indefinite sense. There is nothing characteristic or antithetical in any one of these cases.

The substantive, ἀγάπη, occurs fifteen times in the canonical Septuagint, and in all but two of them, where the sense is indefinite and general, refers to the love of the sexes. In fact, eleven of the instances are in the Song of Solomon. It is used to name Amnon's unlawful passion for Tamar (2 Sam. xiii. 15) and also to translate Jeremiah's reference to "the love of thine espousals" (Jer. ii. 2).

Φιλία occurs seven times in the canonical books of the Septuagint. The cases are all in the translation of the book of Proverbs. In five of them the sense is wholly general; once the reference is to the pure (v. 19) and once to the impure (vii. 18) love of the sexes. There is therefore no evidence of a difference in idea for these two substantives. Both alike may be freely used for any kind of affection high or base.

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The substantive, ἀγάπησις, (which is unkown to the New Testament) occurs nine times in the Septuagint. It has the same indiscriminate usage as its verb and names (1) the love of God to man, (2) human friendship, (3) pure sexual love, (4) impure sexual love.

The verbal, ἀγαπητός, occurs sixteen times in the Septuagint. It is used where the affection is God's love for man, human parental fondness, or man's love for the "tabernacles" of God.

Coming now to the New Testament, we find ἀγαπάω used 142 times, while φιλέω (excluding the three times when it signifies *to kiss*) occurs but twenty-two times. The occurences of the former thus outnumber those of the latter more than six to one. Where love of any kind is spoken of, the first verb that occurs to the writer is ἀγαπάω, but occasionally φιλέω, and that without any regard to the shade of thought to be expressed. For example, John in speaking of himself as the "beloved disciple" uses four times ἀγαπάω and once φιλέω. Each verb covers the whole ground but one is preferred. Thus we find φιλέω occasionally used of the love of the Father for the Son, (John v. 20), God's love to man (John xvi. 27, Rev. iii. 19), the love of Jesus for men (John xi. 3, 36), men's love to Jesus (John xvi. 27), the mutual love of believers (Titus iii. 15), the mutual love of sinners (John xv. 19), family love (Matt. x. 37), and the love of sinners for their sinful gratifications (Matt. vi. 5; xxiii. 6; Rev. xxii. 15). It has been said that men are nowhere commanded or said to φιλεῖν God. But Paul says, "If any man love (φιλεῖ) not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema" (1 Cor. xvi. 22), and pious men are said to be φιλόθεοι (2 Tim. iii. 4). In all of these senses ἀγαπάω is used, only more frequently. Instances where it refers to God's love to man, man's love to God, and man's virtuous love to man abound on every page and therefore need no special citation. It expresses also the mutual love of the Father and the Son, the love of husbands for their wives, the selfish mutual love of sin-

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ners, the fondness of sinners for their objects of gratification, such as uppermost seats (Luke xi. 43), darkness (John iii. 19), the praise of men (John xii. 43), this present world (2 Tim. iv. 10 and 1 John ii, 15), the wages of unrighteousness (2 Pet. ii. 15). The only sense in which φιλέω is unique is that of parental and filial love, which happens to be but once mentioned in the New Testament (Matt. x. 34). The only sense in which ἀγαπάω is unique is that of the love of husbands for their wives which also is practically referred to but once (Eph. v. 23–33 and the parallel passage Col. iii. 19). On these solitary overlappings it is impossible to erect a theory.

The substantive ἀγάπη occurs in the New Testament 118 times while φιλία occurs but once. This is not a discrimination of synonyms but practical supersession.

One curious confirmation of our conclusion as to the identity of the domains of φιλέω and ἀγαπάω is found in the fact that it was not felt to be necessary to develop compounds of the later when it came into fashion, but the compounds of φιλέω were used freely as if perfectly homogeneous. There is no compound of ἀγαπάω in either the Old or the New Testament; but we find φιλάγαθος *lover of good*, φιλαδελφία *love of the brethren*, φιλάδελφος *loving as brethren*, φίλανδρος *loving her husband*, φιλανθρωπία *love toward man*, φιλαργυρία *love of money*, φιλάργυρος *lover of money*, φίλαυτος *lover of self*, φιλήδονος *lover of pleasure*. φιλόθεος *lover of God*, φιλονεικία *contention*, φιλόξενος *given to hospitality*, φιλοπρωτεύω *to love to have the preeminence*, φιλόστοργος *tenderly affectioned*, φιλότεκνος *loving one's children*, along with others less significant. It would be unaccountable, if φιλέω was felt to have a distinctly different plane and range of meaning from that of ἀγαπάω, that the compounds of the one verb should be constantly used to express, in composition, the ideas of both. If husbands were commanded to ἀγαπᾶν their wives because the other verb would have suggested sensual passion, it is unaccountable that wives should be commanded to be φίλαν-

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δροι (Titus ii. 4). If men are not commanded to φιλεῖν God, as being inappropriate, it is strange that they are condemned for not being φιλόθεοι (2 Tim. iii. 4).

With the results of this investigation in mind let us now consider the statements of our principal authorities. It will be necessary to condense as much as possible.

The classic authority upon the distinction of these two synonyms is Trench.[2] He says: "The first [ἀγαπάω] expresses a more reasoning attachment, of choice and selection (diligere = deligere), from seeing in the object upon whom it is bestowed that which is worthy of regard; or else from a sense that such was fit and due toward the person so regarded, as being a benefactor, or the like; while the second, without being necessarily an unreasoning attachment, does yet oftentimes give less account of itself to itself; is more instinctive, is more of the feelings, implies more passion..... From this last fact it follows, that when the φιλεῖν is attributed to a person of one sex in regard to another, it generally implies the passion of love, and is seldom employed, but rather ἀγαπᾶν, where such is intended. Take as an example of this the use of the two words in John xi. The sisters of Bethany send to Jesus to announce to him that his friend Lazarus is sick (ver. 3): no misunderstanding is here possible, and the words run thus, ὃν φιλεῖς ἀσθενεῖ: cf. ver. 36. But where the Saviour's affection to the sisters themselves is recorded, St. John at once changes the word, which to unchaste ears at least, might not have sounded so well, and instead of φιλεῖν, expresses himself thus: ἠγάπα δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν Μάρθαν, κ. τ. λ. (ver. 5). .....Out of this which has been said it may be explained that while men are continually bidden ἀγαπᾶν τὸν θεόν, and good men are declared to do so, the φιλεῖν τὸν θεόν is commanded to them never..... It is especially to be regretted that at John xxi. 15–17 we have not been able to retain it [the distinction], for the alternations there are singularly instructive, and if we would draw the whole meaning of

[2] Synonyms of the New Testament § xii.

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the passage forth, must not escape us unnoticed. On occasion of that threefold "Lovest thou me?" which the risen Lord addresses to Peter, he asks him first, ἀγαπᾷς με; At this moment, when all the pulses in the heart of the now penitent apostle are beating with an earnest affection toward his Lord, this word on that Lord's lips sounds too cold; not sufficiently expressing the warmth of his personal affection toward him. Besides the question itself, which grieves and hurts Peter (ver. 17), there is an additional pang in the form which the question takes, sounding as though it were intended to put him at comparative distance from his Lord, and to keep him there; or at least as not permitting him to approach so near as he fain would. He therefore in his answer substitutes for it the word of a more personal love, φιλῶ σε (ver. 15). When Christ repeats the question in the same words as at first, Peter in his reply again substitutes his φιλῶ for the ἀγαπᾷς of his Lord (ver. 16). And now at length he has conquered; for when the third time his Master puts the question to him, he does it with the word which Peter feels will alone express all that is in his heart, and instead of the twice repeated ἀγαπᾷς his word is φιλεῖς now (ver. 17). The question, grievous in itself to Peter, as seeming to imply a doubt in his love, is no longer made more grievous still, by the peculiar shape which it assumes. All this subtle and delicate play of feeling disappears perforce, where the variation in the words used is incapable of being reproduced. Let me observe in conclusion that ἔρως, ἐρᾶν, ἐραστής, never occur in the New Testament, but the two latter occasionally in the Old.....A word or two on the causes of this their significant absence may here find place. In part, no doubt, the explanation of this absence is, that these words by the corrupt use of the world had become so steeped in earthly sensual passion, carried such an atmosphere of this about them, that the truth of God abstained from the defiling contact with them; yea, found out a new word for itself rather than betake itself to one of these.

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For it should never be forgotten that the substantive ἀγάπη is a purely Christian word, no example of its use occuring in any heathen writer whatever."

Upon this long quotation we have to remark: (1) This fine discrimination of the two verbs has been shown by our investigation to be right in the face of the whole usage of both Testaments. The word which Trench thinks expresses "a more reasoning attachment, from seeing in the object that which is worthy of regard" is the very word chosen to express the love of sinners for darkness, the praise of men, this present world, and the wages of unrighteousness. It is used for the mutual selfish love of sinners (Luke vi. 32). (2) The word which Trench thinks sounded to Peter "too cold, not sufficiently expressing the warmth of his personal affection" toward his Lord is that glowing word to which alone Peter had been all his life accustomed in the description of the affection of Jonathan and David, the preeminent example of warm and spontaneous friendship, a "love passing the love of women" (1 Sam. xviii. 1, 3; 2 Sam. i. 26). (3) The word which Trench thinks John uses to express the affection of Jesus toward Martha and Mary, in order not to make an unchaste suggestion, is the very word which for generations had described to Greek-speaking Jews the passion of Shechem for Dinah (Gen. xxxiv. 3), of Samson for Delilah (Jud. xvi. 4, 15), of Amnon for Tamar (2 Sam. xiii. 15), of Solomon for his strange wives (1 Kings xi. 2), and which in the books of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel had described the adulterous passion, gross as the heat of the wild ass, with which Israel had sought idolatry (Isa. lvii. 8; Jer. ii. 25; Ezek. xvi. 37). (4) The assertion that ἀγάπη is a purely Christian word is unaccountable in the face of the fact of its repeated use in the Septuagint for both right and wrong love. Its first appearance in literature is to describe Amnon's lust for Tamar (2 Sam. xiii. 15). (5) The reasons given why ἐρᾶν and its family never occur in the New Testament are purely sentimental and

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imaginary. This family of words was not used for Christian love for the very same reason that ἐπιθυμέω and its family were not used, namely, because they were not the general words in Hellenistic Greek for *love*. They were not used in their own proper senses simply because there was no occasion to refer to those ideas by *any* words. The idea that these words had become "so steeped in earthly sensual pasison that the truth of God abstained from the defiling contact with them," in view of the free use of much grosser terms in the first chapter of Romans, the sixth chapter of 1 Corinthians, and elsewhere, is absurd.

Cremer, in his Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek, draws largely from Trench. He says: "If after all this, it be asked, in conclusion, how do you account for the *surprising fact that every where in biblical Greek*, in both the O. T. and specially in the N. T., where the love which belongs to the sphere of divine revelation is spoken of, ἀγαπᾶν is systematically used, while φιλεῖν has received no distinctive coloring at all?—the answer must be, That the love designated by ἀγαπᾶν must certainly possess a distinctive element of its own. We shall not go wrong if we define the distinction thus: φιλεῖν denotes the love of natural inclination, affection,—love, so to say, originally spontaneous, involuntary (*amare*); ἀγαπᾶν on the other hand, love as a direction of the will, (*diligere*). This must be regarded as the true and adequate explanation, at least as regards Scripture usage, and it is surely confirmed by the testimoney of classical usage above given.....(We can hardly attach importance to the use of ἀγαπᾶν instead of φιλεῖν in John xi. 5: for one cannot see why ἐφίλει, as Cod. D reads, should be regarded as offensive)."

In the supplement, (Edinburgh 1886), which embodies the additions of the 3d and 4th German editions (the 5th edition, 1888, is the same here), Cremer adds:—

"Ἀγαπάω is used in the LXX. for the Hebrew אהב in the entire range of its reference, with one or two charac-

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acteristic exceptions. . . . . Apart from a few passages where it is rendered according to the sense of the context, ... אהב is, as a rule, rendered by *ἀγαπᾶν*, except where it stands for lustful love (sixteen times in all), in which case *ἔρᾶν, ἐραστής* is used, and where it denotes a sensual inclination or a natural affection (ten times), and then it is rendered by *φιλεῖν* and its compounds."

In regard to these views of Cremer we may say: (1) His "surprising fact that everywhere in biblical Greek" where the love which belongs to the sphere of divine revelation is spoken of *ἀγαπάω* supersedes *φιλέω* proves too much, for this is just as true when unhallowed love is spoken of. If the translators of the Septuagint, in their desire to fix upon an appropriate term for "the love which belongs to the sphere of divine revelation," chose *ἀγαπάω*, it is unaccountable that they went on and used their new and sacred word freely to express all sorts of common and lustful affections. A score of times it is used in the LXX. to express the love of cursing, perjury, death and other evils. As often it is used to express conjugal love. *Ἀγαπητός* is the regular word to describe a beloved child. (2) Cremer can see no significance in the interchange of verbs in John xi. which is really Trench's strongest case. (3) Cremer's assertions regarding the translation of אהב in the LXX. are sheer misstatements, as any one who has Tromm's Concordance in his hands can see. We have already in this article referred to half a score of passages where *ἀγαπάω*, as the translation of אהב, expresses lustful love. *Φιλέω*, as we saw above, but once expresses a natural affection, and but four times a sensual inclination. *Ἀγαπάω* expresses a natural affection in Gen. xxii. 2; xxv. 28; xxxvii. 3; xliv. 20; Ruth iv. 15; Prov. iv. 3; xiii. 24. *Ἐράω* translates אהב but twice. Cremer says that *ἀγαπάω* "never means *to do anything willingly, to be wont to do;*" yet we have it in Jer. xiv. 10, "They have loved to move their feet" and in Jer. v. 31, "And my people loved to have it so."

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Ex-President Woolsey in his elaborate and valuable article on "The Disciple whom Jesus loved," in the *Andover Review*, August, 1885, presents many important results of a fresh study of the two words under discussion and often comes near the truth; but he is too much under the influence of the "learned and careful" Trench, and his Latin erudition, to see the full significance of the facts which he reports. We quote a few remarks:—

"Φιλέω takes the background in these translations [the Jewish sacred books], while the place of honor and frequent use is ceded to ἀγαπάω. This is not only the case to a greater extent when religious love is concerned,—as when love to God, or God's love is expressed,—but to a considerable extent φιλέω, when used in other senses, gives way to what may be called a new-comer.....The increased use of ἀγαπάω and its family in the Sept. and in the Christian Scriptures is probably to be accounted for by the frequent use of φιλέω and its derivatives in denoting sensual love, and in covering up foul acts under a veil of words so common and important. Such a change, on this supposition, must have come from a higher condition of moral feeling which may have been first felt by Greek-speaking Jews.....We believe that this [Trench's] is a true statement of the difference between the two words and notions.....Grimm adds, "nunquam dicitur, [ἀγαπᾶν] nec dici potest de venereo amore." But this last remark is not fully borne out by fact. Comp. Lucian, Ver. Hist. ii. 25, Plut. Pericl xxiv. 2, and even Judges xvi. 4, where in the Sept. we find ἠγάπησε, but in the Vulgate more properly *amavit*.....But this use of ἀγαπάω is exceedingly rare.....It is in this place [John xx. 2] not altogether plain why ἐφίλει is used instead of ἠγάπα. Meyer, in his remarks on this passage, says that ἐφίλει expresses the rememberance of Christ with a more tender sensibility, to which B. Weiss seems to assent. Westcott in like manner thinks that a personal affection is more strikingly shown than it would be by ἠγάπα. The Vulgate

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translates, as elsewhere, by *amabat*. All these explanations concur in something like this: that Jesus was conceived of under the power of a new affection. It was natural that when the Lord showed himself again to his disciples they could not but feel a want of nearness and familiarity, which helped them in their earthly intercourse with him. Until their faith grew, and they believed more joyfully in their divine master, the human sight and presence were supports which sustained them while away from him. But ἀγαπάω returns in xxi. 15 and 20, as to the Divine Savior, as soon as the presence of Jesus began to be apprehended again by the help of sight."

Upon the foregoing we remark as follows: (1) Woolsey sees and admits that the supersession takes place not only where religious love is concerned, but over the whole field. But he does not see how fatal this is to Trench's theory. (2) There is, as the concordance shows, not the least indication in the manner in which ἀγαπάω appears in the Septuagint that it was sought out by a "higher moral feeling" as a special word for purer uses; but demonstrative evidence of the reverse. (3) It is highly improbable that Jews who found but one word (אהב) for love, good and bad, in their sacred language and original Scriptures should feel the necessity of differentiating terms in translating into a foreign tongue. (4) It is certainly a mild correction of Grimm's mistaken remark that ἀγαπᾶν "is not said and cannot be said of sexual love," to say that "it is not fully borne out by fact," and then to cite Lucian and Plutarch and Judges xvi. 4, as if the one biblical instance and the two from later authors were the solitary exceptions to break the force of the generalization. We should regard this mildness as simply the "courtesy of knightly tournament," did not the remark "But this use of ἀγαπάω is exceedingly rare" lead us to infer that the author has really overlooked Gen. xxxiv. 3, Judges xvi. 16, 2 Sam. xiii. 1, 15, 1 Kings xi. 2, and the numerous other only less striking cases scattered through

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the Septuagint. (5) Every reader must feel, as President Woolsey himself frankly admits that he does, the shadowy nature of the explanation offered for the occurrence of ἐφίλει in John xx. 2.

In Thayer's Translation of Grimm's *Lexicon Novi Testamenti* (New York: 1887) the views of Trench are fully accepted. We read under the word φιλέω (the brackets are placed by Prof. Thayer around his own additions):—

"As to the distinction between ἀγαπᾶν and φιλεῖν: the former by virtue of its connection with ἄγαμαι, properly denotes a love founded in admiration, veneration, esteem, like the Lat. *diligere, to be kindly disposed to one, wish one well*; but φιλέω denotes an inclination prompted by sense and emotion, Lat. *amare*. . . . . Hence men are said ἀγαπᾶν God, not φιλεῖν; and God is said ἀγαπῆσαι τὸν κόσμον (John iii. 16), and φιλεῖν the disciples of Christ (John xvi. 27); Christ bids us ἀγαπᾶν (not φιλεῖν) τοὺς ἐχθρούς (Matt. v. 44), because love as an emotion cannot be commanded, but only love as a choice. . . . . [even in some cases where they might appear to be used interchangeably (e. g. John xiv. 23; xvi. 27) the difference can still be traced]. From what has been said, it is evident that ἀγαπᾶν is not and cannot be used of sexual love [but it is so used occasionally by the later writers]."

Under the word ἀγάπη we read:—

"['It is noticeable that the word first makes its appearance as a current term in the song of Sol.;—certainly no undesigned evidence respecting the idea which the Alex. translators had of the love in this song.' (*Zezschwitz*, Profangraec. u. bibl. Sprachgeist p. 63)]; Jer. ii. 2; Eccl. ix. 1, 6; [2 Sam. xiii. 15]"

Upon this Lexicon we remark: (1) It is to be regretted that in so splendid a work, which for years to come will be the only New Testament lexicon upon the table of many a poorly paid pastor, Professor Thayer has not added to Grimm's meagre treatment of the verb ἀγαπάω a discussion of the Septuagint usage. As it is, there is

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not even a mention of the Hebrew verb אהב, no statement of Septuagint usage a whole, and but a single reference to a passage in the canonical books of the Old Testament. Under φιλέω we find the vague notice, "(Sept. several times for אהב)", and four references to passages in the Old Testament canonical books, besides those in which it means *to kiss*. This is not sufficient; for the biblical philology of to-day is awake to the indispensable importance of the study of the Septuagint (see Hatch's Studies in Biblical Greek. Oxford: 1889). (2) In all "cases where they might appear to be used interchangeably" a difference can doubtless "be traced" *i. e.* imagined; but the difficulty is to find scientific proof that it was in the minds of the writers. (3) Prof. Thayer is even more mild than Pres. Woolsey in dissent from Grimm's universal negative assertion that ἀγαπᾶν "is not and cannot be used of sexual love." The remark that "it is so used *occasionally* by the *later* writers," when in fact it is frequently so used by earlier writers, hardly meets the case. The fact that this representation has stood so long uncorrected in Robinson's N. T. Lexicon does not make it any more true. (4) In regard to the words in question our lexicography has really retrogaded. Schleusner, in his *Lexicon in Novum Testamentum*, two generations ago (4th ed., 1819), said of ἀγαπάω: "Haud differt a verbo φιλέω; quod vulgo putatur esse: *impense, eximie amo;* sed utrumque sine ulla differentia, aeque ac lat. *amare* et *diligere* in universum notat: *benevolentia aliquem complecti*" etc. In his *Lexicon Veteris Testamenti*, (2nd ed., 1829), he clearly recognizes that ἀγαπάω is used in the Septuagint "*de amore illicito.*" (5) It is hard to make out how fully Prof. Thayer means to adopt the view expressed in the quotation from Zezschwitz; the reference to 2 Sam. xiii. 15, where the word refers to the lust of Amnon, may be meant to refute it; at any rate it does refute it. (6) Ἀγαπάω and ἀγάπη are not used to express sexual love in the the New Testament simply because no writer found occasion to refer to that

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idea in the New Testament.

Let us consider now the explanations of the interchange of verbs in our passage offered by some of the leading commentators:—

Bengel says: 'Αγαπᾶν, *amare*, is the part of relationship and affection: φιλεῖν, *diligere*, is the act of the judgment."

Meyer says: "Peter in his answer substitutes for the ἀγαπ. (*diligis*) of the question, the expression of *personal heart emotion*, φιλῶ, *amo*, by which he gives the most direct satisfaction to his inmost feeling. . . . . In his third question, verse 17, Jesus takes up the φιλῶ σε of Peter, and cuts, by means of this altered question, still more deeply into his heart. Peter was troubled about this, that Jesus, in this third question appeared to throw doubt even upon his φιλεῖν."

Alford says: "The distinction between ἀγαπᾶν and φιλεῖν must not here be lost sight of, nor must we superficially say with Grotius, "Promiscue hic usurpavit Johannes ἀγαπᾶν et φιλεῖν ut mox βόσκειν et ποιμαίνειν. Neque hic querendae sunt subtilitates." If so, why do the Lord's two first questions contain ἀγαπᾷς while Peter's answers have φιλῶ—whereas the third time the question and answer both have φιλεῖν? This does not look like accident. . . . . Peter therefore uses the less exalted word, and one implying a consciousness of his own weakness, but a persuasion and deep feeling of personal love. (Hence it will be seen that in the sublimest relations, where, all perfections existing, love can only be personal, φιλεῖν only can be used, see ch. v. 20.) Then in the third question, the Lord adopts the word of Peter's answer, the closer to press its meaning home to him."

Professor Sophocles, in the private letter referred to above, says: "'Αγαπῶ implies more affection than φιλῶ. Hence Peter was grieved when the third question was φιλεῖς με."

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Pres. Woolsey says: "A difficulty attendant on this explanation [Trench's] is, that when the word so much used for the love of God to men, and of man to God, is chosen by Christ, Peter should make use of another, because Christ's word is "too cold." We naturally avoid or distrust attaching this quality of coldness to ἀγαπάω or ἀγάπη; and while we ascribe to these words the consent of the will and benevolent regard, we do not strip them of feeling. May we not rather consider it to be more probable that Peter felt his love to Christ to be too human, too much like a friend's love to a friend, and ventured not on this solemn occasion to give it the name more appropriate to a love such as did not reach the point of ἀγάπη? Hence it is humility and a feeling of unworthiness which leads Peter to choose another expression; that one which his consciousness and his conduct might both justify."

Godet says: "Peter . . . . . substitutes for the term ἀγαπᾶν, *to love* in the higher and spiritual sense of the word, love with the love of reverence, the term φιλεῖν, *to cherish*, love in the sense of personal attachment. He thinks he can without presumption ascribe to himself this latter feeling; and yet he does not do it without expressing a certain distrust of himself and without seeking the guaranty of the testimony of his heart, to which he does not dare to trust any longer, in the infallible knowledge of the hearts of men which he now attributes to his Master.....Jesus now pardons the apostle; but he persists in the use of the more elevated term to designate the love, ἀγαπᾶν, Peter on his side, does not have the boldness to apply such a term to himself; but he so much the more emphatically affirms his love in the more modest sense of the word φιλεῖν, and by appealing anew to the scrutinizing glance of the Lord.....Finally the third question leaves no longer any doubt for Peter respecting the humiliating fact which the Lord wishes to recall to him, and this recollection affects him the more

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painfully as Jesus this time substitutes for the term ἀγαπᾶν, as Peter himself had done from the beginning, the term φιλεῖν, whereby he seems to call in question even the attachment of an inferior order which the apostle had modestly claimed for himself. Peter feels the point of the sword penetrating to the quick."

On the foregoing quotations we would observe: (1) When it is once assumed that there is a "subtle and delicate play of feeling" in the interchange of these words, the problem is to agree upon what it is, Bengel and Sophocles think ἀγαπᾶν the warmer word; Trench thinks it too cold. Woolsey thinks it not too cold, but not sufficiently humble. Trench thinks at the third question that "at length he [Peter] has conquered. The question is not any longer made more grievous still". Godet thinks that he "feels the point of the sword penetrating to the quick." This is wild guessing and nothing else. (2) Alford's notion that in the sublimest relations, those of the divine Father and Son, "φιλεῖν only can be used", based on the solitary expression in John v. 20, and in forgetfulness of the use of ἀγαπᾶν in John iii. 35; xiv. 31; xv. 9; xvii. 23, 24, 26, and the standing phrase ὁ υἱὸς ὁ ἀγαπητός (Matt. iii. 17, etc.), is a specimen of the heedless way in which great scholars have dogmatized about these synonyms. (3) The expression "the third time" (ver. 17) should have suggested that in the view of the Evangelist the question was the same as that which had already twice been asked.

There is a curious illustration of painstaking but ineffectual pedantry in the Revised Version of the last chapter of John's gospel. "Love" where it translates ἀγαπᾶν is numbered 7, and where it translates φιλεῖν is numbered 8, each referring to the same note in the margin, "*Love* in these places represents two different Greek words." The reader is not told whether these words differ in meaning, or how they differ, or whether either is used in any other passage of Scripture, nor is he referred to any source of

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information. He is simply informed that the revisers know something which, for some reason, they cannot tell him, and left to infer that he is missing the point of the dialogue.

The conversation, as it stood unannotated in the old version, seemed so natural, so explicable, so complete, that plain readers will be reluctant to believe that it turned largely on the balancing of two Greek synonyms so delicately differentiated that the language of Tennyson and George Eliot and Robert Browning cannot reproduce them. It is a relief to find that Grotius was right and that science is on the side of simplicity; for this "subtlety" and "delicate play" of logomachy are "altogether a profanation of that deep, abstracted, holy scene."

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