

its content. They are still dependent on Christ, though only mediately. Yet if the individual can live apart from the personal Christ, the Church cannot. The vitality of the Church depends on the men who draw their life from no secondary source.

Much controversy has raged round the question whether it is the historical or the glorified Christ that is the object of Christian faith, and therefore the medium of revelation. To Christ as exalted we can certainly add no trait that is not exhibited in His earthly life. The Christ who gathered publicans and sinners about Him, and gave them a new sense of sin and forgiveness; the Christ who won the love of the 'woman who was a sinner,' and drew Matthew from the receipt of custom, is the Saviour who rules human hearts now. We indeed think of Him as not holden of death, as having passed, as our forerunner, within the veil; we think of Him with the clear consciousness of His world significance, but it cannot be said that the glorified Christ is thereby differentiated from the Christ of history. Communion with Him as ex-

alted is either an expression for the fact that in His Spirit He abides with us for ever, or it is an example of that legitimate mysticism that finds in the movements of the soul's inner life the tokens of the Divine presence and working. In the latter case Christ is merged in God. You cannot distinguish between them.

From what has been said it will be evident that Ritchlianism is not synonymous with an undogmatic Christianity. We shall still have our dogma, in the sense of a truth that shall hold valid within the Christian Church, only it will not represent a combination of the thoughts of faith with the metaphysical speculations of the schools, but be in the strict sense of the term a 'confession of faith.' The task of dogmatic is to exhibit Christian faith in its purity, and as it rests on the revelation in Christ; to exhibit it with scientific clearness and precision. Theology is the correlative of life and not of speculation; and every doctrine will have its proof and test in this—that faith, and only faith, can apprehend it.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

JOHN xxi. 15-17.

'So when they had broken their fast, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My lambs. He saith to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Tend My sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed My sheep' (R.V.).

EXPOSITION.

'Simon, son of John.'—The form, '*Simon, son of Jonas,*' or rather, as it should probably read, '*Simon, son of John,*' is not contrasted unintentionally with the name *Simon Peter*, which is used by the evangelist in this very verse. It recalls to Peter his natural state, from which the call of Jesus had brought him, into which he had relapsed by his fall, and which now serves as the starting-point for his restoration.—GODET.

'Lovest thou Me more than these?'—The word for 'love' here, and in the question in v.¹⁶ is *agapân*. St. Peter in all three answers uses *philein*, and our Lord uses *philein* in the third question (v.¹⁷). The change is not accidental: and once more we have evidence of the accuracy of the writer; he preserves distinctions which were actually made. St. Peter's preference for *philein* is doubly intelligible—(1) it is the less exalted word; he is sure of the natural affection which it expresses; he will say nothing about the higher love implied in *agapân*; (2) it is the warmer word; there is a calm discrimination implied in *agapân* which to him seems cold. In the third question, Christ takes him at his own standard; He adopts St. Peter's own word, and thus presses the question more home.—PLUMMER.

WHEN He adds '*more than these,*' Jesus certainly reminds him of the presumptuous superiority which he had claimed when he said (Mt 26³³, Mk 14²⁹), '*Though all shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended.*'—GODET.

'Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee.'—St. Peter in his answer affirms his personal attachment to the Lord, appealing to the Lord's own knowledge, but his profession differs in two important points from the question proposed. He does not assume any superiority over others; and he lays claim only to the feeling of natural love, of which he could be sure. He does not venture to say that he has attained to that higher love which was to be the

spring of the Christian life. Moreover, now he says nothing of the future, nothing of the manifestation of his love.—WESTCOTT.

'Feed My lambs.'—The proper evidence of Simon's love to the Lord should be seen in his tender care for the weak 'little lambs' of the Lord's flock. He would deal gently, as he had been gently dealt with himself; he would restore as he had been restored, love as he had been loved.

—REITH.

'He saith to him a second time . . . Lovest thou Me?'—The same verb ('lovest') which had been used by our Lord in His first question again occurs here, and the question only differs from the first in the gracious omission of the words 'more than these.' Jesus had appreciated the motive which had led Peter, in his previous reply, to avoid all comparison between his own love to Jesus and that of others. He accepts the evidence of humility afforded by His apostle, and, in that direction at least will no longer test him.—MILLIGAN AND MOULTON.

'Tend My sheep.'—In reply, the Lord lays upon him a new part of the shepherd's duty: *Tend*—be shepherd of—*My sheep*. The lambs require to be fed; the sheep require to be guided. The watchful care and rule to be exercised over the maturer Christians calls for greater skill and tenderness than the feeding of the young and simple.—WESTCOTT.

'He saith unto him the third time . . . Lovest thou Me?'—In this third question, apparently a repetition of the first and second, one word ('lovest') is changed; for the word which He had used before, Jesus substitutes that less elevated, more familiar word with which Peter had already twice replied, 'I love Thee.' It is this that constitutes to the apostle the painful force of the third question. Not only is his own word taken up by Jesus, but that word is one by which he had sought to give utterance to the strength of his affection. And now Jesus says to him, 'Peter, dost thou really thus love Me as thou sayest? But a little while ago, what was thy denial of thy Friend? Is it otherwise now? I will take thee at thine own word. May I trust thee, that, with that love of which thou speakest, thou lovest Me?'—MILLIGAN AND MOULTON.

'Peter was grieved.'—It had gone to his very heart, that the Master, in presence of the rest, should consider it needful thus to interrogate *him* of all men. But Jesus was not satisfied until this point was reached. His disciple must feel the sting of the question piercing, to the 'dividing asunder of soul and spirit.' Christ's dealing in love and tenderness is meant to produce sincere repentance, grief, and hatred of our sin; and not till then can we be sure that our love to Christ is growing from a strong and enduring root. The word of Christ is meant to fetch our deepest feelings, to stir us—'all that is within us'—and then only, when the very lowest stratum is upheaved, is there hope and safety for the future.—REITH.

'Feed My sheep.'—There is distinct progress in the ideas—(1) 'Feed My lambs'; (2) 'Rule (shepherd) My sheep'; (3) 'Feed My little sheep.' First, let Peter, let the apostolic company, let any one of the successors of the apostles, learn the delicate duty of supplying the just and appropriate nourishment to those that are young in years or in graces; then let him also learn to guide, direct, protect from outward foes, the mature disciples, and preserve the

discipline of the flock, seeking the lost sheep until it be found; and he will find that then a third duty emerges. The sheep that are young in heart, the old men that are childlike in spirit, the trembling sheep that need even more care than the lambs themselves, are specially thrown upon the shepherd's care.—REYNOLDS.

Love and Service.

There can be little doubt that in calling Peter by his old name of 'Simon,' Jesus desired to remind him of his natural condition as a sinning son of Adam. So on that other occasion, 'Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat.' Then in the phrase, 'more than these,' He reminds him of the special sin of which he had been guilty. For, 'Lovest thou Me more than these?' does not mean 'more than these things,' as if Jesus had pointed to the boats and nets and fishing gear lying at hand, but 'Lovest thou Me more than these My other disciples love Me?' This was Peter's claim once. He had said, 'Though all shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never.' And Christ's purpose in reminding Peter of that boast and its dismal result is to let him understand why he had fallen so disastrously, and how he might never fall again.

Now the reason of Peter's fall was not that he did not love his Master. He loved Him as ardently and unselfishly as any of the disciples did. We might even admit that he only spoke the truth when he said that he loved Him more than any of them. But his love had a wrong foundation. It was only the love of friend to friend, the affection of a disciple to his human master.

Accordingly Christ says, 'Lovest thou Me more than these?' and uses a word which means infinitely more than that. He uses a word for 'love' which expresses the love of God to man or of man to God, or at least the love of man to man in Christ Jesus. He does not ask Peter if as a Master and dear friend he loves Him more than the others do. He does not care to dispute or consider that. He asks him if he loves Him as God, as his Saviour, more than they do. And at once He shows him the folly of his previous boast, and the source of that love that never fails.

Peter does love Jesus, and he will not foolishly deny it. But he will not yet claim that greater love, and uses the word which expresses the human affection. 'Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee.'

That is enough for Jesus. Already on the basis of that love, claimed as his notwithstanding its recent failure, Jesus sends him to feed His lambs. For that human love is already being purified and transfigured. But He will not confirm the commission till Peter, who never claims the Divine love, has thoroughly felt the folly of *trusting* to the love that is merely a human affection. So He repeats the question, again using the word which expresses the love of the saved to his Saviour. He receives the same steady answer, that the *human* love is there, notwithstanding all that has seemed against it. But it is nearer its transfiguration, and Jesus enlarges Peter's office, 'Tend My sheep.'

Then, when the grand truth, that love in order to last must be God's own gift, is rushing in upon Peter's soul, Jesus once more puts His question, 'Lovest thou Me?' this time using the word which expresses the love of friend to friend. For though Jesus is God, He is also man. And the love of the Saviour must mingle with the love of the Master and Friend. Peter is not to lose Him whom he has held so dear now that he recognizes in Him the Saviour of the world. Let the Divine and the human love dwell together. And on the basis of that harmony Peter is once more sent to his great life's work, 'Feed My sheep.'

There are two practical lessons:—1. The foundation of all service is love to God in Christ. Not love of the work, not love of the sinners that are to be rescued and worked among, not even love of the Man of Nazareth. That love will fail. But God's own love is unquenchable, and the love that cannot fail is the love that says, 'We love Him because He first loved us.'

2. The evidence of true love is service. Who was the servant who returned his lord's money unused and unimproved? Not he who loved his master, but he who feared him. 'I feared thee,' he said, 'because thou art an austere man.' But true love casteth out fear. And no one need doubt of the presence of it in his heart, for it will certainly make its presence known in service that shall be unselfish and that shall last.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

MANY years ago a father and his son repaired to a seaside town on the west coast for their holiday. One day the son was drowned, and the body could not be found. The father

offered £10 for its recovery. All hands made an effort, and all boats were employed, but in vain. Another placard appeared offering £20 reward, and another spurt was made. The third time a £50 reward was offered, and all tried, but still in vain. After a time they gave up dredging and searching, believing that an undercurrent had swept the body into some cavern far away. One form, however, was seen pacing the shore all day. When all had given up, he continued his search. At last he received his mournful reward. He saw the curly head, half buried in the sand, of his only son. The £10, the £20, and the £50 reward had failed, but a father's love was faithful unto the end.—T. DAVIES.

A KAREN woman offered herself for baptism. After the usual examination, I inquired whether she could give up her ornaments for Christ. It was an unexpected blow. I explained the spirit of the gospel; I appealed to her own consciousness of vanity; I read to her the apostle's prohibition (1 Ti 2⁹). She looked again and again to her handsome necklace; and then, with an air of modest decision that would adorn beyond all ornaments any Christian in the land, she took it off, saying, 'I love Christ more than this.'—D. JUDSON.

SIMON had boasted in the upper room, 'Though all shall be offended, yet will not I' (Mk 14²⁹, Mt 26³³); and Jesus asks him if he is still prepared to say the same,—claiming a love stronger than that of the others. We might think it ungenerous to recall such words—better let them drop out of mind. Perhaps so; had Peter's boast been mere vanity and nothing more, or Christ's intention not suffused with love. Knowing how true at heart His disciple was, the Lord gave him the opportunity, painful in some respects as it was, of uttering his deepest feelings and convictions. It is the kindest thing at times to let the past be untouched. But things we cannot bear to look at again in the light of God's judgment and our own forgiveness are not dead. . . . The life is laid bare, not to confound us merely, but to convince us that nothing escapes the eye of God, and that His judgment is none the less searching that the tenderness of Divine mercy goes with it.—G. REITH.

THE work begins with the little lambkins. Put the food therefore where they can get at it. 'Bless the Lord,' said a farmer, after a sermon from a substitute for his minister, a very high classical gentleman, 'the hay was put in a low crib.' Some preach as though the Lord said, 'Feed My camelopards. Nothing but giraffes would be able to reach it from the lofty rack in which they place the food.'—C. H. SPURGEON.

NOT without deep meaning was this line of action marked out to a warm-hearted, erring, yet penitent man. If ever he would be saved from such falls as he had had, it could only be by learning how rightly to use his impulses. And so with us all. Better that deeds should witness to our love than that we should have all raptures and yet be found fruitless.—J. REID HOWATT.

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Immortality.

A REPLY TO DR. PETAVEL.

BY PROFESSOR THE REV. J. AGAR BEET, D.D., RICHMOND.

DR. PETAVEL'S courteous and thoughtful open letter has had my careful and repeated study. It claims, and shall have, from me a careful reply.

It will be well to begin by restating the issue between us. On p. 193 of my book I give the result of my research as follows:—'To sum up. The writers of the New Testament agree to describe, with more or less definiteness, the punishment to be inflicted in the day of Christ's return as actual suffering and as final exclusion from the blessedness of the saved.' So far Dr. Petavel agrees with me. But he goes beyond me by asserting that the Bible teaches, not only the final exclusion of the lost, but also their ultimate extinction; and invites me to go 'one step further' and join him in this position. This step, however, I cannot take until I find, in Holy Scripture, solid ground on which to tread. This, after much careful search, I have not found.

On the other hand, I do not find, either within or without the Bible, any clear disproof of, or serious objection to, Dr. Petavel's teaching. But this absence of disproof does not justify, in the absence of positive proof, acceptance of the teaching in question as true and reliable. To accept a statement as true simply because it cannot be disproved, is a common and dangerous fallacy. I therefore differ both from those who assert that the lost will ultimately sink into uncon-

sciousness, and from those who assert that they will continue in endless suffering. On these matters the Scriptures, as I read them, give no decisive judgment. On p. 193, quoted above, I say: 'They give no ground for hope that the agony of the lost will ever cease; but they do not plainly and categorically assert its endless continuance.' In Dr. Petavel's books and open letter, and in the Bible, I cannot find anything which justifies 'one step further' than this.

Dr. Petavel objects, on p. 408, to my criticism that he has 'mixed together and identified two distinct issues, viz. the essential immortality of the soul and the ultimate extinction of the lost, and accepted as proof of the latter every disproof of the former.' This criticism I must leave with those who read his book. With much ability he has shown that the former doctrine has no place in the Bible; but, in my opinion, he has given no valid proof of the latter. Yet he confidently accepts it as taught there. His quotations; also, from the Fathers, while clearly proving that the writers had no conception of the essential immortality of the soul, fall far short of proving that they taught that the lost will ultimately fall into unconsciousness. This issue does not seem to have been clearly before them. For their language about the lost is, from this point of view, sometimes ambiguous. As an example, I may refer to the interesting passage quoted by