*first* questions contain the former word,  
while Peter’s answers have the latter and  
warmer one :—whereas, *the third time* the  
question and answer both have the warmer  
word (*philein*). This does not look like  
accident. Peter in his two answers uses a  
less exalted word, and one implying a  
consciousness of his own weakness, but a  
persuasion and deep feeling of personal love.  
Then in the third question, the Lord adopts  
the word of Peter’s answer, the closer to  
press the meaning of it home to him.  
The answer, **thou knowest**, the *two first*  
times, seems to refer to the Lord’s *personal*  
knowledge of Peter’s heart—in His having  
given him that name, ch. i. 43, Matt.  
xvi. 17; Luke xxii. 31, and the announcement   
of his denial of Him. The *last* time,  
he widens this assertion ‘Thou knowest  
*me*,’ into ‘Thou knowest *all things*,’ being  
grieved at the repetition of a question  
which brought this Omniscience so painfully   
to his mind.   
  
**Feed my lambs**]  
This, and the following answers of the  
Lord, can hardly be regarded as the   
*reinstating* of Peter in his apostolic office,  
for there is no record of his ever having  
lost it: but as a further and higher setting  
forth of it than that first one, Matt. iv. 18  
ff.—both as belonging to all of them on  
the present occasion, and as tending to  
comfort Peter’s own mind after his fall,  
and reassure him of his holding the same  
place among the Apostles as before, owing  
to the gracious forgiveness of his Lord.  
  
  
Our Lord’s three injunctions differ  
in their mode of expression. The first is,  
**Feed my lambs**. ‘The second, **Keep, tend**,  
or **shepherd** (the same word is used in  
Acts xx. 28: 1 Pet. v.2) **my sheep**. The  
third, **Feed my sheep**, but with this difference,   
that the word **sheep** is the diminutive,   
expressive of affection. Perhaps  
the *feeding of the lambs* was the furnishing  
the apostolic testimony of the Resurrection,  
and facts of the Lord’s life on earth, to the  
first converts; the *shepherding* or ruling  
*the sheep*, the subsequent government of  
the Church, as shewn forth in the early part  
of the Acts: the *feeding of the* sheep (diminutive,   
the choicest, the loved of the flock),  
the furnishing the now maturer Church of  
Christ with the wholesome food of the  
doctrine contained in his Epistles. The  
notice of these distinctions, which only the  
cold and undiscerning will attempt to  
deny, may serve to shew the English  
reader, how entirely inadequate even the  
best version must be to represent the  
sense of Holy Scripture. For our language   
is quite unable to express its minute  
beauties and differences. But those must  
strangely miss the whole sense, who  
dream of an exclusive primatial power here  
granted or confirmed to this Apostle. A  
sufficient refutation of this silly idea, if it  
needed any other than the fact, that Peter  
*was grieved* at the question leading to the  
commission, is found in the “ *fellow-elder*”  
(so in the original) of 1 Pet. v. 1, where he  
refers apparently to this very charge; see  
note on Matt. xvi. 17 ff.   
  
**17. Peter  
was grieved**] not merely on account of the  
repetition of the question, but because of  
its being asked *the third time*, answering  
to the number of his own denials of Christ.  
  
  
**thou knowest all things**] See above.  
  
  
**18.**] The end of his pastoral office is  
announced to him:—a proof of the *knowledge   
of all things* which he had just confessed   
to be in his Lord;—a contrast to  
the denial of which he had just been   
reminded ;—a proof to be hereatter given of  
the here recognized genuineness of that  
love which he had been professing.  
  
**When thou wast young**] This may be said  
merely in contrast to **when thou shalt be  
old**. Or it perhaps includes his life up to  
the time prophesied of.   
  
**thou girdedst   
thyself**] As in ver. 7, he had girt his  
fisher’s coat to him: but not confined in  
its reference to that girding alone,—‘ thou