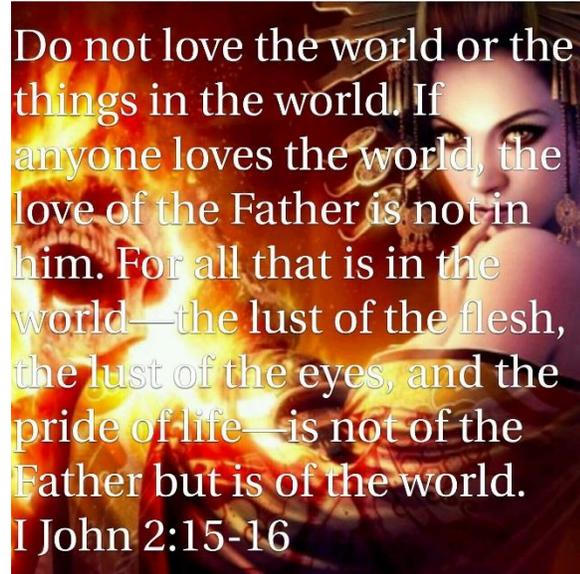**Daily Life with Christ. Love-11: Understanding the objective, universal, unchanging, eternal nature of love—The failure of the Bible-onlyism's Linguistic Turn (2).**

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. I John 2:15-16

(Online copy at http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/030818.pdf
and http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html).

Introduction: It is my contention that a vast number of well-meaning, conservative Christians who diligently seek Truth have been hijacked by modern philosophy's Linguistic Turn without even realizing it. They have become Idealists in their Bible studies by attempting to base ultimate reality on words rather than beings. I have decided to do this series in a Socratic dialogue, which will enable me to address the various issues in an informal and thus easy to understand manner. In this dialogue we have **George** who believes he gets to ultimate reality through the original languages of Scripture (and thus he is an Idealist) and **Stephen** who believes that one gets to reality directly through beings as such—through direct contact with reality. In the last conversation, **Stephen** pointed out **George's** problem in basing ultimate reality on words by pointing out the different meanings of *agape/agapao/love* in the Bible—how it is used of God's love, love for God and also love for all kinds of evil things in the world. Moreover, **Stephen** pointed out that even the Bible does not give a universal definition of *agape/agapao* that applies to every single instance of the word in the original. How can one base ultimate reality of love on the meaning of *agape* when the use of *agape* is so varied (multivocal) in the Bible? George did not believe Stephen. They agreed to continue their conversation after George did some research. They meet each other again at the gym where the conversation resumes.

George: Hey, Stephen, how are you?

Stephen: Great, how are you? I was wondering if you got a chance to look how *agape/agapao* is used in John 3:16, 19; 2 Tim. 4:8, 10? How it is used for God's love, man's love for darkness, believers' love for God, and believer's love for things in Satan's world?

George: Yes, I did. I think I have an answer. [He opens his backpack and pulls out Kenneth Wuest's translation and commentary on 1 John 2:15]. Do you know Kenneth Wuest?

Stephen: Oh yes. He was a great Greek scholar. However, he was an Idealist?

George: What!? What do you mean by Idealist?

Stephen: There are many different types of Idealists, but in our context, it refers to anyone whose ultimate reality is based on words rather than beings as such. Instead of basing meanings in reality on natures in reality, an Idealist's bases meanings on ideas, like we find in word studies.

George: So, you do not believe in word studies?

Stephen: Not for ultimate reality. But, yes for syntax and to see what the speaker/writer is pointing to. But we can talk about this latter when we discuss the form/matter in the Text. I also think that Idealists are guilty of deconstructionism, but we can discuss this later too . . . You mentioned you had a quote from Kenneth Wuest.

George: Yes, [he first pulls out His Bible and reads] 1 John 2:15, "*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*" [Then he opens up Wuest's book and reads the following commentary] *The word "love" here is agapaō (ἀγαπαω), the word used of God's love for a lost race of sinners, and which is self-sacrificial in its essence (John 3:16), the love which He is by nature (I John 4:8), and the love which is produced in the heart of the yielded saint by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). The question confronts us now as to how believers can love the sinful world with a love produced in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. The answer is that the Bible writers when taking certain Greek words over into the Bible, poured an additional content of meaning into them, as in this case, but at times use the word, not in its newly-acquired New Testament meaning, but in its purely classical connotation.*"

Stephen: I am surprised you use this to make your case. Is he not acknowledging that *apapao* is used in diametrically different ways? Besides, how does he know that the writers are pouring in additional meanings? Did he ask them? Does this not sound like deconstruction of the Text? Moreover, if the writers are pouring in different meanings, does that not invalidate basing ultimate reality on any idea that words are univocal? A realist does not have this problem because he bases ultimate reality on beings rather than language.

George: What do you mean that you based meaning on beings rather than language?

Stephen: It means that we have direct access to understanding of the natures of things in reality and thus base meanings on the natures of things as such. Words only serve to point to the natures, which we study directly. By understanding the natures of the objects, we can properly give the correct attribution. By the way, this is assumed throughout Scripture—believers did not look up meanings in dictionaries.

George: Can you give me an example.

Stephen: Sure! Consider the English word "good." The Idealist, for example, will focus on word study of "good"—its etymology and use to define "good." After he establishes what good, he then applies it to beings. The realist, on contrast, will study the nature of the being under consideration and what would be good for that being, and then proceed to define the proper meaning of good based on that being. For example, the realist understands that a good shoe is leathery, but a good steak is not. A good shoe lasts for a long time; this is not true of a good steak. Both are good, but good is attributed according to the nature of beings in the world.

George: Yes, I can see how good can be used differently of shoes and steaks. But how does that apply to God?

Stephen: Well, if you are studying about God and man in the Bible and both are called good, the realist one will focus on the nature of God versus the nature of man and attribute goodness according to each kind of being. The beings of God and man are the direct objects of understanding good, not the word "good." The same is true of love. There is a love of God, love for God, and love for darkness and they are all understood according to their natures of beings in context—so there is no need to subjectively posit writers of Scripture pouring in different meanings. This also explains John 3:16 and 3:19 as well—those loves are understood by the natures of the beings and not by the word.

George: I still think that Greek is an exact language, which is why God used that language. Moreover, we must understand how people used the language in their times to understand the meaning.

Stephen: I hate to tell you this, but that way of thinking is a result of the modern anti-realist philosophy of Ferdinand de Saussure (cf., his linguistic community). Unfortunately, it has infected most of conservative Bible-believing Christianity. You keep talking about the exactness of the Greek language, could we discuss the use of *agape* in the Old Testament Septuagint next time?

George: Sure.