

Daily Life with Christ. Love-12: Understanding the objective, universal, unchanging, eternal nature of love—The failure of the Bible-onlyism’s Linguistic Turn (3).

OLD TESTAMENT (LXX) USE OF AGAPE/LOVE    NEW TESTAMENT USE OF AGAPE/LOVE

Love for evil	Love for soup	Worldly love	Love for Mammon
Love for God	Love for a son	Love for God	Sinful prideful love
Love for wife	Illicit sexual lustful love	Covetous love	Illicit sexual lustful love
God’s love for man		God’s love for man	



Breaking the myth that the form/meaning is in the word:  
Agape does not inherently mean spiritual love

(Online copies at <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/030918.pdf>,  
<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>, and <https://www.facebook.com/don.hargrove.165>

**Introduction:** The conversation continues between **George** who believes one gets to reality through the original languages of Scripture, and **Stephen** who believes one gets to reality directly through the natures of beings in extra-mental reality. The last two conversations revolved around the meaning of the Greek word *agape/agapao*. George has unwittingly become a victim of modern philosophy (the Linguistic Turn) and is convinced that the Greek language is precise enough to get to and ground ultimate reality—in contrast to other languages like English. **Stephen** is trying to disabuse him of that idea. **Stephen** has shown that *agape/agapao* is used of God’s love for man, man’s love for God, and man’s love for all kinds of evil (see 1 John 2:15-16). **George** cited the Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest in an attempt account for why love is used for God’s pure love and man’s evil love for the world in 1 John 2:15-16. Wuest says that in this passage the writer of Scripture fills *agape/agapao* with a different meaning (however, the Bible never hints of this). The main thesis of **George** is that it is impossible to build objectivity on words—the fact that *agape/agapao* is used for all kinds of love, good and evil, demonstrates this beyond any doubt.

How can anyone claim that *agape/agapao* essentially refers to spiritual love when it is used for all kinds of love in the Bible—both evil and good? Moreover, *agape/agapao/love* is never universally defined in the Bible. This poses an insurmountable problem for anyone who thinks he can obtain objectivity based on the words *agape/agapao*. There is a way to get to objectivity, but before we move into the universal and undeniable principles of absolute objectivity and certainty in biblical interpretation, we must put aside once and for all the idea that words in themselves in the original languages anchor or determine meaning, let alone objective meaning. In this dialogue, the wide range of meanings of *agape/agapao* in the Septuagint (Greek

translation of the Old Testament—the recognized Bible of the first century and basis for many New Testament quotations of the Old Testament) is recognized.

[George and Stephen meet at the gym where they continue their conversation]

**Stephen:** Did you get a chance to look at *agape/agapao* in the Septuagint? The Greek translation of the Old Testament?

**George:** Yes. But, frankly, I do not see the relevance.

**Stephen:** Well, it is commonly taught in Greek word study books that *agape/agapao* are technical Greek words referring to the highest of loves.

**George:** Do you deny that *agape/agapao* is the word most often used for a God-kind of love?

**Stephen:** No, of course not! It is the word one would use for God's love, but that is a far different thing than taking the word and then defining the nature of God's love with it—*this is the problem!* One does not understand the nature of God's love through the word. One understands the nature of love by starting with the nature of God . . . I will explain this later, but just consider “God demonstrated His love;” is this not far more real and powerful than dictionary definition of *agape*. In Realism, God's love is understood based on the being of God as we noted in our last conversation with the use of good—“good” leather shoe versus a “good” non-leathery steak. Love must be predicated according to its being, not according to some mythical word study where the meaning of the word platonically just follows the word around wherever it is goes. *This is not how language works with reality!*

**George:** Yes, I looked up *agape/agapao* in the LXX (Septuagint) and noted that it referred to many different kinds of love: Abraham's love for Issac (Gen 22:2), Isaac's love for his wife Rebekah (24:67), Isaac's love for Esau (25:28), Isaac's love for soup/stew (27:4, 9), Jacob's love for Rachel (29:18), love for God (Ex. 20:6), a slave's love for his master (21:5), love for neighbor (Lev 19:18), God's love for His people (Dt 7:13), love for evil (Psa 52:3), and Amnon's lust/love (and rape of ) Tamar (2 Sam 13:15).

**Stephen:** Can you see why one cannot claim to obtain objective meaning of love based on the original *agape/agapao*, given the broad range of meanings—from *agape* for God to *agape* for evil? Can you see that the idea that the Greek language is exact is a myth? Can you see why all the claims in the internet world, in countless Greek word study books, and Bible study groups that *agape/agapao* is essentially, at core, the Greek word for the highest and purest love is bogus?

**George:** I still think that the original Greek is more exacting than English?

**Stephen?** Can you give me an example?

**George:** Yes! Take the word **Τετέλεσται/Telelestai** (John 19:30)—it is translated “it is finished.” There is no way the English can offer an equivalent translation with one word. No English translation can do it justice. One would have to write a whole sentence to unpack that one Greek word—something like: “it is finished in the past with the results that continue.”

**Stephen:** But you just captured the Greek thought in English, you just used more words. It does not mean that English or Hebrew cannot be as accurate or scientific as Greek. As a matter of fact, I could argue that English can be even more precise. For example, some would say that the perfect tense of this Greek word means, “it is finished in the past with results that continue forever.” However, a perfect tense in the Greek does not necessarily mean “with results that continue forever.” But look how easy it is for me to capture that idea with no ambiguity with the two English words “continue forever.” Which is more ambiguous in this case, the Greek or the English? Can you think of anything in the Greek that cannot be expressed in the English, even if it takes more words?

The bottom line is that one should never define reality and essences by a word. We are to define reality by reality. We understand the nature of love based on the real relationships of and in real beings—as the Bible teaches ‘God *demonstrated* His love . . . *we know love by this, He laid down His life.*’ Christians of the first century did not understand this love by local usage of the Greek word *agape* or by lexicons. They knew this love, not by defining words, but by the reality of the love in God on the Cross. The same principle applies to all beings and words. Only the Realist gets this because he lives directly connected to reality rather than in Idealism—where words always mediate true knowledge of reality. The Idealist is disconnected with reality, all that he learns of reality is in words, which he then applies to things. This is most unfortunate for in this case he cannot see God as the efficient cause of all existing beings around him. All he sees are words that he then uses to define reality that he is looking at. This is a source in all kinds of ignorance and misery in life, especially politics as people are more oriented to words/clichés/feelings than reality as such. When was the last time you heard someone argue for a political position based on the ontology of government of the one and the many? Before one can claim objectivity about love or about government or anything else, one must understand the inherent nature of those beings as such.

**George:** I am not sure I understand all that you are saying. I do have questions. I need to think about this.

**Stephen:** Basically, I just wanted to show you how broad the meaning of *agape/agapao* is in relation to all the various kinds of beings of which it is described. To get this is to make a step toward the door of reality as such and out of idealism—an idealism that continues to be perpetrated by word study myths that continue fill so many Greek lexicons, word books, and Bible study methods, all of which were spawned by the Linguistic Turn in modern anti-realist philosophy. Having given up on classical metaphysics, modern rotten philosophy turned to language to obtain objective reality. It turned out to be a failure in philosophy as it is in biblical studies. We must reject all that is false if we are going to be committed to correspondence truth of God (instead of the coherence and pragmatic “truth” of Satan’s cosmos). As people of truth, we must do much better! God is not glorified by well-meaning falsehoods, not even in the name

of love. We must be committed to objective correspondence Truth if we hope to be known as people of Truth.