

The word love has been used all through its history for an overpowering emotion, affection of fascination for another individual. Then the word love is used for godly love in the NT sense. In recent years it has come to be used by quite a number of people for just a general attitude of universal benevolence, a sense in which I do not think it was much used until very recent times.

It is very easy as we look at our Greek and Hebrew to jump to conclusions when we only look at their usage in the NT and do not compare other sources. About 50 years ago there was a book written caalled EROS AND AGAPE. In this book the main theme was that there is a love which the Greeks called EROS which is perhaps degrading, at least it is not deserving of high praise; and the Christians in order to get away from this adopted a new word AGAPAO. And as I started to prepare this message, I was impressed with this idea which I found in several books written 50 years ago or more, that the NT writers simply adopted a new word in order to get away from the sensuous implications of the word EROS from which our word erotic today comes.

You can make a beautiful theory out of it about how the NT adopted this new word and got away from EROS = and translated love in various Greek MSS. Unfortunately a few facts often can destroy a beautiful theory. I got the LXX. I looked into the LXX and found that everytime the Hebrew word AHAB(for love) occurs in the LXX, in the verb, it is translated by AGAPAO and the corresponding noun AGAPE is only used once or twice in the LXX but the verb is used every time that the word love occurs.

So if the word was adopted in order to raise it to a new level it would be the LXX writers, not the NT writers who did so! So I decided I'd better look into secular Greek sources and see how the word was used. EROS was used in early times for all kinds of love from the most degrading to the highest, that is the highest that was conceivable to Greek philosophers. The word AGGPAO ~~differs~~ did occur as early as Homer but only once or twice.

But then the word EROS disappeared pretty much from Greek writing and there was substituted the word PHILEO and that was used for all phases of the idea of love and is used 22 t. in the NT in that sense. There is no sharp distinction between the use of PHILEO and the use of AGAPAO. But the word AGAPAO which is an comparatively colorless word did not have any of these unfortunate associations and so the LXX writers use it for the highest type of love, and on one or two cases for the lowest type of love. The NT has taken this common word for love and given it a sense which we do not find in pagan writers. Has given it a fully Christian significance.

But this (idea) that we move from the one word to the other in ==and the NT adopted a new word this way is a beautiful theory and you will perhaps heard it said in sermons. Certainly it was in many books 50 years ago, but the new papyri that has been discovered in the last 50 years have quite conclusively shattered(the idea). I don't think we had to wait for them because use == its use in the LXX should have sufficiently proved it already. The word does have quite a wide range of meaning and the NT has given it a depth of meaning that it