

CONTENTS.

Statement	i
Abstract	ii
Prologue	iii
<u>CHAPTER 1</u>	
<u>IS 'LOVE' REALLY LÓVE?</u>	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 PERSPECTIVES ON LOVE	2
1.2.1 Secular perspective	2
1.2.2 The religious realm of love	3
1.2.3 Love in religion and religion embedded in kinship	6
1.2.4 Present day notions about love	6
<i>1.2.4.1 The 'vertical' aspect of love</i>	7
<i>1.2.4.2 The 'horizontal' aspect</i>	7
<i>1.2.4.3 Moral / ethical aspects</i>	9
1.2.5 Answers for today in questions about yesterday	9
<i>1.2.5.1 'Our understanding' of ancient concepts</i>	10
<i>1.2.5.2 Doing things 'by the book'</i>	12
<i>1.2.5.3 The prohibitive effect/s of fundamentalism on understanding</i>	14
<i>1.2.5.4 The need for cross-cultural knowledge</i>	15
<i>1.2.5.5 Questions begging answers</i>	15
1.2.6 'What's love got to do with it?'	18
1.2.7 Focus	19
1.2.8 Overview on the concept 'Love'	22
<i>1.2.8.1 The traditional-cum-theological view</i>	22
• John Calvin	23
• Emil Brunner	25
• Johan Heyns	27
• F J Pop	28
<i>1.2.8.2 Summary</i>	29
<i>1.2.8.3 A 'popuar' view on love</i>	29
• Melvin Dieter (John Wesley)	30
• Walter Harrelson (Anders Nygren)	31
• John MacArthur jr	33
• R H Stone	35
<i>1.2.8.4 Summary</i>	36
1.2.9 Word studies and lexicographical detail/particularities	37
<i>1.2.9.1 A timeous word of caution</i>	38
<i>1.2.9.2 Lexicographial study</i>	39
• Bauer (trans Arndt & Gingrich)	39
• Hoehner	44
• Kittel	45
• Louw and Nida	51
• Moulton and Milligan	52
• Spiq	53
• Vine	53
• Zodhiates	54

1.2.9.3 Conclusion: lexicographical particulars	54
1.3 CONCLUSION	55
<u>CHAPTER 2.</u>	
<u>METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS: UNDERSTANDING</u>	
<u>'UNDERSTANDING'</u>	58
2.1 HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH	58
2.1.1 Reading in high and low-context audiences	60
2.1.1.1 Reading 'into' instead of from a document	61
2.1.1.2 The completeness of biblical texts	64
2.1.1.3 Reading, understanding and interpreting ancient high-context documents	68
2.2 METHODOLOGICAL DEFINITION	69
<u>CHAPTER 3.</u>	
<u>THE NEW TESTAMENT WORLD</u>	70
3.1 INTRODUCTION	70
3.1.1 First century agrarian / peasant communities	74
3.1.2 Person, people, community	77
3.1.2.1 First century Mediterranean cultural orientation	79
• Individualism	79
• Dyadism	84
• Dyadic relations and social status	92
• Identity, group-conscience and conduct	92
• Honour and shame	97
• Limited good	100
• Patronage and patron-client relationships	101
• The Evil Eye	103
3.2 SUMMARY	107
<u>CHAPTER 4.</u>	
<u>AGÁPÉ IN JOHN</u>	108
4.1 INTRODUCTION	108
4.1.1 The group as context for <i>agápé</i>	110
4.1.2 First century groups and associated phenomena	110
4.1.2.1 Voluntary associations	110
4.1.2.2 Christianity as 'group'	111
4.1.2.3 Cliques, gangs factions	112
4.1.2.4 The shape and nature of early Christianity	113
4.1.2.5 The household	114
4.1.2.6 Reasons for associating with others	116
4.1.2.7 'Philosophy' as Christian identity	117
• Names and designations	117
• 'School' characteristics	118
• Joining a philosophy	118

• Truth	119
4.1.3 Agápé in its Johannine guise	119
4.1.3.1 <i>The heritage of the Beloved Disciple</i>	120
4.1.3.2 <i>Loyalty and sincerity towards Jesus</i>	121
4.1.3.3 <i>Identity of the BD</i>	123
4.1.4 Hypothesis	127
4.1.4.1 <i>Language as used by the Johannine author/s</i>	129
4.2 EXEGESIS	131
4.2.1 John 3: 16	131
4.2.1.1 <i>The divine initiative is stated</i>	136
4.2.1.2 <i>The nature and recipient of love</i>	138
4.2.1.3 <i>The embodiment...the only son</i>	145
4.2.1.4 <i>The response to love</i>	147
4.2.1.5 <i>The purpose of love</i>	149
4.2.1.6 <i>Summary</i>	154
4.2.2 John 13: 34-35	155
4.2.2.1 <i>The setting</i>	156
4.2.2.2 <i>The newness of the commandment</i>	160
4.2.2.3 <i>The standard for and outcome of mutual love</i>	162
4.2.2.4 <i>Summary</i>	164
4.2.3 John 21:15-17	164
4.2.3.1 <i>What's in a name?</i>	166
4.2.3.2 <i>The removal of shame</i>	167
4.2.3.3 <i>The nature of the task</i>	168
4.2.3.4 <i>Service grounded in love</i>	170
4.2.3.5 <i>Jesus' threefold commission for Peter</i>	170
4.2.3.6 <i>Summary</i>	171
4.3 CONCLUSION	171
<u>CHAPTER 5.</u>	
<u>CAN 'AGÁPÉ-LOVE' REALLY BE REAL?</u>	173
5.1 PARADIGM	173
5.2 RESULTS	173
5.2.1 Theological and popular views	173
5.2.2 Lexicographical particulars	175
5.2.3 Exegetical	177
5.3 CONCLUSION	182
WORKS CONSULTED	189

THE SOCIAL MEANING OF LOVE IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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I declare that

**THE SOCIAL MEANING OF LOVE IN THE GOSPEL OF
JOHN**

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted
have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete re-
ferences.

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REV P A ROUSSEAU

30 / 11 / 2003

ABSTRACT

The concept of love abounds in the Bible but it is questionable whether the same understanding that the antique audiences of the biblical documents could have had of this concept is prevalent in our time. The reason for such doubt lies, simply, in the noticeable absence of regard for each other among (even devout) people.

The study was directed towards an investigation of theological and popular views on biblical love as well as a brief overview of lexicographical works by known scholars as regards the noun *agaph* and the verb *agapaw*. It was found that, despite the volume of entries, not much in the way of clarification of the meaning of *agaph* and related words is available. There is, indeed, a dire lack of contemporary social-scientific related data as regards this important concept and related matters.

The world of the New Testament differs widely from the one we live in and a brief overview was given from social-scientific sources on the historical-cultural aspects of the first century Mediterranean world. This was done from the perspective of making use of such data in the exegesis of three short text-segments selected from the Gospel of John.

The text-segments John 3: 16; 13: 34-45 and 21: 15-17 are well-known for the bearing they have on the noun *agaph* and the verb *agapaw* in the Fourth Gospel as well as the popular meaning/s that is quite commonly ascribed to the texts. Exegesis was done from a grammatical-historical paradigm with joint usage of applicable historical-cultural data.

Keywords: agápé, believe, dyadism, Evil Eye, eternal life, exegesis, individualism, John's community, limited good, honour and shame, love, loyalty, Mediterranean culture, patronage, social-scientific, world.

PROLOGUE

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