

**In a word - CHARITY**

Surely the most wonderful thing one person can say to another is: "I love you!"  
But surely the most easily misunderstood word in our language is the word 'love'.  
"Ooh! I'd love an ice cream!" "I love my teddy bear." "I love stamp collecting." "I know a man who makes love every Friday night." "God is love..."

Perhaps it is that the word is not so much misunderstood as used to mean at least three different things, as illustrated by these quotations. English, generally speaking, is a language that is rich in different words to indicate slightly different thoughts or ideas. Sometimes you hear an immigrant who has an excellent accent express some idea in a way that is hard to say is wrong, and yet you know he has said it in a way that no-one brought up here, of parents born and bred here, would ever do.

What a pity that we cannot on the face of it distinguish between God's love for us, our preference for ice creams, and 'making love'. The ancient Greek, spoken in Bible times, and used for the most ancient copies of the New Testament that we possess, had three words for these three quite different things.

There was 'eros', from which we get words like 'erotic'. They may have used it to describe a wider love than solely sexual feelings, but there is no doubt where the emphasis lay.

There was 'philia,' meaning friendship, which appears in English as part of words expressing our liking for friends, for wisdom or stamp-collecting, or indeed ice cream or teddy bears. 'Philadelphia' is the 'city of brotherly love' - or it is supposed to be!

The early Christians discovered the depths of the love of God, and felt that neither of these words would do, and so 'promoted' a little used Greek word 'agape', and used it for the unselfish, undemanding, totally self-giving love of God for us, and for our poor attempts to reproduce it.

In the days of the 'King James' translation, the English authors tried to do the same, and from the Greek word for kindness and thankfulness, 'charis' gave us the word 'charity', and we all know what a mess we have made since of that attempt.

*By Rev Peter Barratt.*

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for forsaking them.**

Anon

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most of the misery of the world.**

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