

Emmaus Chapter 12 – Mike Baran

Grasping God's Word – Chapter 12

Assignment 12-1

The Spirits Role in Bible Interpretation:

The Professor Husband

The unbelieving husband is sanctified by his believing wife (1 Corinthians 7:14) even though he has not believed and professed faith in Jesus. Being an unbeliever, his biblical studies are for intellectual purposes only, rather than an attempt by him to understand the will of God. As such, he is not looking for the leading of the Spirit in his life or in his studies. Consequently, there is unlikely to be any divine inspiration in his New Testament Gospel studies and any real understanding of what the Gospels are teaching. Nevertheless, any kindnesses that he may otherwise know from God will be as a result of God's grace towards him, possibly because of his believing wife.

The Professor's Wife

The believing wife, as a mature believer, was presumably sealed by the Holy Spirit at the time of her baptism into the name of Jesus. As such, she might know the leading and inspiration of the Spirit in her biblical studies. However, as the text states, "when it comes to biblical interpretation, having the Holy Spirit does not mean that the Spirit is all we need, since he will not make biblical interpretation automatic. He expects us to use our minds, valid interpretive methods, and good study helps."

Their Nine Year Old Daughter

She is much too young to really understand what it means to "give her life to Christ." At this stage of her life she is sanctified by her believing mother (1 Corinthians 7:14) – as is her unbelieving father – until she comes of an age when she can understand what faith in Jesus and baptism into the name of Jesus means for her walk with God. At that time she will be sealed with the Spirit as a seal of her righteousness and so may, thereafter, be able to experience the leading of the Spirit in her life and in her study of God's word, while ever she remains a faithful believer and follower of Jesus.

Assignment 12-2

I have a problem with the *lectio divina* as a process. It sounds too much like a New Age (Buddhist) Meditation process on a Mantra or a Dharma contemplation, or even a so-called "Christian" *Walking the Labyrinth* process; the labyrinth itself being a type of Buddhist Mandala and a symbol that existed among various pagan societies from some four-thousand years ago.

To my mind there is no need to indulge in such a "mystical" process, especially as God warns us that we should not look to the pagan religions around us to learn from them about how we should worship or commune with God (Deuteronomy 12:29-31). Suffice it to prayerfully and sincerely continue in the study of scripture, by way of all available resources, and to "never flag in zeal" (Romans 12:11, RSV) in trying to understand the Word of God – the instructions for living that come to us *from* God – and to faithfully live by them.

"*Lectio divina* is an ancient contemplative practice from the Christian tradition in which participants immersed themselves in the Gospels. Its four-part form **codified in the eleventh century** inspired the multiple layers of *Dharma Contemplation*. Also inspiring is *lectio divina*'s

visceral sense of living the experiences of Jesus' life and teachings. ... A key principle of *Dharma Contemplation* is that the wisdom we are contemplating comes directly from the Buddha via his oral teachings, teachings passed down in the Pali texts for two thousand years. Put another way, in *Dharma Contemplation* there is no teacher that interprets or otherwise mediates between us and the Buddha. Just as we can experience intimate and elucidating contact with a good friend or teacher—mind to mind, heart to heart—we can do so with the Buddha via his legacy in a remarkably direct way—human to human, Buddha to Buddha. *Dharma Contemplation* is designed to provide a structure to help us realize this capacity.”

(From the web site: <https://www.buddhistinquiry.org/article/dharma-contemplation-soaking-ourselves-in-the-words-of-the-buddha/>).



Walking the Labyrinth inside of the Episcopalian Grace Cathedral, San Francisco.

Although the above quoted source suggests that the *lectio divina* inspired the *Dharma Contemplation*, the reality is that the Labyrinth symbol and the related Mandala (“Mandala” meaning “circle” in the Sanskrit) predated any such Christian practice and so were absorbed into Christianity rather than the other way around. The practice of building and contemplating the Mandala, together with Dharma contemplation, were originally Pagan practices, which Christianity chose to borrow from paganism and so made it into one of its own spiritual practices – *Walking the Labyrinth* and seemingly also the *lectio divina* contemplation.

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