

# ***Lectio Divina***

## **An Analysis and Critique**

**By Vernon G. Wilkins**

### ***Foreword*** (written 2010)

I first wrote this paper in 2005 as a member of the eldership team of a very ordinary local evangelical church with a solid base in bible teaching, in response to a situation which arose there. Certain church members, Christians good and true, were being influenced from a certain quarter to embrace a number of agendas which weren't, it has to be said, the bread and butter of what we stood for as a church, including some 'spirituality' in the mystical tradition. They were entitled to, of course – we didn't and wouldn't ban people from thinking their own thoughts (!). But they were interested to know why the eldership team's antennae were quivering nervously. This paper was one result of this situation arising.

The paper below addresses one issue which was pertinent to this incident, namely the suggestion from the source of the influence that *Lectio Divina* is of very ancient pedigree – the following oft-quoted sound-bite was quoted: "A very ancient art, practi[s]ed at one time by all Christians, is the technique known as *lectio divina* - a slow, contemplative praying of the Scriptures which enables the Bible, the Word of God, to become a means of union with God." In this paper I address the claim to ancient pedigree, and not so much the mystical tradition of *Lectio Divina* itself, which needs another paper.

The remainder of this paper is just as written in 2005, save for a clarification or two, and a slight emendation here and there to disguise an identity or two.

## ***Lectio Divina***

To some concerned brothers and sisters at \_\_\_\_\_ Church

*Lectio Divina*, in the current usage of the term, is a method of reading the bible, often with the view to it leading to 'prayer' and 'contemplation', based upon a subjective and individualised hermeneutic, and standing in the Romanist monastic mystical tradition – that's not to damn it here and now, but just to set the scene. It stands in contrast to the historic Protestant/Reformed/Conservative Evangelical hermeneutic known these days by buffs as the Grammatico-Historical Method, which is a hermeneutic firmly rooted in a literary contextual approach to the text, not independently of historical and cultural contexts, and is, as a hermeneutic, also rooted in history.

### ***Lectio Divina – growing in popularity***

I am fully aware that *Lectio Divina*, steadily growing in popularity, is increasingly pursued these days, including by some of those in or previously in the more Reformed traditions. In this paper I address the fact that some here in this church have found this attractive, and have read and been influenced by a website article *Leadership and the Sacramental Life* written by one of our members. The section on scripture in this article, which does seem, it has to be said, to have been plagiarised from the earlier virtually identical online article *Praying the Bible* by the American Presbyterian Kristine Haig, place both these authors within this growing trend. Far be it from me, or anyone, to proscribe this – I have no pretensions to being a cosmic religious policeman; certainly I shall feel free to argue stridently against it, as I do genuinely consider that *Lectio Divina* is not a valid hermeneutic, and carries considerable danger, but what we don't want is a latter day inquisition.

### **Lectio Divina – is it conventionally evangelical?**

The question I address here is thus not, “Is it legitimate?”, but, “Is it in line with conventional evangelicalism?” That is the only question we have asked. My submission is that it’s not conventional evangelicalism. Rather, *Lectio Divina* in its modern sense and usage stands – as a ‘method’ (hermeneutic) or ‘observance’ or ‘art’ of bible reading – as the antithesis of the Grammatico-Historical Method (hermeneutic). And (surprising conclusion to some people, no doubt) it is the Grammatico-Historical Method which has ancient pedigree, and not *Lectio Divina* in its modern sense. Yes, indeed (see soon below). So if we ask not only, “Is it in line with conventional evangelicalism?”, but also, “Is it in line with the most ancient standards of biblical hermeneutics going back to the earliest times in consistent and constant unbroken tradition?”, the answer is, again, No! For the Grammatico-Historical Method has had its champions throughout all of Christian history. *Lectio Divina*, in its modern sense and as practised today, is by contrast relatively recent.

### **Lectio Divina – the antithesis of the Grammatico-Historical Method**

Notable exponents of the Grammatico-Historical Method to name but two are Augustine of Hippo himself, and, to pick a less well known one (he was an object of interest to me once), Nicholas of Lyra (a.k.a. Lyranus, d.1340), arguably the ablest of all the mediaeval scholastic theologians (and Franciscan Romanist to boot), and one of the ‘foremost exegetes of all time’, who wrote the very first printed bible commentary (his ‘*Postills*’). For a very long time, I believe, copies of the Vulgate bible were printed with Lyra’s ‘*Postills*’ included, as also the two ‘*Glosses*’ were (also commentaries, dating from the pre-printing era). Lyra was a passionate advocate of the Grammatico-Historical Method (not known at that stage by that term, of course – he called it simply the ‘literal sense’), such that he was hugely admired by none other than Luther, and it was said later by an opponent of the Protestant Reformation, ‘If Lyra hadn’t played his lyre, Luther wouldn’t have danced [to] his tune’.

True, these theologians (Augustine, Lyra, and many others down through the ages) admitted of ‘senses of scripture’ beyond the merely literal – allegorical, anagogical, etc. – but they were insistent that the literal sense was the foundation of all the others, and the others were not independent of the literal sense but subservient to it. Thus there was to be no bypassing the Grammatico-Historical Method – all senses of scripture derive from hard graft textual exegetical work on the bible in context – that is in literary and historical and indeed every other appropriate context. [NB, the term *literal* has also changed its meaning relatively recently. Originally, the term *literal* meant ‘according to the type of literature it is’, deferring properly to all figures of speech and literary genres it employs. So the literal meaning of “my secretary is worth her weight in gold” would have meant “my secretary is exceedingly valuable to me” and *not* “my secretary is worth several billion pounds”. The latter might be regarded as a modern use of the term *literal*, but actually it’s rather useless, and the original meaning of ‘literal’ was far preferable (I aver).]

### **Lectio Divina (recent) vs. the Grammatico-Historical Method (ancient)**

Allow me to justify this opinion further, that it’s the Grammatico-Historical Method that has ancient pedigree. First, we ask, “How far back do *Lectio Divina* on the one hand, and the Grammatico-Historical Method on the other, go?” The answer to this depends on whether we mean the *term* or the *hermeneutic denominated by the term*. The term *Lectio Divina* clearly goes way back to the earliest days of the Latin Fathers, but the term ‘Grammatico-Historical Method’ is recent. So does this mean that *Lectio Divina* in its modern usage has ancient pedigree, and the Protestant hermeneutic doesn’t? Answer, No, quite the reverse, because although the term ‘Grammatico-Historical Method’ is new, the hermeneutic which this term describes is as ancient as the earliest Greek and Latin Fathers, I submit (justification of this below); and although the term *Lectio Divina* is extremely old, the hermeneutic it now describes *in its modern usage* goes back only, I believe, to its original formulation in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (at least, I thought it was the 12<sup>th</sup> century – the web-article referred to above names Ignatius as its pioneer, but he is much later: 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> centuries). The ancient term *Lectio Divina* meant then, back in the earliest centuries, exactly what the term ‘Grammatico-Historical Method’ means today. This view, if valid, will be surprising to many, so here’s a bit more elucidation ...

Consider the three terms, *Lectio Divina* (‘divine lesson’), *Sacra Pagina* (‘sacred page’) and *Regula Fidei* (‘rule of faith’). These terms were all in currency in the days of the Latin Fathers (and in the case of ‘Rule of Faith’, of the Greek Fathers). My understanding is that all these three terms were virtually synonymous: they meant scripture itself (what it said, that is, its message, held to be the Word of God), and not, then in the days of the

Fathers, a particular *practical method* of reading the scriptures. I know this certainly to be the case regarding *Regula Fidei*, as I have myself seen and studied ample documentary evidence of this, and am fully convinced – I’ve seen too many quotations from too many of the Fathers and scholastic theologians for there to be any doubt in my mind.

In due course the various creeds became known as Rules of Faith, but only in so far as they encapsulated, by common consent of the Fathers, the central tenets of the scriptural Christian faith – i.e., they were designed to embody the core teaching of the scriptural text. But long before the term ‘Rule’ became used of the monastic traditions (e.g., the Rule of St. Benedict, or the Anglo-Saxon *Regularis Concordia* of Ethelwold and Dunstan), or any other kind of prescription for discipleship (such as Gregory’s ‘Pastoral Rule’) – and long before the term ‘Rule’ became assigned by the papists to mean the received or new traditions of the Romanist Church – the Rule of Faith was scripture, the teaching of scripture, the doctrinal content of scripture, God’s Word conveyed in scripture, scripture itself, pure and simple, and not anything loaded upon it by way of a religious practice, observance or art of reading the bible.

Here are a couple of snippets (and more follow) from an early Jacobean writer that I have open in front of me as I write (and he is describing the pedigree of the term ‘Rule of Faith’ down through the Christian ages from the earliest fathers, through the scholastic theologians, before and through the Reformation to his own day, his point being that it has always been believed thus):

**‘Thus, then, the judgment of God the Father as supreme, the judgment of the Son as the eternal Word of God, of the Spirit as the fountain of all illumination, making us discern what is true, is that in which we finally rest. The judgment or determination of the word of God, is that wherein we rest as the rule of our faith; and the light of divine understanding, as that whereby we judge of all things.’**

**‘... Scripture, which we affirm to be the rule of our faith.’**

**‘The books which Moses, the prophets, and apostles delivered to the world, contain the canon, that is, the rule of piety, faith, and religion, which the sons of men received by revelation from heaven, and therefore are rightly named canonical. The matter of these books we believe to have been inspired from the Holy Ghost, for our instruction; whose authority is so great that no man may doubt of them. The writers of these books were in such sort guided and directed by the Spirit of truth in composing of them, that not to believe them were impious.’**

It should be added, to be fair, that the ancient writers were at pains to insist that this ‘rule of faith’ is not simply the scriptures as a written or printed text, conceived barely as the words on paper, but the text as a body of doctrine, the Word of God, established by common interpretative consent, i.e., the ‘faith once delivered to the saints’ of Jude 3.

**‘The unity of the Church consisteth principally in three things. First, in observing and holding the rule of faith once delivered to the saints. Secondly, in the subjection of the people to their pastors: and thirdly, in the due connexion of many pastors, and the flocks depending on them, among themselves.’**

So the Rule of Faith is Scripture, seen as a literary text to be treated as the Word of God,

**‘the entire profession of divine verities, according to the rule of faith, left by Christ, and his first disciples and scholars, the holy apostles’; ‘those first messengers, whom he sent with immediate commission, were infallibly led into all truth, and left unto posterities that sum of Christian doctrine that must forever be the rule of our faith.’**

But lest any individual should thereby suppose that he or she could come up with private interpretations of scripture, and expect them to have legitimacy, these forebears of his, the scholars of preceding centuries, were clear that

**'The principal grounds of Christian doctrine above mentioned are the whole platform of all Christian religion; the rule of faith so often mentioned by the ancient; by the measure of which all the holy fathers, bishops, and pastors of the Church made their sermons, commentaries and interpretations of Scripture. This rule (every part whereof is proved so nearly to concern all them that look for salvation) we make the rule to try all doctrines by; and not such platforms of doctrine, as every sectmaster, by himself, can deduce out of the Scriptures, understood according to his own private fancy; as the Romanists falsely charge us. This rule is delivered by Tertullian, Irenaeus, and other of the fathers: and ... by Theodoret in his Epitome Dogmatum.'**

**'the ground of all our doctrine is the written Word of God, interpreted according to the rule of faith, the practice of the saints from the beginning, the conference of places [this phrase means contextual work: we would say, 'reading the bible in context', especially in the context of the whole, ensuring that no part is interpreted on its own, and certainly ensuring that no passage, treated without reference to its context, leads to a quirky interpretation incompatible with the whole thrust of the whole of scripture], and all light of direction that either the knowledge of tongues [languages], or any part of good learning may yield. This surely is the rule to end all controversies by ... Whereupon the Book of God, and monuments of antiquity were always wont to be brought into the councils, whereby the fathers might examine all matters to be controverted, or any way doubted of.'**

**'Now as we want not a most certain rule, whereby to judge of all matters of controversy and difference, so in examining things by the direction of this rule, we require that Christian moderation in all men that ever was found in the servants of God; that no man presume of his own wisdom, judgement and understanding, nor hastily pronounce before conference with others.'**

**'The rule, then, with us is most certain and infallible, known to all; to wit, the Scripture, or written word of God, expounded according to the rule of faith, practice of the saints, and the due comparing of one part of it with another, in the public confessions of faith published by the Churches of our communion. In all which there is full consent, whatsoever our malicious adversaries clamorously pretend to the contrary: and all those that stubbornly resist against this rule, or anything therein contained, and refuse to be ordered by it, we reject as factious and seditious schismatics.'**

All this seems strong language, but the point at issue is the need, as perceived by these scholars of old, to defend the historic Christian faith against all attempts to detach its content, its doctrine, from the bible as historically interpreted and understood by common consent. Writers such as the above were at pains to explode the myth, still commonly current today, that before the Protestant Reformation so corrupt was the Church of Rome that authentic Christian doctrine and practice as taught in scripture had been completely and utterly lost for many centuries – so that what the Reformation achieved was a recovery of what had been totally lost. But not so. These writers showed, quoting actually dozens of scholars, that there were many such of the Patristic, Dark and Mediaeval Ages who held entirely orthodox views on every central article of Christian doctrine and practice, including an orthodox view of scripture and hermeneutics, consistently and in every age. It's just that those faithful, orthodox scholars had been swamped by the **'prevailing faction of the pope's flatterers'**, and traduced at every turn.

All the above bears upon the term 'Rule of Faith', and I can quote all of the above because of my own studies and a few dusty tomes open on my desk. In respect of the other terms, *Lectio Divina* and *Sacra Pagina* I have to assign a degree of provisionality, because I do not have the documentary evidence to hand as I write this, and even if I had it would be too long a task to check it (easy, these days, with electronic search engines, but too long, and my Latin isn't good enough anyway). But I have researched the term *Lectio Divina*, and I am given to believe that if you do search through the entire corpus of the Latin Fathers and early scholastic theologians through the dark ages, you will find that in every single instance (without exception) of the term *Lectio Divina* the meaning is exactly as for the term 'Rule of Faith' above – in other words, *Lectio Divina* in the first millennium meant Scripture and the body of doctrine deducible from it, the Word of God, and in no single

instance meant *Lectio Divina* as it is understood today as a ritual, an observance or a method of reading in the mystical monastic tradition.

### **The meaning of *lectio***

A further interesting matter is the meaning of *lectio*, as the basis of how we understand the term *Lectio Divina*. It is said that that *lectio* means a 'reading', and thus *Lectio Divina* means 'divine reading'. This might lend itself to the suggestion that a *method* of reading is meant by the term – and that indeed is how *Lectio Divina* is portrayed today in its modern usage. This can be challenged, however ...

It's only partly true that *lectio* means a 'reading'. The root meaning of *lectio* is not a 'reading' at all, I believe, but the 'selection', or a 'choosing', or 'picking out', or 'highlighting' of a thing for the giving of prominence or favour to it. This is preserved in our English words 'election', 'selection', 'predilection', 'collection', 'recollection', etc. When a written text was the object of the *lectio*, therefore, it meant, derivatively, a 'lesson' or an 'instruction'. This is preserved in the term 'lesson' once used for the public bible reading in church (and also, interestingly, in the term 'collects' or (Latin) '*collectiones*' for the prayers set to accompany and correspond with the bible passages chosen for the service).

The point here is that underlying the notion of *Lectio Divina* is the ancient belief that the scriptures are a 'Divine Lesson' – a body of instruction revealed through His Word by God himself. Of course, the scriptures are read, but they are read for instruction, involving the whole person, mind, heart and life; it's interesting that even today the term 'bible reading' is used in various situations of not just the reading of the bible, but the bible exposition that goes with it. This is why from the very earliest days biblical exegesis was handled carefully and corporately, with acutely careful attention paid to the text. This is also why the six general (ecumenical or catholic) councils were called for the very business of thrashing out particularly important issues of biblical exegesis (and thus of Christian doctrine). This is why all quirky, individualised interpretations were proscribed, in particular mystical/allegorical interpretations which bypassed a literary, contextual approach to scripture. Origen's allegorical method, for example, did not find catholic favour.

Thus *Lectio Divina* means not so much the reading of scripture, but rather the 'Divine Lesson' from scripture entailed thereby – in other words, the Rule of Faith, as described above. My understanding is that only later did this term come to mean simply and only the reading of scripture as an exercise to be performed (i.e., as a human activity), and later still as a method of reading scripture as a monastic 'spiritual' exercise.

### ***Lectio Divina* – as practised today**

Accordingly, it cannot be left unchallenged that so many descriptions of *Lectio Divina* today speak of it as a 'very ancient art, practi[s]ed at one time by all Christians'. Oh yes, if by *Lectio Divina* we mean it in its ancient sense of the teaching of scripture, then, Yes, it was practised by all Christians – all Christians were taught the bible in the earliest centuries; but this is hardly what they mean, those moderns now who talk of the 'very ancient art'. They mean the very *modern* art called *Lectio Divina* in its *modern* usage today – and this most certainly is not 'very ancient' and most certainly was never 'practised by all Christians'.

What certainly seems to be the case is that even in the early days of the monastic tradition itself, as Anthony of the Egyptian Desert unwittingly founded the monastic movement at the end of his long self-imposed isolation, and thereonwards, *Lectio Divina* was not the *Lectio Divina* of today. Rather it was scripture, the Word of God, the rule of scripture, the content of scripture, but supremely scripture to be embraced and obeyed in life transforming obedience. The 'Rule of Faith' was for them, including for the Desert Fathers, the 'Rule of Life'. But not for them only – every orthodox catholic Christian theologian throughout all those early centuries held a view of scripture that it is for life transforming obedience – as every orthodox Christian theologian ever since, including those in the Protestant/Reformed/Conservative Evangelical tradition.

I fully concede that from the earliest days of the monastic tradition there were the beginnings of a shift towards more allegorical, subjective understandings of the bible, and increasingly so as the centuries went on – but what is clear is that for a very long time mystical/allegorical interpretations had no independence of their own (except for the likes of Origen – Origen of the Specious as I fondly call him, with apologies to Darwin), but were subservient to and dependent upon the literal sense. It wasn't until the 12<sup>th</sup> century that *Lectio Divina* was formulated in a predominantly mystical sense that owed everything to 'me-centred', ego-exalting subjectivity and little to objectivity or to the corporate witness of history. Nowadays, all explanations I see of *Lectio Divina* describe it in these thoroughly subjective, individualised, often privatised and non-

contextual, often mindless terms (e.g., ‘Take a word or phrase into yourself’, ‘simply rest in God’s embrace’, ‘we let go not only of our own ideas, plans and meditations but also of our holy words and thoughts’), and I find it to be consummately post-modern (no objective meaning in the text) despite its 12<sup>th</sup> century foundations. But, I contest, subjective truth is no truth at all, and let’s remember, our forebears warned very severely against the dangers of privatised interpretations – see above. Likewise we note the extreme danger of interpretations that ignore or sit light to context – focussing on mere words or phrases without regard to the place they have in the text will never be orthodox exegesis.

Woe betide any one of us, though, who thinks that the *lectio* of scripture is for dry and dusty study only. Which brings me to my next point. Much is made in a modern analysis of *Lectio Divina* of reading (*lectio*), meditation/reflection (*meditatio*), prayer (*oratio*) and contemplation/rest (*contemplatio*) (significantly, I think, and horrifically, I haven’t seen repentance or obedience dwelt upon by exponents of modern *Lectio Divina*). But we all believe in meditation, prayer and the like, and consider them mandatory for anyone serious about the bible. I for one am absolutely committed to a thoroughgoing need to meditate upon, reflect upon, pray through, contemplate and obey the scriptures as we study them both individually and corporately in life transforming repentance and faith. These terms cannot be hijacked by a modern practitioner of *Lectio Divina*. We note, though, that the concept of ‘contemplation’ as espoused by modern *Lectio Divina* (‘resting in God’s embrace’) is far removed from the considered reflection that should be meant by it.

In the website article *Leadership and the Sacramental Life* mentioned at the beginning of this paper the section on scripture in the life of a leader, almost word for word the same as Kristine Haig’s article, was a page and a half long. One thing of concern is that the entire piece was devoted to *Lectio Divina*. How does this author portray the role of scripture in the life of a church leader? Answer: modern *Lectio Divina*, and that alone. No other mention was made at all of any other understanding of scripture, or of any other use of scripture whatever. This very severely unbalances the approach, I feel. Even if (a big if) one were to concede some sort of a place to modern *Lectio Divina* as possibly able to make a contribution to a bigger whole (but I make no such concession), such would nonetheless be a far cry from the message of this web-article, a piece on scripture which *only* speaks of *Lectio Divina* and gives no place to any other tradition or understanding. Perhaps the writer would insist that his private view does embrace other things, but nonetheless he gave himself a page and a bit to write about scripture in the life of the Christian leader, and all he talked about was the *modern* incarnation of *Lectio Divina*, that and that alone. One can’t help but get the impression that the Big Thing is now *Lectio Divina*, and that it has supplanted good old fashioned bible study.

### **Lectio Divina – Conclusion**

Putting all this together, it is abundantly clear that *Lectio Divina* in its modern (definitely not ancient) sense, whatever anyone might think of it as a monastic practice, does most certainly stand as the antithesis of the Grammatico-Historical Method, the constantly and standardly accepted exegetical method of nearly two thousand years. I have argued above that there are very serious question marks to be raised over the modern practice of *Lectio Divina* in its individualism, its mysticism, its non-contextual approach, its mystical notion of contemplation, its post-modernism (all about *me*), its lack of emphasis on repentance and obedience, and its thoroughgoing subjectivity. It is clearly at odds with conventional traditional evangelicalism and historic exegetical methods, and brings with it significant dangers. Whilst I would never attempt to proscribe it, I do nonetheless for all the reasons I have adduced consider it to be an invalid and unorthodox hermeneutic, despite the growing trend.

## **Postscript – a Few Brief Notes on Historical Hermeneutical Methods** (written 2010)

(Summarising and extending a few points made above)

### *Literal*

Originally the early church Fathers spoke of the *literal* reading of scripture. This meant something very different from what it means today. Today, the word *literal* refers usually to a rather wooden word-by-word understanding of the text, where each word is given a value equal to its supposed basic/normal sense; one might say a *literal* reading in this modern sense is necessarily a *non-figurative* reading. But originally *literal* meant, simply and only, an interpretation according to the literary genre of the text. A *literal* reading could be non-figurative or figurative, whichever was indicated by the literary genre. It could be very highly figurative if that were indicated, employing several or even many different figures of speech in a single passage, but it was still called the *literal method*. Buffs these days tend to call it the *Grammatico-Historical Method*, but we tend to call it, simply, *reading the bible in context – all its relevant contexts*. Because of the vast confusion between the word *literal* in its original sense, and the word *literal* in its modern sense, it's my personal view that it would be better if we were to avoid using the term as much as possible these days. There are usually other words (or longer circumlocutions) that would do just as well as *literally*, such as *actually*, *really*, *physically*, etc.

### *Allegorical*

In the early Christian centuries, some scriptural commentators, notably the specious Origen, soon developed to a fine art the idea of *allegorical* interpretation, where allegories were read into the text that were by no means demanded by the text itself, but which owed a lot to the individual interpreter's imagination and nothing to the original writer's intention (e.g., the two pence given by the Samaritan to the inn-keeper represent the Old and New Testaments). We don't do allegory.

### *Anagogical*

Later, two other interpretative methods were employed, the *anagogical* and the *tropological*. *Anagogical* more or less means *mystical* (the word *anagogical* conveys the idea of rising up to lofty heights – but usually it's lofty heights of the imagination, and is, again, not what the author intended). We don't do *anagogy*.

### *Tropological*

A final, fourth, ancient interpretative method is the *tropological*. *Tropological* more or less means *moral*, but *moral* in its former, rather broader meaning of 'life decision making' – today we would use the term *application* rather than the old term *tropological interpretation*.

A loyal, conventional evangelical Christian, or Christian church, would tend these days to commend both the *literal* and the *tropological* interpretations of scripture as being thoroughly appropriate – but we would tend to use the terms *reading the bible in context*, and *applying the bible in a relevant, life-changing way* instead of those rather arcane terms. On the other hand, we would tend to eschew the other two classic interpretative methods, namely the *allegorical* and the *anagogical*, as being self-promoting, ego-pandering, escapist, experiential, loopy and, above all, not according to the author's intentions.

## **Appendix** (from the web)

by Fr. Luke Dysinger, o.s.B.

### THE PROCESS of *LECTIO DIVINA*

**A VERY ANCIENT** art, practiced at one time by all Christians, is the technique known as *lectio divina* - a slow, contemplative praying of the Scriptures which enables the Bible, the Word of God, to become a means of union with God. This ancient practice has been kept alive in the Christian monastic tradition, and is one of the precious treasures of Benedictine monastics and oblates. Together with the Liturgy and daily manual labor, time set aside in a special way for *lectio divina* enables us to discover in our daily life an underlying spiritual rhythm. Within this rhythm we discover an increasing ability to offer more of ourselves and our relationships to the Father, and to accept the embrace that God is continuously extending to us in the person of his Son Jesus Christ.

#### **Acknowledgement**

This paper has been peer-reviewed by a variety of colleagues. The finished result owes much to these contributors, and I humbly acknowledge with gratitude their help. Nonetheless, the views expressed in this paper are those of the author, and he and he alone accepts responsibility for them – particularly for anything inexact or unclear, any obvious omissions, faulty logic and other follies and defects. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version except where noted.

#### **Latest Version**

This is version dated 10<sup>th</sup> November 2010. The latest version of this paper can be found at [vernonswilkins.org](http://vernonswilkins.org).

#### **Apology**

Apologies for the remainder of this panel and its verbiage – the site it was downloaded from requires it, I'm afraid, for usual safeguarding reasons.

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The author, Vernon G. Wilkins, M.A. (Hons) Cantab (Mathematics), M.A. (Hons) Oxon (Theology), is British, lives in Dorset, England, and is trained in mathematics and theology; he's had a career both as a mathematics teacher and as a Bible teacher/church minister.