

Emmaus Story

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I. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is, first, to examine the themes of Jesus and his two disciples on the road to Emmaus as it appears in Luke 24:13-32, from the perspectives of theology, literature, music, and art; second, to determine the implications of the themes as they relate to my teaching in Christian education; and third, to dramatize the Emmaus story, integrating the above perspectives.

Before moving to the main tasks, I would like to briefly mention my interpretation of the Emmaus story. The setting is Jesus and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. In this setting, what is the method of communication between Jesus and the two disciples? What is the content of the talk between them? What is the result and the effects of the Emmaus event? Concerning the method of communication, one can say that it is dialogue which is expressed from verse 17 to verse 27. Regarding the content of the talk, one can point out that it is about the

understanding of Jesus. It seems that there is a discrepancy about the understanding of Jesus between the two disciples and Jesus. The two disciples understand that Jesus was "a prophet" (v.19); he was "the man to liberate Israel" (v.21); and he is alive, although they are half in doubt about the third point. On the other hand, Jesus understands Himself to be "the Messiah who is bound to suffer before entering upon his glory." (v.26) In short, this means that without the cross, resurrection doesn't take place. Therefore, one can point out that the two disciples are unable to understand and internalize the meaning of the cross, at this stage. With regard to the result and the effects of the Emmaus event, the Bible says, "They said to one another, 'Did we not feel our hearts on fire as he talked with us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?'" (v.32) Why did they feel their hearts on fire? One can indicate the following points. First, the two disciples could sense the meaning of "the Messiah who is bound to suffer before entering upon his glory" (v.26), through His explanation of the scriptures to them. Second, in addition to this, they could feel in the Emmaus event the same Jesus that they knew and loved in His "lifetime," that is, a warm-hearted Jesus. Third, one can say that the Holy Spirit filled the two disciples' hearts.

II. Emmaus Story in Theology

I selected "the Emmaus event" in The Transforming Moment¹ by James Edwin Loder, as the Emmaus story in theology.

First, the story of the two disciples, that is, Cleopas and Simon, on the road to Emmaus begins with their "conflict" in four dimensions. By four dimensions, Loder means the lived world, the self, the void, and the Holy.² Second, the "scanning" process by Jesus begins. "His disguised presence introduces a dialogue."³ He cultivates and directs the process in which the two disciples are already immersed.⁴ Loder describes "scanning" in the following way: "Scanning, in four dimensions, is a process in which one's immersion in the conflict is seemingly undertaken by another initiative."⁵

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Third, for the two disciples, because of their arrival, the resolution which means a familiar conflict or a new unfamiliar transformation must be chosen.⁶ They chose the latter. Consequently, "He (Jesus) went in to stay with them. And when he had sat down with them at the table, he took bread and said the blessing; he broke the bread, and offered it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight."⁷ (Luke 24:29-31) Here, Loder mentions the symbols of "the broken bread." One is Jesus' body, broken on the cross, and the other is his two disciples' brokenness in four dimensions.⁸ In addition to the symbols of "the broken bread," he also suggests an implication of Jesus' vanishing from his two disciples' sight, the very moment that they recognized him. He who had been the unrecognized visible Presence became the recognized invisible Presence, after the two disciples knew who he was.⁹ Loder considers that "this is important because the reversal supplies us with a sense of the transformation as both continuous with the past and yet involving a radical change of those past conditions."¹⁰

Fourth, the two disciples felt "a release" of tension, according to Loder. "Did we not feel our hearts on fire as he talked with us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?"¹¹ (Luke 24:32) Their release, and at the same time, their joy represent an "aha!" experience.¹²

One can state that Roder regards the Emmaus event as the process of the two disciples' "inner conflict," the "scanning" by Jesus Christ's initiative, the resolution regarding whether their accepting Jesus Christ or not, on arrival at the destination, and a "release" of tension of the two disciples.

Concerning the theological themes of the Emmaus event, Loder, in advance, explains one thing in the following way: "Ordinarily, if we were to pursue this text theologically we would probably put it in the context of a resurrection theme under the heading of Christology. The aim here, though, is not to pursue the usual procedures that would take us away from our concern for convictional experiences. Rather, we will

return to the theological basis for selecting this text - that is, as an illustration of how the Holy Spirit works convictionally in the lives of individuals....Moreover, it should be made clear that the transformational work of the Holy Spirit converges with the Eucharist in a myriad of different ways,..."¹³

Therefore, Roder considers the theological themes in the Emmaus event to be, first, the work of the Holy Spirit, and second, the Eucharist. Regarding the former, it seems that there are two important points. One of them is that the Holy Spirit has "grammar," that is, "transformational logic" in spiritual transformation. As I described above, the order of "grammar" is "inner conflict," "scanning," "resolution," and "release." The other important point is that "we cannot experience authentic transformation anywhere except in the work of the Holy Spirit."¹⁴ Concerning the Eucharist, Loder connects it with transformation. He indicates that "without the Eucharistic center, transformation may become an ideology, but without transformation the Eucharist may become idolatry or sheer folly."¹⁵

Based on the above, I would like to mention an implication of Loder's interpretation to my teaching in Christian education. One can say that the order of transformation, that is, inner conflict, scanning, resolution, and release is a learning process itself or a counseling process itself. Inner conflict is not detestable, but should be transformed by scanning to resolution and release. Scanning, that is, teaching or intervening is, therefore, important in teaching or counseling process. On arrival of a parting of the ways, a learner or a counselee has to make a resolution, helped not by an visible teacher or counselor but by an invisible teacher or counselor, that is, the Holy Spirit, in a strict sense. By so doing, he/she can feel a release of the inner conflict tension of the beginning process.

III. Emmaus Story in Literature

I selected an essay "Emao no Tabibito(Travelers to Emmaus)" by

Tatsuo Hori, a modern Japanese novelist, as the Emmaus story in literature.

The following are a part of a translation by Michiyo Morita.

"We cannot do without seeking Christ who lets our hearts burn, as the travelers to Emmaus seek Him." These are the last words in Zoku Saiho no Hito (Sequel to the Western Man) which is Akutagawa's last writing. "Stay with us, for evening draws on, and the day is almost over." The words of the travelers to Emmaus who called to Christ without recognizing Him as Christ, strangely move our hearts. We may live without knowing that one of our "fellow travelers" has been the person for whom we have, subconsciously but eagerly, been seeking, in the evening of our lifetime. After our fellow traveler's disappearance, we, at last, realize the meaning of His existence, and His word which we have heard absent-mindedly before, burn our hearts now.

It seems to me that there are two characteristics in Hori's interpretation of the Emmaus story. One of them is that Hori interpretes "the evening" in Emmaus event as "the evening of one's lifetime," that is, "the last stage of one's lifetime." The other characteristic is that one recollects His words, and His words let one burn and live. In other words, His words have a power or energy to let one live. His words bring one life.

One can utilize Hori's interpretation of the Emmaus story for adult Christian education, in particular, for Christian education in mid-life and later. Although adolescents and young adults are in "the noon of their lifetimes," the people in mid-life are in "the afternoon of their lifetimes." They should begin to think about "the evening of their lifetimes." Therefore, Hori's creative interpretation of the Emmaus story is useable for Christian education in mid-life and later. In addition, it seems to me that one has to remember that His words and human words are important in one's spiritual formation and in Christian education. One is formed and fostered by His words and human words.

IV. Emmaus Story in Music

I would like to discuss hymns in the old Methodist Hymnal and the new United Methodist Hymnal, as they relate the Emmaus story in music. Regarding the Emmaus story, there are three hymns in both the old Methodist Hymnal, and the new United Methodist Hymnal, although one of them is in both hymnals. The hymns in the former hymnal are "Abide with Me," "Be Known to Us in Breaking Bread," and "Sun of My Soul, Thou Savior Dear." The hymns in the latter hymnal are "On the Day of Resurrection," "O Thou Who This Mysterious Bread," and "Abide with Me."

"Abide with Me" was written by Henry F. Lyte (1793-1847). This is based on Luke 24:29. One can say that the theological theme of this hymn is "immanent God," because a person in this hymn is asking God to live with him/her, both in this life and in death, that is, at all times. According to Albert Edward Bailey's interpretation, this hymn "is wholly about death....Everything now vanishes but the Cross, which in turn is the herald of heaven's morning."¹⁷ My interpretation is different from his, because it seems to me that God's abiding with him/her is much more emphasized than the Cross as the herald of Heaven.

"Be Known to Us in Breaking Bread" was written by James Montgomery (1771-1854). This hymn is based on Luke 24:30-31. The theological theme is "Eucharist," because this hymn is filled with such expressions as "breaking bread," "supping with us," and "living bread and heavenly wine."

"Sun of My Soul, Thou Savior Dear" was written by John Keble (1792-1866). It, too, is based on Luke 24:29. I cannot identify the theological theme of this hymn, because words seems to be scattered in all directions. However, Bailey analyzes this hymn in the following way: "The thought alternates between day and night-nature and its changes reveal God and His providence: prayer for the constant and unobscured vision of Christ; for His presence in life or death; for the sinful, the sick, the poor, and those who mourn; prayer for tomorrow's journey

and the final immersion in God's love."¹⁸ Nevertheless, I cannot see why this hymn and Bailey's interpretation regarding this hymn are related to Luke 24:29.

"On the Day of Resurrection" was written by Michael Peterson. This is based on Luke 24:13-35. The theological theme of this hymn is "Resurrection." In this hymn, resurrected Jesus "comes to us, unknown; walks with us, unknown; speaks to us, unknown; stays with us, unknown; and is through us made known."

"O Thou Who This Mysterious Bread" was written by Charles Wesley, and is based on Luke 24:13-35. The theological theme of this hymn is "Eucharist," since this hymn is included in "Eucharist" in the hymnal. Nevertheless, it seems that one can say that the theological theme also implies the "Holy Spirit," because such expressions as "our hearts burn with flames of fervent love," and "enkindle now the heavenly zeal" appear in this hymn.

In short, one can point out that the theological themes in the hymns regarding Luke 24:13-35 are "immanent God," "Eucharist," "Resurrection," and "Holy Spirit." However, it is difficult to identify the theological themes in the hymns, because each stanza could have a bit different theme in each hymn.

As an implication of the theme of the hymns related to Luke 24:13-32, it seems that "immanent God" is acceptable and understandable to the Japanese people, although they have little idea of a "trancendental God."

V. Emmaus Story in Art

I selected four pictures, as the Emmaus story in art. They are "The Walk to Emmaus" by Eugene Girardet, "The Walk to Emmaus" by Tadao Tanaka, "The Supper at Emmaus" by Rudolf Eichstaedt, and "The Supper at Emmaus" by Velázquez.

First, I would like to describe "The Walk to Emmaus" by Eugene Girardet. The picture is the following.

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Eugene Girardet was born in Paris in 1853, and was a great Swiss painter. The picture, "The Walk to Emmaus," was painted in 1904 and exhibited in the Paris Salon.¹⁹ Maus interprets this picture in the following manner. First, "Jesus walks a little behind the two men, who seem to be conversing between themselves rather than with Him."²⁰ This interpretation is further supported by the motions of the two apostles' heads and fingers. Although I can't explain why Girardet portrayed Jesus walking a little behind the two men, it is interesting that Jesus did so. Second, according to Maus, "the shimmering white robe and somewhat vague outline of the Master may be the artist's way of suggesting that while they talked earnestly of these prophecies between themselves, a vision as to their hidden meaning was made clear by the shadowy spiritual Presence of this unseen traveler Who joined them along the way."²¹ I agree with Maus' interpretation. The shadowy spiritual Presence of the unseen traveler is emphasized by "the shimmering robe and somewhat vague outline of the Master." Third, Maus' interpretation is that "Girardet is trying to indicate that the appearance of Jesus was subjective

rather than objective.”²² It doesn't seem that Maus' interpretation is sufficient in explanation. My understanding is that although Jesus is truly in existence, since a human being is subjective, he let Jesus exist, or he doesn't let Him exist, according to his feeling. In addition to Maus' three interpretations, I would like to include two further points. The first point is that Jesus is wearing a white robe, according to Maus. What does "white" symbolize? According to Sill, "White or silver represents light, innocence, purity, joy, virginity, faith, and glory. Christ always wears a white robe after the Resurrection."²³ The second point is that the picture, "The Walk to Emmaus" by Girardet doesn't present a tense atmosphere, but rather impresses the viewer with a peaceful and tranquil one, because the background is very spacious. My impression is that the Emmaus story in the Bible is a bit more strained.

Second, I would like to mention "The Walk to Emmaus" by Tadao Tanaka. The picture is the following.

Tadao Tanaka is a Japanese painter. This picture was donated to my college by a Christian lady. My interpretation of this picture is as follows. First, different from Girardet's picture, in Tanaka's picture, Jesus walks between the two apostles. Second, judging from the motion of one of the apostles' hand and fingers, the content of the talk between the apostle and Jesus is probably "what has happened in Jerusalem in the last few days." Third, Jesus is wearing a light blue robe. What does "blue" symbolize? According to Sill, "Blue symbolizes heaven, spiritual love, truth, constancy, and fidelity."²⁴ Fourth, in this picture, the colors of blue, yellow, black, and a bit of green attract my attention. Among these colours, in particular, "black" and "yellow" seem to be more emphasized than "blue" and "green." According to Sill, "Black is the emblem of mourning, penance, and death. It is a negative colour, denoting the negative qualities of evil, death, and the underworld."²⁵ "Yellow is symbolic of the sun and the colour of God and divinity.... Yellow is the colour of illuminated truth, truth removed from the shadow. In a negative sense, yellow signifies deceit, jealousy, instability, cow-

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ardice, or treason...."²⁶ " Green represents hope, regeneration, and fertility. As spring follows the dead of winter, so does life triumph over death. It is the colour of victory, as in the palm and the laurel."²⁷ Therefore, from the point of the symbols of the colours, one can say that this picture expresses hope as being eliminated by death, that is, by Jesus' death; and although God is with the two disciples, they feel unstable in a negative sense.

Third, I would like to relate "The Supper at Emmaus" by Rudolf Eichstaedt. The picture is the following.

Rudolf Eichstaedt was born in Berlin in 1856, and was a great



German painter. Maus interprets this picture in the following way. First, "The table is spread with a white cloth on which may be seen the plates and wineglasses containing the food and drink of this simple evening meal."²⁸ I described the symbol of the colour, "white." Here, "the simple evening meal" touches me. Although this meal is simple, it is sufficient. Second, "The older man's hands are clasped in startled adoration and prayer as he looks into the face of the Master which seems to be slowly dissolving into mist before his very eyes."²⁹ Third, "The younger man has fallen to his knees as with uplifted face and outstretched hands he gazes steadfastly at the face of his beloved Master, Who sits in misty dignity at the end of the table. Startled surprise, mingled with adoration, fear, and a desire to restrain, if possible, the form that is already slowly vanishing into mistiness is in the impulsive gesture of this younger man."³⁰ My interpretation is that the older man's hands are clasped because of his astonishment, on the one hand; on the other hand, the younger man outstretched hands wishing the Master to remain with him.

Fourth, I would like to describe "The Supper at Emmaus" by Velázquez. The picture is the following.

Although Maus mainly focuses on the two disciples, Sill does on Jesus. He describes the characteristic of this picture as follows. "Christ can be identified by a halo and by the marks of crucifixion on His hands."³¹ "Halos are the visual expression of a supernatural light, a mystical force....The halo is the attribute of sanctity in Christian art, and identifies an important personage."³² One can say that the second characteristic of this picture is that the table is "white and bright." It seems to me that the table is one of the points that the painter wanted to emphasize. That is, it appears that the painter would like to emphasize the importance of the Eucharist.



One can utilize the above four pictures, when one teaches the Emmaus story in Christian education. In that case, according to the development of the story, it is effective to use them in the following

order: "The Walk to Emmaus" by Girardet, "The Walk to Emmaus" by Tanaka, "The Supper at Emmaus" by Velázquez, and "The Supper at Emmaus" by Eichstaedt.

VI. Conclusion—Dramatization of the Emmaus Story—

I would like to dramatize the Emmaus story, integrating what I have described above.

The characters are Christ, Cleopas, Simon, and a narrator. Regarding dress, Christ wears a white robe; Cleopas and Simon wear a black or a purple garb; and a narrator wears a green or a red garb. Concerning lines, Christ's lines are v.17, v.19, and vv.25-26; those of Cleopas and Simon are v.18, and vv.19-24; and the narrator's are all verses except Christ's, Cleopas', and Simon's lines.

A table of development of the drama is as follows.

	Morita's interpretation	Roder's interpretation	Music ³³	Art (Scene)
v.13		Inner Conflict	Drama begins with "On the Day of Resur- rection." ³⁴	
v.14				Girardet's painting
v.15				
v.16				
v.17	The dialogue begins.	Scanning by Jesus Christ		
v.18				Tanaka's painting
v.19	Understanding about Jesus by the apostles			

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- v.20
- v.21 Understanding
about Jesus
by the apostles
- v.22
- v.23
- v.24
- v.25
- v.26 Understanding
about Christ
by Jesus Himself
- v.27 The dialogue
ends.
- v.28
- v.29 Resolution "Abide with
Me"
- v.30 "Be Known to Us in Breaking
Bread" Velázquez's
painting
- v.31 Eichstaedt's
painting
- v.32 Result and Release of "O Thou Who
effects of tension This Mysterious
Emmaus Bread"
event

In short, the drama could begin with the chorus, "On the Day of Resurrection." One can imagine Girardet's painting here as a scene of the story. Cleopas and Simon are in a state of inner conflict. The dialogue begins with v.17. That is, scanning by Christ begins here. The dialogue ends with v.27. The content of the conversation between v.17 and v.27. is the understanding of Jesus Himself. In the formation of the above scene, Tanaka's painting is helpful. At v.29, the hymn, "Abide

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with Me” could be sung by Cleopas and Simon, or simply by the general congregation. To ask to “abide with me” is an expression of the two apostles’ resolution of acceptance of the strange companion. After this, again, a hymn, “Be Known to Us in Breaking Bread” could be sung. One can set this scene, imagining Velázquez’s painting. Just after this, Eichstaedt’s painting is useful as a kind of model of the scene. The drama of the Emmaus story could end with the chorus, “O Thou Who This Mysterious Bread.” One can see that the drama of the Emmaus story results in a release of tension of Cleopas and Simon. One can also say that this is a beginning of a new phase, too.

ENDNOTES:

1. Loder, James Edwin, The Transforming Moment, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981), pp.92-124.
2. Ibid., pp.64-91.
3. Ibid., p.100.
4. Ibid., p.101.
5. Ibid., p.101.
6. Ibid., p.102.
7. Luke 24:29-31.
8. The Transforming Moment, p.103.
9. Ibid., p.101.
10. Ibid., p.101.
11. Luke 24:32.
12. The Transforming Moment, p.108.
13. Ibid., p.114.
14. Ibid., p.115.
15. Ibid., p.119.
16. Hori, Tatsuo, Hori Tatsuo's Collected Works Vol.4, (Tokyo: Chikumashobo, 1978), p.127.
17. Bailey, Albert Edward, The Gospel in Hymns Backgrounds and Interpretations, (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1950), p.172.
18. Ibid., p.166.
19. Maus, Cynthia Pearl, Christ and the Fine Arts, (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1938), p.437.
20. Ibid., p.439.
21. Ibid., p.439.
22. Ibid., p.439.
23. Sill, Gertrude Grace, A Handbook of Symbols in Christian Art, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1975), p.30.
24. Ibid., p.29.
25. Ibid., p.29.
26. Ibid., p.30.
27. Ibid., p.29.
28. Christ and the Fine Arts, p.440.
29. Ibid., p.442.
30. Ibid., p.442.
31. A Handbook of Symbols in Christian Arts, p.99.
32. Ibid., p.59.
33. I don't use the hymn, "Sun of My Soul, Thou Savior Dear."
34. This hymn provides the outline of the story to the audience. Therefore, one can utilize this hymn in either case of introduction and/or summary of the drama.

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5. Sill, Gertrude Grace. A Handbook of Symbols in Christian Art. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1975.

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