

**Artfully Engaged in God's Redemptive Purposes for the World: Christian Formation and Integration
Around Scripture
Collegeville Institute Lectures
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Carla Durand:

My name is Carla Durand, and on behalf of the Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research and our host today, the School of Theology seminary, I'd like to welcome you to this afternoon's lecture, entitled, "Artfully Engaged in God's Redemptive Purpose for the World." I have the privilege this afternoon of introducing our speaker Mary Schertz. And Mary, this afternoon, will help us: one, examine what integration and formation around the text look like in an increasingly diverse church; and two, she will help us explore how scripture brings us together and opens us up to the world that God loves. Mary is Professor of New Testament as well as the director of the Institute of Mennonite Studies at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana. Mary is a good friend of the Collegeville Institute, and we were so very happy to welcome her back to campus this year for her third resident scholar sabbatical. In her residency application, Mary wrote, "The first time I applied to the Collegeville Institute, which was back in 2000, I was attracted by the thought of living by the water. My appreciation for the scholarly and ecclesial communities brought me back to St. John's the second time, in 2006. And this time, I approached my sabbatical with a sense that the First-Person Method, or the 'Collegeville Approach,' has a role in the work I want to do." We are happy that the Collegeville Institute has been able to provide some space and some time for Mary to do and continue her scholarly work, which includes her authorship of many articles and book chapters, co-authorship of a number of books, and her work as editor for a number of journals. Mary received her BA in English from Goshen College in Goshen, Indiana, her MDiv from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart, and her PhD in New Testament from Vanderbilt University in Tennessee. Please join me in welcoming Mary Schertz.

audience applause

Mary Schertz:

Thank You Carla. It's good to be back at Collegeville. And the Collegeville way is speaking out of a tradition, and that's what I'm going to be doing this afternoon. It's also informed by the kinds of contacts I've had here over the years in many ways.

Several years ago, Cheryl Bridges Johns came to Anabaptist—by the way, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary are the same thing, right? We changed our name, so, not to confuse anybody—several years ago Cheryl Bridges Johns came to Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary where I work. She is a pastoral theologian at Church of God Theological Seminary in Cleveland, Tennessee. Her tradition is what she calls "Classical Pentecostalism," and she introduced us to a new word. The word is "orthopathy," and she compared and contrasted it to orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Orthodoxy, she explained, is right thinking, right worship, right theology. The Catholics, she said, are very good at this. Orthopraxis is right acting, right conduct, right ethics. "And you Mennonites," she said, speaking directly to her audience, "are very good at this. But what the Pentecostals bring to the table," she went on, "and what Catholics and Mennonites both need, whether they recognize it or not, is orthopathy."

Orthopathy is right feeling, right experience, or right perspectives on experience. Right orientation to the passions of God. This middle term, this point between thinking and acting, is corrective. When orthodoxy puffs itself up into a myopic view of the truth, orthopathy steps in to broaden the scope. When orthopraxis puffs itself up into legalism, orthopathy steps in to ease the rigidity. But as a middle term, orthopathy is more than corrective; it is also integrative. What holds orthodoxy and orthopraxis together is experience correctly oriented and feeling oriented to the passions of God. Orthopathy, or emotions lined up with God's emotions, moves us into and out of extra-dependent and intra-dependent space, and I'll say more about that when I get to the topic of worship. Orthopathy integrates worship and discipleship, an integration that binds us both to the divine world and the natural world. An integration, I think, that frees us to love God, neighbor, and enemy with heart, mind, spirit, and body.

Now, sometime after Bridges Johns' lectureship, I began to think about my own discipline, New Testament Studies, in light of these three terms. I was well aware of the use of the Bible as a standard for theology: orthodoxy. I was also well aware of the use of the Bible as a standard for ethics: orthopraxis. But the use of the Bible to orient ourselves to right feeling, right expression, right orientation to the passions of God? The use of the Bible for formation and integration? I didn't know quite what to do about that. And the more I thought about it, the more it seemed to me a missing piece. Not only did we not seem to use the Bible orthopathically; but our lack of relating to the text in that way may have had deleterious consequences for our use of the Bible for both theology and ethics.

Then a year or so later, Ellen Davis came to our campus for a series of lectures. And she calls herself a practical theologian of the Old Testament and works at Duke University. In preparation for her coming I was reading the book that she and Richard Hays edited together, called *The Art of Reading Scripture*. In it, Davis describes the task set before an ecumenical group of Christian scholars, both Catholic and Protestant, of which she was a part. Their task was to identify a solid intellectual grounding for this stage of the life of the church. Davis notes that within an hour, something of a miracle for academics, they had reached a consensus. And their consensus was that what the church needs most is to relearn how to read the Bible confessionally. Now with that term, "confessional" reading, they did not mean in accordance with any particular doctrinal statement, but to—and there's a quote that I want to look at with you—but to "learn afresh to acknowledge the Bible as the functional center of its life, so that in all our conversations, deliberations, arguments, and programs, we are continually reoriented to the demands and promises of Scripture. Reading the Bible confessionally means recognizing it as a word that is indispensable if we are to view the world realistically and hopefully. We acknowledge it as a divine word that is uniquely powerful to interpret our experience. But more, we allow ourselves to be moved by it, trusting that it is the one reliable guide to a life that is not, in the last analysis, desperate." That statement resonated deeply within me, especially that phrase "a word that is indispensable if we are to view the world hopefully and realistically." What is it, I began to wonder, about our modern hungers that drives us to the ever-expanding miles of self-help books at Barnes and Noble? ***audience laughter*** Or that drives us to mega-churches in droves? I became more and more convinced that it might be worth our while to explore the possibility that our modern hungers might be satisfied by something as simple and sane as Bible study.

The challenges are significant. Our fractured society. Our soundbite attention spans. The misuses of the Bible. Biblical illiteracy. Sporadic church attendance—the list goes on and on. In light of those

challenges, how do we start? How do we keep going? Where does this all end? It was this compulsion to go deeper, to try to figure out how Scripture can not only be a source for theology and ethics, but more fundamentally, core to our formation and integration as Christians, that was driving me at that point. One of the texts that we used in those early days was Jesus calling the disciples in Luke 5. And we heard in a new way Jesus' instruction to Peter—or, as I have come to say here, St. Peter so you know I'm talking about ***audience laughter***—his instructions to *Saint* Peter to go out and to push out into the deeper water. That became a kind of mantra for the group.

So at that point we began experimenting. It didn't hurt that we had a Lilly grant. ***audience laughter*** It freed up some time and resources to be creative. And I was not in this adventure alone. I have some wonderful colleagues at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary through the years, and for the most part we have had a spirit of collaboration and cooperation. Perry Yoder, who is here with us this day, was for many years my colleague in Hebrew Bible, until he retired, and I wanted to have him and Elizabeth with us. Rebecca Slough is my Dean. She will be a scholar at Collegeville Institute in the Fall for a time. So, it started, really, with Rebecca and Perry experimenting with what they called “artful response to Biblical texts.” Perry has long held that engaging Scripture should involve both halves of our minds: the right brain as well as the left brain. Scripture has to do with the whole person. When Perry retired then, Rebecca and I began a similar collaboration with some of my classes. The rest of the team has included Barbara and James Nelson Gingrich and Rachel Miller Jacobs. Barb is the managing editor at the Institute of Mennonite studies and has a wonderful sensitivity to words and worship. Her husband James is a local physician but has contributed to this project in many ways. Leading music, formatting resources, and hand-making books for the participants. Rachel Miller Jacobs, another my colleagues at AMBS, has worked harder than any of the rest of us to adapt the project for use in congregations, and has been especially successful in working with middle school and high school youth. We have worked at this mode of Bible study in a number of different settings and formats. Some groups met one afternoon a month over the school year. Other groups met in retreat settings. One group met three weekends over the course of six months and ranged Indiana to Montana. We have incorporated confessional Bible study into Pastors Week, and of course, into seminary classrooms and Sunday school classrooms.

I have had my own experience, my own moment of Epiphany, my own moment of conversion with confessional Bible studies. One of our earlier groups was working with Luke's quest stories—these are a series of texts in Luke's Gospel where someone comes to Jesus in pursuit of something absolutely vital for human well-being. As the stories unfold there are obstacles in the way—external or internal, physical or social, political or religious. Most often placed in the way by others, but one time, memorably, by Jesus himself. The quest stories are familiar, some of the first stories we learn as children. The paralytic, the centurion with a sex slave, the woman of the city who anoints Jesus' feet, Mary and Martha, the lepers, Zacchaeus, the rich ruler, the thieves on their crosses, and the women at the tomb. I knew something powerful was happening as we worked through that series. But I was not aware, until toward the end, that part of what was happening, was happening to me. That a crotchety, older New Testament professor was being called in a different way, to a different way of being with the biblical text. And in some ways, to a different way of understanding faith.

It was the day that we were studying the women in Luke 24, who go to the tomb to do their duty toward Jesus' broken body and meet there, instead, two dazzling beings who scold them for looking for the

living among the dead. As we were preparing to read this text together, I was teasing the group, because every month—and this was a group of Mennonite women pastors—every month, they would readily volunteer for any reading role...except Jesus. So I said, “Well, at least we don't have to have a Jesus today; he's not in this story.” ***audience laughter*** I have never known quite how to articulate what happened next, because I experienced a wave of grief. I felt bereft, like when my parents died, or like the women walking to the tomb that morning. It was unwelcome in many ways—I had a job to do, and so I kind of shook it off and said, yes Jesus is really present. He's always been and always will be, in that churchy way, you know, that we talk about that. ***audience laughter*** But he wasn't present in a very real way. He wasn't present in that story, and that suddenly mattered.

I still haven't quite figured out how to think about these things. Now that I'm here in this Catholic setting, I've been pondering it as something like this: I have experienced the real presence through the real absence. At any rate, it was a powerful moment, a turning point. In some sense, confessional Bible study has—and I'm going to be real tentative here—in some sense, confessional Bible study has come to function as a sacrament. I'm not saying it is a sacrament, but it functions that way. It helps me trust the text, and it helps me move, in Ellen Davis's words, “with the text,” or in Cheryl Bridges Johns' words, it is “orthopathic.” It helps us move, however haltingly, toward fuller formation and more authentic integration.

There are three movements: study, artful response, and worship. As we have muddled our way through this work, collaboratively and with the help of the Holy Spirit, these three movements have emerged—or stances, postures, positions, modes, attitudes? I never know quite what vocabulary to use. Some people have told me that this approach to Bible study has resonance with *Lectio Divina*. Many of you are more familiar with *Lectio* than I am, so perhaps we can keep that in mind for our discussion time. And then, also let me underline that confessional bible study is not a method; it is not a curriculum; it was an approach. It's an approach that can adapt to different settings, methods, and curriculum.

So we start with study. In our fractured world we want something easy. This is not that. It takes preparation; it takes hard work. Doing anything—playing a sport, musical instrument, woodworking, teaching, administration, pastoring—doing anything worthwhile takes practice and discipline, and confessional bible study is simply no exception. Furthermore, it takes leadership. Leadership may be low-key, but it is still leadership. Hans de Wit, a Dutch Old Testament scholar, talks about ordinary readers and professional readers. Confessional Bible study is a partnership between professional and ordinary readers. I define professional readers as biblical scholars, pastors, and lay people who lead bible studies. And in all three of those cases, I would say at least insofar as they do their homework—***audience laughter*** I think that we can fail at any of those levels to be a professional reader. The point is that confessional Bible study requires someone to take initiative to study and present the text, as well as to guide discussion of it. This preparation needs to be focused; it need not be laborious. With practice, most leaders can manage well with a couple of good, solid hours. And I want to stress “with practice”—it takes some time.

There's much more that I think could be said about preparation, but I don't really want to spend our time this afternoon doing that. What I'd like to do with you is to talk about the kinds of things that should happen in the group study process. I find, first of all, a prayer for illumination central and

essential. It introduces, right at the beginning, that orthopathic emphasis. Liturgical prayers for illumination, crafted prayers, spontaneous or informal prayers, I don't think it matters, as long as one takes into consideration the tradition with which one is working and the authenticity of the prayer.

The second thing is so obvious that it feels silly saying it, yet it seems to me to be sadly lacking in many of our attempts at Bible study. Bible study should study the Bible. Reading the Bible as if our life depends on it is really reading the text, not just reading it once and going on to general discussion. ***audience laughter*** Rabbi Hershel who wrote the book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, once compared reading the Bible to a love letter. We read it, we read it over, we read it over again, we read between the lines and above the lines and under the lines. Think of scripture, he encourages, as a love letter from God. What I often do is give participants my own translation. It helps them get over the hump of thinking that we already know everything about this text. Not everyone can do that, and none of us can do that all the time. But I think it's important that what we have to give to people when they come in is a copy of the text on which they can write without being afraid that they're going to ruin their Bibles. Something that they can have to scratch notes on and make drawings, things like that. And then, other than that, I think as many different versions as you can have in the room is always helpful. What we want to communicate is that these words were not written in English, and that there are more than one way to understand them.

Next comes reading the text out loud, together. And there are various ways of doing this. After that, I think it's helpful for the teacher to offer a few comments about the text, but sparingly. Two or three sentences, and only what the group really needs to start discovering the text for themselves. Here's where I think most of us teacher types can find the discipline difficult. The aim is to open up discussion, not to supply the answers. I often make a remark or two about genre, for instance. Or if there's some historical or cultural information we need to do the text justice, I supply that. I try to give the information that will serve the group without foreclosing on an interpretation of the text's meaning. A session itself is free-flowing. I think of the professional reader's role in the process as putting an oar in the water once in a while. The main issue is usually steering us back to the text, as in "Where in the text do you see that?" Trust the group. Essentially, trust the group. They will linger on the thoughts that are consequential and substantive and they will pass over the ones that are less substantive or less important. I correct things that are obviously wrong, but normally try not to jump into that mode too quickly. Often, there's no there's no need, or someone else will steer things back on course.

The payoff for this type of bible study is twofold. One is knowledge and insight. It seems to me a pretty well-kept secret that this kind of partnership between professional and ordinary readers yields better quality interpretations of the Bible than either scholars alone or lay people alone. We can talk about that. The other payoff is, for want of a better term, ownership of the text. Or, conversely, being owned by the text. Captured in that word, "engagement." When contributions are valued and heard, when everyone in the study circle is participating, when there is commitment to the text and to the group and to the process, people become engaged. The text becomes a living, breathing entity. It begins to matter in life. It takes on the quality of companionship in our minds and hearts, walking along with us in both the sacred and quotidian moments of life. Gerald talked a few weeks ago about the kind of discussion he and his students have in Central America. That's the kind of engagement that we're looking for here.

A couple of counterintuitive suggestions. One is to put the perennial question of how the text applies to our lives aside. In my experience, it's a dead end. It's a dead end when it comes to actually interacting with the texts. In Mennonite circles, that can become a collective guilt trip: all the ways we are not living up to this text. ***audience laughter*** I try not to pounce on people who raise application questions, but I do try to steer us back to the text itself. If the text has truly come alive in our hearts and minds, it will have significance in our lives in ways we can't even imagine at the moment. And another counterintuitive suggestion: I try to end openly. Summarization about the range of the discussion is often helpful, and sometimes conclusions about the text can enter into that. But go lightly. Our human tendency to wrap everything up neatly, and as definitively as possible, doesn't really stand us in good stead at this point.

Artful response: If there has been anything innovative about the way we work at this at AMBS, it's likely to do with what we have been calling artful response. As I mentioned when I introduced collaborators, Perry and Rebecca began with artful response in a class on Job, and then Rebecca and I continued with it in my class on the Atonement. These classes called for a response that is more than intellectual. It calls for response that is involving the two sides of the brain. The content is difficult, calling forth the mysteries of the human spirit as well as the Divine Spirit. Rebecca is the only one in this collaboration that can legitimately be called an artist, and she coached us to think of artful response in three ways. The simplest, and often first way to respond to something artfully, is to copy it. Art students go to museums and copy what they see. Our earliest efforts at playing the piano, or any other instrument, is to copy what someone else has done. Actors do impressions, needle workers follow patterns, woodworkers copy furniture.

The second way to respond to something artfully it is to copy something with alteration. You might change one thing about the original. A color, or a posture, something small or something significant. In any case, what you have done is create something new. It may or may not be original from a Fine Arts perspective, but it is nevertheless a new thing. We are, after all, not after art for art's sake, but for what we can learn about ourselves and the texts that give us life. There are many examples of this kind of response in the world of music. A couple of Sundays ago, I went down to the cities and heard Cantus in their program, "Going Home." It's a program of Dvorak and of Czech music. But think of how the spiritual "I'm Going Home" echoes in Dvorak's new world symphony. Dvorak is copying it but, he's also altering it, and it becomes a new thing in the context of the symphony.

The third way to respond to something artfully is to make something entirely new that connects with or resonates with the art to which we are responding. One of my students from Ecuador responded to the crucifixion scene in Luke, where the two thieves crucified by Jesus talk to him, with a painting that used the styles and symbols from her own culture. She invoked cross as the tree of life. It was haunting, and it was beautiful, and it was a new thing that responded to the text without copying it. Her painting brought together the fleeting tenderness and community fashioned by Jesus and the beseeching criminal in the midst of their suffering with the fleeting tenderness and community fashioned in perilous times by her own community in Ecuador.

In addition to thinking about those three ways of responding artfully, Rebecca, fairly early on, introduced us to writing the text. "Taking the text in hand," she called it. Something about that phrase

sparked our imaginations. For one thing, it was simple. Artful response sometimes makes people gasp. The defenses go up. “I’m not an artist!” they say, and no matter how soothing you are—and after twenty-five years of teaching Greek, I can be very soothing— ***audience laughter*** the anxieties still continue to rise. But writing the text is something that we can do. It may have been a long time for some of us since we took a pen or pencil in hand, but we can write. Legibility may indeed be an issue, but we’re not writing medical prescriptions. It doesn’t much matter. So, writing the text lowers the defenses and helps people get started. From my perspective as a biblical scholar, writing the text also connects us to the tradition of the biblical text and its transmission. I think it is also something that we have learned from the St. John’s Bible project. These actions connect us physically, psychologically, and theologically to the scribes who went before us to preserve these texts.

While we tell participants in confessional Bible studies that writing the text is quite enough, the truth is that it rarely stops there. Like the calligraphers of the St. John’s Bible, and like the scribes before us, the urge comes to illuminate and ornament the writing. And so, to move into contemplation and interpretation. We begin selecting some phrases or words for special attention. We write them over and over. We play with them. We start adding color and texture. The leadership task at this point is to encourage participants to let their playful sides emerge. And to have lots of art supplies lying around available. A holy silence often holds sway. Usually we become quiet. A few murmurs perhaps, the logistics of sharing materials. It’s a kind of quiet that I hardly ever—maybe never—have experienced in Mennonite settings, have occasionally experienced in Catholic settings, and reliably experience in Quaker settings, and it is a silence that I have come to crave.

This is the part that is likely most like *Lectio Divina*, although for me confessionally here, it has always been difficult to move into this quieter mode without the rigorous intellectual study that precedes it. But something happens here, something opens up in us. The text becomes embedded, in us and in the work of our hands in a new way. We see features of the text that we didn’t see before. We hear emphases differently. The text takes on a patina. It seasons. It ages within us. Most times, although not always, we give participants an opportunity to say something about their work if they would like to do so. We never pressure people to do this. Often the comments are quiet. There is some kind of contemplative sense. There is space between the offerings of insight and the words of appreciation.

The last posture of confessional bible study is worship. Hard left brain work with the texts—the cognitive component—coupled with hard right brain work with the text—the artistic response—leads us to God. We might see the first part, the rigorous mind work, as taking hold. Paying our dues. Working to establish our right to interpret these texts. Fulfilling our responsibility as disciples to hear and to understand the word. We might see the second part, artistic response, as letting go. Letting go of control. Letting the text speak into us, invoking the Holy Spirit beyond us and within us. Some people have described these two movements as reading the text and letting the text read us. I think they go together hand in glove. But it does not really end there. We really bring our taking hold and our letting go as disciples together before the throne of grace. It is worship that helps us integrate the taking on and letting go. The work of the left and right brains, the activity of the mind and heart.

As we have planned worship for the culmination of confessional Bible reading, reading as if our lives depend on it, the texts themselves have been our richest resource.

One element that does not vary is that you read the text again. This final communal reading takes on contemplative overtones, and sometimes almost unfathomable richness as we hear it once again, resonating as it does through our mindful scrutiny and our open-hearted artful response. So we let ourselves settle into that reading and take our time. But we also use the text to guide our liturgy. Mennonites often insist that we have no liturgy, but this kind of bible study seems to nurture that need, and what we do most often is adapt a service from the Anabaptist prayer book. Again, you will likely see influences of St. John's and the prayer book. But it is essentially a simple format with a call to praise, a call to discipleship, and a call to intercession. It is, I suppose, somewhere on the continuum between high church and low church, with set pieces and open places to bring in other kinds of richness, prayers, and our own heartfelt intercessions.

The theory that has guided our development of worship for confessional Bible study is the notion of intra-dependent and extra-dependent space, which also, I think, has ramifications for the project of confessional Bible reading as a whole. And for the integration for which we thirst. These terms come from Tom Tr—Troeger? I think that's how you say it. And Carol Doran's *Trouble at the Table: Gathering the Tribes for Worship*, and here's two quotations that I would like to have us look at together. This is the first one. "Intra-dependence and extra-dependences are 'two different modes of being.' Intra-dependence is the state of depending upon ourselves. Most adults have to be intra-dependent most of their lives. Intra-dependence is demanding. We periodically need to change out of that role; we need to receive instead of give, to surrender control instead of take control, to become, in a word, 'extra-dependent,' to depend upon one another. The church at worship invites people to become depend upon the only One who is ultimately dependable: God. When worship 'works,' people find themselves renewed by the experience of extra-dependence so that they can return to their daily lives and take responsibility for using the gifts that God has given them." And here is the second one. "There are dangers in the process of oscillation, of movement from intra-dependence to extra-dependence. The most obvious one is that we would cease to take responsibility for our lives and give ourselves to destructive ends. There is also the danger that the theory of oscillation will lead people to consider worship as nothing more than an escape valve from their overburdened lives."

In many ways, these two quotations from *Trouble at the Table* are instructive, I think, for the project of confessional Bible study as a whole. We are binary creatures, fundamentally and theologically. Our lives at the service of God are, whether we recognize it or not and whether we like it or not, paradoxical. Cognizant of the pitfalls, but taking courage in hand, along with the tools of human understanding and expression, we dare to study the Bible. We dare to give it the rigor of our minds and the allegiance of our hearts. We dare to let it orient us and reorient us to the passions of God. God's love for God's people and God's love for God's world. We dare to stand firm, and we dare to take hope. We dare to let God's Word to us in Scripture move us. And again, in the words of Ellen Davis, reading the Bible confessionally means recognizing it as a word that is indispensable if we are to view the world realistically and hopefully. We acknowledge it as a divine word that is uniquely powerful to interpret our experience. But more, we allow ourselves to be moved by it, trusting that it is the one reliable guide to a life that is not, in the last analysis, desperate.

So, questions? Oh, I do have questions— ***audience applause*** I was trying to figure out a question to ask you to get us started. So my question is—and I'm going to work with the scholars in a couple of weeks on this more specifically—but how the formation and integration happen? What do we need, what can we learn about these processes from each other? It seems to me—this is my thesis—that we need three things or integration to happen. One is the great thing (Parker Palmer). In my case Scripture, but it might be Benedictine values or the life of Christ, or you might phrase that differently. I also think it takes leadership and mentoring of some sort. And finally, it takes commitment and time and willingness to be vulnerable. On the part of both participants and the leadership.

So, questions? Quibbles? Arguments? Further insight? Bill.

Bill:

Thank you, Mary. This was really fun. I think those of us who taught high school knew that whatever we're teaching, we'd expect kids to say, "Well, when am I ever going to use this again in my life?" and I think you've clearly shown us that in a really interesting and challenging way. It was interesting to me when you were... "tentative," I think, was your word...in describing it as Sacrament.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah. Especially for a Mennonite.

Bill:

Yeah. ***Schertz laughs*** But, if when the Scriptures speak, if when the scriptures are proclaimed it is Christ who speaks...

Mary Schertz:

Yes.

Bill:

It's got to be a sacramental moment that works, right?

Mary Schertz:

Yeah. And it functions that way. What is Sacrament? It's bringing the material and the spiritual together.

Bill:

And called to in Christ.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah. So what—how else would you describe, I mean, is that—? This seems to describe it. Yeah.

Bill:

It seems really sensible and lovely to me.

Mary Schertz:

Thank you. Thank you. Tim? ***audience laughter***

Tim:

I'd love to hear just a bit more about where you use this, and what kind of tie-in you're talking about. Both in terms of both the study, as well as then doing the artful. And creating that, and then carrying people, debrief, or talk about that, and then going to worship. Are we talking about something that you really think needs an hour and a half...? Twenty minutes? ***Schertz laughs***

Mary Schertz:

Well...

Tim:

It's just, I— The rhythm and the flow of this. The different kinds...

Mary Schertz:

Yeah, yeah. The commitment is crucial. So... Yeah, I've mainly done it with self-selecting groups. Okay? So we invite them to apply for a retreat. This is a leisurely thing. My favorite way to do it is at a retreat setting, where you may do three Bible studies. Joetta can speak to this, I think. And then have social time, eating time. Do communion, probably, at some point. Those seem to me to be the deepest experiences of this. But in fact, what are the realities? So. Rachel Miller Jacobs, who has just finished her DMin, and who was part of this as her, what do you call it? Dissertation for the DMin, whatever that is— has worked with Sunday schools. One time, she tried it doing the cognitive study first, one week, moving into artistic expression the second week, and worshipping the third week. You always have the issue of people coming in new and leaving, coming and going in those settings, so you have to work with that somewhat. But she also worked with—she did what she called a middle youth camp. Day camp. Was in August when the parents were tired of their middle school children being around, ***audience laughter*** and so she had them for about four days. And worked with them in that setting and did some really marvelous things. They did some— Their artistic response was partly done in video. So, you know, it caught their attention. And, yeah. So, I think that, I mean, I keep trying to emphasize that this is not a curriculum. But it's adaptable to various limitations. Now, it requires time and commitment. I don't want to sugarcoat that. This is not a, what do you call it? Quick and easy. This is not a frozen food entrée. It's more like a stew. ***audience laughter***

Audience Member:

It's not microwave; it's a crock pot.

Mary Schertz:

Right! ***audience laughter*** Exactly. Yeah, the flavors deepen with the time that's given. Gerald.

Gerald:

It might be helpful for some of us who haven't done it to at least push you just a little bit more on this. Is there a minimum time that you need to stew the juices or whatever? I mean, can you do it in an hour in Sunday school? Which turns out to be probably 45 minutes or 50 minutes.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah... The quickest time I've tried to do this in—I'm trying to decide now whether it was successful enough to mention or not. ***audience laughter*** We have tried doing this as a faculty before a faculty meeting.

Audience Member:

Oh...!

Mary Schertz:

Now, generally the limitations of that are 20 to 25 minutes. But what I've discovered is some things can be done. I have given faculty a handout of the texts that I've translated, for instance. And then we'll have sort of open observations for eight minutes or so. Now, these are people that know Bible pretty well. I mean, it's, again, there's some self-selection about that. I'm not saying—I'm not trying to make generalizations from it. But then—and there's no time to do an artistic response, in terms of creating with paper or writing the text. Although sometimes you can do a little bit of writing the text. But sometimes, some silence can work there. Something that moves people into a different side of their brain. And then we end with worship, which can be very brief. Five minutes, even. But yeah, that's been the shortest time that I've tried this with. I think there was some, I mean, I wouldn't want to abandon it, but I mean, it doesn't have the richness of the longer times. Joetta?

Joetta:

I was going to share that I did take part in one of the retreats that Mary and her cohort led, and it was actually a Holy Week done a month before Holy Week. It was for pastors, so that we could actually, fully enter Holy Week. So it was Thursday night through Sunday, and it was lovely. It was just, it was very moving, and I think I had some of those moments that Mary had talked about.

But, you know, so I was taken with it, and I wanted so much to bring this to my church, and I haven't been very successful. Partly because of the time issues. I just tried offering something during Lent and after inviting people for the first two Tuesdays of Lent and nobody showing up, I decided that was—

Mary Schertz:

Yeah.

Joetta:

But I've actually done the art response part as a meditation at the beginning of, say, my deacons, which is a pastoral care group.

Mary Schertz:

Oh interesting.

Joetta:

And just taking the Scripture, and I can't remember now what it was, maybe it was the "don't worry about tomorrow," you know? And then just handing out pieces of paper and putting colored pencils on the table. And I mean, I said a little bit, but we didn't really do the hard studying. We just took the text...it was more like Lectio.

But then it was just, let your mind go. And with five people around the table, it was just amazing what came out in five minutes. And these were not people that were artistic, necessarily.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah, uh-huh, yeah.

Joetta:

And then we just recently did it, in part because my worship commission chair was really excited about the project but didn't have Tuesday nights free.

Mary Schertz:

Uh-huh.

Joetta:

She then brought it to our worship commission, and we used it on a text for the upcoming Sunday. And we had read the text together, and then again, just spent five minutes drawing. And we really had some very rich conversation. And again, these were people that, one has an MDiv, and you know one's a doctor but they're all very serious people. And so in that case, it was no more than 15 minutes, I think.

Mary Schertz:

That's really heartening for me to hear, Joetta.

Joetta:

Yeah. I could see there was a real richness that came out of it.

Bill:

That's so interesting. When I'm hearing that, because I'm wondering, it would be ideal if those of us who proclaim the gospel could do what you say—make our own translation first, but we're not. But we could do the writing like you're talking about. Have you ever tried that, Joetta? Before you read, like, the Sunday scriptures, to write it out? I haven't but I'm really intrigued by it.

Joetta:

Well, I actually do.

Bill:

Yeah?

Joetta:

And now, you know when I was here in January and February, and knowing that Mary was here, I actually wrote—I worked through the Lenten texts that I knew I would be preaching on when I read them that term. So each week, I took one week of text, and I hand-wrote them all for lectionary text. And then I spent Monday afternoon in Mary's office, and I artistically usually worked with the gospel. But sometimes a couple of the others.

Mary Schertz:

And by the way I have lots of art supplies in my office. Any of you ***audience laughs*** would want to do this, you've got two more weeks! Michael then Don.

Michael:

Well, I notice that your slides, they were very triadic.

Mary Schertz:

Oh! ***Schertz laughs*** I am a well-trained Trinitarian.

Michael:

Makes me think of think of the mystagogical method. Mystagogy is something which the sacramental churches have kind of rediscovered, which is also triadic. But it starts with an experience, and then reflection, and then sharing. And that's the way we are for teaching adults, but it's that middle section, the reflection, which is most difficult. Because a lot of people are going to say, okay, just take some time and reflect, and they go crazy. But I like your approach, is the art thing. Because it's a way to kind of appropriate that task, appropriate that experience in yourself by doing something. And so, I'm tempted to actually steal it from you ***audience laughter*** and use that method.

Mary Schertz:

Please! ***Michael laughs*** Be my guest. Yeah. I think what I'm coming to understand, is that people in our modern society are really hungry for this kind of slowing down. This kind of reflection, this time of looking inside and looking outward. The text in hand, I think, enhances that, it helps that. But I think there's a real sort of gnawing hunger for this—I mean, it's contemplation. I mean, most of you have known this for all your lives, right? Yeah, Don and then Perry.

Don:

I'm going to be the bad guy talk about something that I found dissonant.

Mary Schertz:

Okay.

Don:

I'm very interested in... How is it... ***attempts to pronounce "orthopathy"*** ***multiple overlapping voices attempt to correct him*** Orthopathy! Or orth-o-pathy...

Mary Schertz:

Schertz laughs Yeah, I—who knows.

Don:

I'm really interested in relationship between pathos, doxis, and praxis.

Mary Schertz:

Oh, praxis is the word.

Don:

inaudible ***Schertz laughs*** But in your talk, you talked about the relationship between left brain and right brain, and you kind of use that interchangeably with mind and heart.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah, I know.

Don:

And that's a problem, because it seems to be left brain and right brain are mind activities. And orthopathy is something else. It's a heart thing.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah.

Don:

And so there's an inconsistency there.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah. I agree.

Don:

And you also talked about orthopraxy as a middle term.

Mary:

Yeah.

Don:

And I am not sure I feel comfortable with that? I would want to challenge and talk to you about that further, because to me it's the ground term.

Mary Schertz:

Okay. Yeah, maybe that's right.

Don:

In which orthopraxy and orthodoxy, they assume that. And then I would say, if this is so important to the kind of Bible study—which I completely, I find this very interesting and enriching and all that to talk about the Bible study. But is it very important that the kind of Bible study you're talking about really look at this as category, orth-*o*-pathy, or orthopathy, or whatever—

Mary Schertz:

Yeah, orthopathy.

Don:

Proper motions, proper feelings, well-formed feelings. Because I think this is one thing that the theological world has not paid sufficient attention to.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah, yeah.

Don:

I'll drop one name: Jonathan Edwards. There is no other theologian who has written on the religious affections in the way that Edwards raises. And that seems really important, is all.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah. The first thing, Don, is that I'm struggling for vocabulary for this. So I'm aware that I've gone back and forth between right brain and left brain, and heart mind And I'm not sure which one of those terms is best. So I've kind of been throwing them both out and seeing how people respond. But there is kind of a linear, rational part of us, and there is kind of an affective part of us. And those are the two parts that I think have to come into some tension, some balance, some interaction for us to be integrated beings. So, I'm searching for vocabulary. And would welcome suggestions.

Don:

Yes, or something ***inaudible***

Mary Schertz:

Yeah. Perry first, and then Dawn?

Perry Yoder:

I'm just going make a comment about, back at the beginning.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah.

Perry Yoder:

In asking Rebecca to participate with me in the Job class. I was a seminary professor, but even seminary professors are not going to be able to do a very good job of exegesis on the text of Job.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah, right.

Perry Yoder:

So what I was looking for, what kind of product would they produce besides an interpretation? that they could really get existentially involved in. And have a dialogue between their own process of understanding the text and expressing the text, not in words, but in some creative way. And Rebecca was very good at working with that. And so that was kind of my thing. Is there another way, rather than

having to write an exegesis paper, to express their understanding of a book, or understanding of a chapter, or something like that? And of course, you get a mixture. But I had some phenomenal

Mary Schertz:

Some very moving, as I recall.

Perry Yoder:

Very moving response. I remember one of the highlights of the night two guys did a video. Anybody who's worked with book of Job and saw that video, it just had rapport. Just, yeah. That's it.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah. Something happens, something happens. And finding words for that, and finding ways to think about it, is part of what I'm about here.

Perry Yoder:

The second thing I was going to say is, it has become apparent to me, involving the body in some way. Where the trying, whether it's...

Mary Schertz:

Yeah.

Perry Yoder:

It is just helpful. And varying your vocabulary, you're going to do, is helpful.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah, the embodiment of it. Yes indeed. Joetta, when we did the Holy retreat, did Rebecca start with some body exercises? Or did we develop that for the next one?

Joetta:

I don't think so.

Mary Schertz:

Sometimes she has led us through things on balance, tension, body tension, those kinds of things, which have been real helpful. As beginning to, you know, let go of this control. Dawn? You had...

Dawn:

Well this is connected a bit to what Don was saying. I do think that theologians going back to spark of Bonaventure and Thomas actually have addressed the affective in ways that are helpful. For example, in Bonaventure, you have memory inside your intellect and will, and yet one cannot function without the other. And thinking of in Thomas, there's a whole place of mutual love between God, and you know, the whole friendship of God. That whole section is similar to...

Mary Schertz:

That's right.

Dawn:

And then also, I'm thinking of Dan Maguire, my own mentor, in terms of ethics. The whole area of affective knowing. That you can't be moral on purely rational stance. That is, you know, those don't really act that separate. And maybe that's not what you meant, I mean...

Don:

No, that was— I very much I agree with... If that's not in place, an action without love...

Mary Schertz:

Yeah.

Don:

You can have all these other things. You can have the perfect ethical formulation...

Mary Schertz:

Right, yeah.

Don:

But without love, it—

Mary Schertz:

Clanging symbols. Well it also may be that our disciplines at their best call forth from all of us that more threefold response. What I hear you saying partly, Don, is that good theologians don't ignore the affective. So it's possible, maybe, that our disciplines at their best do this kind of integration. Gerald?

Gerald:

I'm just curious, did anyone in your collaborative group draw in John Paul Lederach's *Moral Imagination*?

Mary Schertz:

No, no we have not, but I will make a note of that.

Gerald:

Just, for those who don't—John Paul Lederach has absolutely been an idol. I don't think that's the connection here, but—is a leading practitioner/theorist of conflict transformation. Now teaches at Notre Dame in their Peace Institute. And did a lot of work, early in his career, sort of on peacebuilding theory, conflict resolution theory. Then about ten years ago, but also while being a practitioner and working around the world, he did this book—you know, having done lots of social science stuff, very theoretical—did this book where he really argued with, a little bit of trepidation, what other social scientists and peacebuilding people, you know, wanted hard, hard theory. We'd say, but more about the art, art of peaceful. And he has a chapter in there, for example, about the haiku moment. When having analyzed this whole, you know, this whole complex conflict and so on, one finds that moment when one who could just express it in—what would it be, seventeen syllables. And has some exercises for peace

builders—I use it in my senior seminar in Peace Studies. So, I would say I find haiku helpful, just at a practical level, you know, if you don't have time to get out the art supplies and do all that...

Mary Schertz:

Right, right. Yeah.

Gerald:

Or if you have people who are pretty wordy, in the first place. The discipline of haiku—

Mary Schertz:

Schertz laughs Seventeen syllables.

Gerald:

—works, so. But there's lots of other stuff in that book that—

Mary Schertz:

There's many ways—

Gerald:

—you guys might want to look at...

Mary Schertz:

Yeah, no, I'm really glad for this suggestion.

Audience Member:

I'd like to hear some more reflections on the artful reflection. Of the kinds of... you want to keep directions simple and direct. But you also want to keep this—provide some direction, some openness. What kind of directions do you give? Or suggestions? I mean, you know, you could say, "Well here's got art things out here, you can write on 'em." That probably is a little bit too open-ended. So what do you say there? And what seems to work best?

Mary Schertz:

We often put this on Rebecca. ***audience laughter*** And she's very articulate and quite wonderful. But she sort of begins with this writing the text thing. You don't have to do—just take it in hand. And she talks about the embodiment. She talks about the scribes and how they did that. She often also brings in the St. John's Bible, actually. To start us off. And invites people to kind of look at that, say, okay, here are people, modern people, contemporary people, who are writing the text. So, she tries to keep it low-key and clear. If we go on for a retreat kind of thing, she will often add to that in subsequent—like, you might, if you've explored line, she might say, then try to think about that phrase. What texture does that phrase have, what color does that phrase have, what shape does that phrase have. So she'll go beyond what she said originally in subsequent sessions, sometimes. She keeps it pretty open-ended, low-key, and just lets people try things. Now, when you're working together, you often get ideas about where to go from seeing what other people have done. It is very reassuring because no one's an expert here. And because you don't know the outcome. I mean, I have done an artful response, I've done writing the text

in which nothing emerged. It's like going to church. Sometimes liturgy doesn't move me. But I keep doing it, and then it does. So, you know, there's ups and downs of that kind of thing. And learning to roll with the...

Audience Member:

Since it's in terms of artful response, but you're not wanting to get—"Excuse me. How do you feel about the text?" ***Schertz laughs*** But really what you're wanting to get them is--and you don't want them simply to rewrite text...in their own words...

Mary Schertz:

No, that would be okay, actually.

Audience Member:

But you're wanting to give them, like, if you think of St. John's Bible, you think of the artwork in particular. So I mean, it's interesting to hear your reflections about--you get to think, to use the other side of the brain.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah.

Audience Member:

So they can image it in terms of its meaning, its texture, its... So.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah.

Audience Member:

My guess is for us, who might say, oh, this is just very interesting, pedagogically. And a way of actually hearing the texts in some new ways. The kinds of examples of how you give directions there are really— or the examples here, and your example of the artist is very helpful—

Mary Schertz:

Yeah, and Rebecca should really speak to this, because she's done the most thinking about it. For my personal work, I often just write a phrase or two, or a paragraph. Sometimes the whole text, really about as fast as I can. And then, I kind of decorate, I go over, I make double letters out. I mean, I do kind of a font, and fill it in and as I'm doing that, that's where the contemplation...

Audience Member:

That's interesting. ***inaudible***

Mary Schertz:

And that's where the art comes, too. Michael, you had a comment.

Michael:

Well, I'm just thinking, like a musician, a musician can study a score.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah.

Michael:

But it's not a part of you yet. You've got to make it—it has to be a kinetic kind of thing.

Mary Schertz:

That's right.

Michael:

And so, the pianist has to get it into the fingers, a vocalist has to get it into voice...

Mary Schertz:

Exactly,

Michael:

Because otherwise, it's extraneous, it's external. So it's a question of appropriation, yourself.

Mary Schertz:

So, part of that's the writing of the text, you know? It's like putting your hands on the piano keys, or the guitar strings, or...

Michael:

Kinetic movement.

Mary Schertz:

Yeah, yeah. "Taking it in hand" is one of Rebecca's favorite phrases. Taking it in hand. Carla?

Carla Durand:

Well, thank you, Mary, for sharing this movement, and process with us. Thank you for the good conversation and questions.

Mary Schertz:

Thank you all for the conversation. ***audience applause***

[Transcriber's Note: Correction—the book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* was written by Harold Kushner.]