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## BIBLIODRAMA WORKSHOP IN WITTENBERG: MARTIN LUTHER – UNSUSPECTED INSIGHTS

In this article I would like to share about my experience facilitating a Bibliodrama workshop in Wittenberg in July 2017.

The idea to have this workshop was a fruit of the cooperation between the German Bibliodrama Association and the EAEE, the „Protestant and Anglican Network for life-long learning in Europe“. This association for people working in Christian adult education in Europe had chosen Wittenberg as this year's destination for their yearly study tour. The focus in 2017 was on Luther, of course...

I was intrigued by the second part of title of the tour: „Martin Luther - Unsuspected Insights“. Isn't that what Bibliodrama is about? New insights through creative methods and play. The workshop was supposed to take place on the second morning of the three-and-a-half-day tour. As far as I could see from their program, it was the one creative part of the program, which otherwise included the general assembly, academic presentations and sightseeing.

Joachim Stöver, at that time the president of the association, had sent me the Bible text for the Bibliodrama well in advance. It was from the Letter to the Galatians (chapter 3, verses 23-29):

23 Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. 24 So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. 25 Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

A rich text, one closely linked to Luther's theology of being saved through faith alone. The time frame for the workshop was four hours including a break - we actually started half an hour later than planned, so we only had just over three hours time. What a challenge - to „do justice“ to the text and to respond to the participants' expectations of „unsuspected insights“ within such a brief time frame!

Time was not the only challenge. I did not know the group before, so I had no idea if they were „into“ creative methods - or rather looking for more intellectual input.

The group consisted of 17 people from ten different European countries (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland,

France, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden). I arrived the night before the workshop (which took place on the second morning) and found out that the participants' levels of English differed quite a bit, an important piece of information for my facilitation. (I made sure to invite wishes for repetitions or word explanations during the Bibliodrama.)

We started the workshop with a brief introduction round. I also asked them to share if they had any Bibliodrama experience. And to my surprise a lot of them did! Some topics relating to Bibliodrama came up in this round of sharing, e.g. the possibility that it can „go wrong“ or the experience that Bibliodrama can go very deep (including the fear that it might go too deep). The participants were assured that even if „it goes wrong“, we can all learn a lot - and that, yes, Bibliodrama can go very deep but that we'd engage in practices appropriate for a short workshop that morning.

A variety of the „four-corner-game“ invited personal sharing about the meaning of some terms relating to the text (such as „sameness“, „diversity“, „law“, „pedagogue“). Each round I was able to witness personal sharing, laughter, serious exchange. Then, in pairs, two of the chosen terms were transformed into a sculpture (frozen or moving). Personally, I was most touched by a pair showing a very simple, slow, tender movement that expressed approaching, doubt, hesitating and finally touching. Their chosen word was „ethnicities“ (commonly translated as „Gentiles“ in the English text).

The participants whispered the text to each other, then they said words out loud that spoke to them, before walking from verse to verse („Viagese“), finding „their“ verse for the time being and sharing with others.

We collected roles from the text, walked around them, and, whenever someone felt like stepping into one of the roles, she / he took the card and the others could interview her / him.

The role-play „on stage“ was short but offered so much! For example: „Faith“ was the first one on stage - and remained alone for quite a while! What is faith without human beings? A „slave“ hurried up and down - someone has to take the garbage out, idealistic talk alone won't do it. „Justification“ understandably felt somewhat awkward in its role.

In the following reflection it was difficult for some participants to distinguish between what they'd seen and their interpretation of it. Then the sharing naturally moved to the meaning of the Bibliodrama for their lives at home. „I understood how important it is to listen, just listen!“ „Yes, but we need to do something, the refugees need our active help!“ - and there we were, right in the middle of the big debate about „faith“ and „works“, right in the middle of Luther's theology. A personal reflection took place in the form of short (eleven-word) poems that everybody was invited to write (as an alternative, there were crayons to draw a picture).

I can say that yes, we were able to discover „unsuspected insights“ together through the wonderful possibilities of experiential learning that Bibliodrama offers. The main ingredient, it seems to me, was the openness, willingness of the whole group to really enter the process. This, I believe, is something that cannot be „made“, it was a real gift.

I cannot say in how far intercultural aspects influenced the flow of the workshop - as always, some participants were more active and outspoken than others - but, not knowing them personally, I dare not say if this reflected cultural norms or rather individual personality traits.

Finally, I would like to thank Joachim Stöver as (now former) EAEE president for the excellent cooperation, communication, support and encouragement. And I want to encourage others to offer Bibliodrama for intercultural groups. And to do workshops even within very restricted time frames - for all of us, it seems, the harvest of that morning workshop was a rich one.



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