

May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Dear Friends

"The people have spoken, though it is unclear what they said"... and I thought it was just accounting statements that were difficult to interpret!

In the last month we have been exposed to the beat of tribal drums, though with insufficient harmony to enable the public to rap with confidence. Politicians like Pastors have difficulty charming po-mo pick- n- mixers with propositions sufficiently persuasive to solicit undivided participation.



Though subject to hustings, leaders were so tightly committed to stay 'on message' that most exposure turned out to be a repetitive monologue, yielding little to public response. Imagine if preachers were restrained by a 28 point card and bidden to bang on about five clinchers, evading answers to questions conveniently deferred? Yes, Imagine! Say now the public presentation of faith were constrained to a handful of media-savvy spin-doctors? Say now the only proponents fielded for stardom were indeed 'boys of privilege', with women, minorities and the honestly reflective airbrushed out. Surely that couldn't happen to us? Now then!

According to George Steiner the Jewish critic: *"It is the Hebraic intuition that God is capable of all speech acts except that of monologue, which has created our acts of reply, of questioning and counter-creation. ... there has to be, if man was to bear his being, the means of dialogue with God which are spelled out in our poetics, music and art."*

Walter Brueggemann develops this, to suggest that the work of the church is to witness to that dialogue, to practice dialogue, and be a place for dialogue *"in a monologue culture, as an authentic outflow and consequence of our deepest nature made as we are in the image of God"*.

Evidence of monologue is offered in the one-way output of TV, internet, and print. We no longer enquire of one another, we just impose our views. The hegemony of big power just prevails, no questions. The outcome is to silence rather than engagement. *"Such silencing will kill democracy, create an environment of distrust and resentment that will readily issue in violence, and is apparent in the shrillness of law violating fundamentalists"*. Heavens alive, I hope that doesn't happen to us!

By contrast, the earliest post creation encounter was a God who walked and talked with his people, morning and evening and subsequent patriarchal, prophetic and poetic leaders who were remarkable not so much as God's spin doctors or mindless messengers, but His conversational partners. Abraham negotiated the fate of Sodom, Israel was one who wrestled with God. Moses developed terms and so on. The Christian way is for us each to have conversations with God, about the really difficult questions, the kind over which we will return again and again for the rest of our lives.

Thank you again, in all sincerity for your contribution to God's elect and to being a servant and conversant of God's will.

Best regards

Victor