**Space for Learning Seminar 12 June 2020 Damian Feeney**

Towards a Hermeneutic of Uncertainty: Signposts and Soundbites

**Introduction**

The game is worthwhile in so far as we don’t know what will be the end.

*Michel Foucault*

* Brexit
* 2019 General Election
* Coronavirus pandemic
* Global and national inequality
* George Floyd
* Context of volatility
* Rhetoric of warfare and conflict

**Our Response**

* The rhetoric of liberation
* The rhetoric of denial
* The illusion of stability

**Change and Decay**

* Slaughterhouse-five and the destruction of context
* Reconstruction and re-imagining

**Improvisation**

* Speed and suddenness
* Jazz as a metaphor
* Sam Wells, N.T Wright and the ‘Missing Act V’

‘…it is wrong to put the church at the end of the story. It is not the church’s role to make the story end well. The story is not an enigma that God has left the church to resolve. The church lies within the story, rather than at the end of it…to see the church as the conclusion of the story, or as the company charged with brining the right conclusion out of the story, is too ‘lyric.’ The story ends when and how God wants it to, whether the church has ‘guessed right’ or ‘performed faithfully’, or not. (Wells, 2018, p.32)

**Back to the Future**

- Vocation and Eschatology

**Abraham and Isaac**

* Lifting the knife, and the embracing of uncertainty

**Tilting at Windmills**

- Monsignor Quixote and faith without certainty

He had dreamt that Christ had been saved from the Cross by the legion of angels to which on an earlier occasion the devil had told him that he could appeal. So there was no final agony, no heavy stone which had to be rolled away, no discovery of an empty tomb. Father Quixote stood there watching on Golgotha as Christ stepped down from the Cross triumphant and acclaimed. The Roman Soldiers, even the Centurion, knelt in his honour, and the people of Jerusalem poured up the hill to worship him. The disciples clustered happily around. His mother smiled through her tears of joy. There was no ambiguity, no room for doubt and no and no room for faith at all. The whole world knew with certainty that Christ was the Son of God.

It was only a dream, of course, it was only a dream, but none the less Father Quixote had felt on waking the chill of despair felt by a man who realizes suddenly that he has taken up a profession which is of use to no one, who must continue to live in a kind of Saharan desert without doubt or faith, where everyone is certain that the same belief is true. He had found himself whispering ‘God save me from such a belief.’ (Greene, Monsignor Quixote)

- The nature of faith

**Foundational Uncertainty**

- The Last Supper and Gethsemane as axiomatic

The Last Supper looked like the collapse not just of one person’s world, but of any meaning at all for anyone. On Good Friday ‘there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour’ (Mark 15.33). If we crucify God’s Wisdom, then what sense can anything have? If we reject the Word of God, then what have any words to offer? In this seemingly hopeless moment, Jesus spoke words and made a sign. He said, ‘This is my body, given for you.’ Christians believe these words to be true. Our different traditions offer various interpretations of the sense in which they are true, but we agree that if they are not true, then any hope for meaning collapses. In the words of Aquinas’ Adoro te devote: ‘What God’s Son hath told me, take for true I do, truth himself speaks truly, or there’s nothing true.’ The one who spoke them is the Word of God, through whom all things were made. ‘In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it’ (John 1.4f.). (Radcliffe)

**Conclusions (1) Sacred Space**

* What is meant by Sacred Space?
* What does that space mean to those who inhabit it?

**Conclusions (2) The Mixed Economy**

* Dissatisfaction expressed in language
* The signposts of the Five Marks of Mission
* Who do you think you are?

**Conclusions (3) Resource**

* Finance, and the rumbling of distant thunder
* Vocation, validation, and ‘squaring the circle’.

Our second hour together will be a discussion which may or may not focus on the following areas (but feel free to redirect the conversation!)

1. From your own perspective, what are the significant shifts in attitude which will affect the church going forward?
2. What things have you reflected upon as needing to change in your own situation?
3. How might the church nationally and globally respond more faithfully to the situation in which we find ourselves?

**Further Reading**

Benedict of Nursia (2018) *The Rule of S Benedict* Liturgical Press

Greene, G. (1982) *Monsignor Quixote* Simon & Schuster

Radcliffe, T. (2008) *Why Go to Church?* (p. 109). Bloomsbury.

Wells, S. (2018) *Improvisation – the Drama of Christian Ethics* Baker, Michigan

Audio

Beloski, H. *Something Understood* BBC Radio Sounds <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b0b5qn14>