

Time will tell . . .

Back in 1958 when I was travelling with other biblical students through the Middle East - I had a chance to climb the great Pyramid near Cairo in Egypt. By climbing I mean lifting my knee and drawing myself up over each of the waist high blocks of stone that run diagonally up its length from bottom to top – close to 500 feet high. At one point I noticed a graffiti left by some soldier of Napoleon back around 1798? – who scratched next to his name the words AN 5. That meant Year 5 of the French Revolution's new calendar, inaugurated in 1793 to replace the centuries old calendar of the *ancient regime*.

As Christians our ancestors did the same thing when they initiated a new calendar dating from the birth of Christ – 2021 years ago. In fact different cultures operate by different calendars dating from some significant event in their past – either historically or mythologically. The Hebrew calendar dates from the *Bible's* reckoning of the creation of the world – so: it's now 5781 (I think). Islam's calendar dates from Mohammed's migration to Medina in 622 AD – so that this year is 1243 (I think). And so it goes from culture to culture. To get business done the whole world operates by our Western calendar – but the other calendars still tell of a time that's held sacred. So what time is it? The sun rises and sets each day so, if we *count* the days that pass, does time amount to years that we can *count*? And once we start counting years as – say – 1905, 1906, . . . 1930, . . . 2020, 2021 – don't they straighten out like a mile after mile one-way highway - - heading where? It drives many to brooding their time away.

And yet even ordinary people like Perry Como can sing of time as “Magic Moments”. Or look at our Church's calendar. Every day is a saint's day or commemorates (makes current again) some profoundly spiritual event like the call of Abraham or of a Moses or a prophet to step into a tomorrow as into a momentarily new dimension. As with our Advent Calendars designed so that each numbered day of December is but a *closed* window to be *opened* to reveal an image of events more meaningful than numbers can express. For persons appreciative of such *liturgical* time our days revive our sense of events and people, ourselves and nature as holy.

Deep thinkers actually view time not as linear but as curvaceous – it twists and turns. From my vantage of ninety plus years as I look back, I recall so many experiences – like detours or roundabouts – that “added up” in ways I could never have anticipated. Also from my current overview I can also see where even the slightest events such as the smell of tomato soup from my school lunch room one day or keeping my balance on my first bicycle or my listening to a lecture one day in Rome or my becoming a father . . . changed me, widened horizons – so that in looking back I am always awakening to whom I have been and am becoming which makes even tomorrow more interesting. The same can be true of you if you take in not only the long view but the subtler moments of your life - which you may have forgotten or overlooked. That's where God works most intimately within us – as Emily notes:

*He fumbles at your spirit / As players at the keys /
Before they drop full music on / He stuns you by degrees.*

Geoff Wood