

MERRY CHRISTMAS

By Franco Maggiotto

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"I am him who is, who was, and is to come," Revelation 1: 8

Refusing to read the Bible constantly, modern thought (perhaps post-modern?) refuses both remembrance- memory and the past- and planning- the future, the probable and the possible. It refuses what is not the present reality and therefore risks stopping at mere suppositions, that is, it risks escaping from reality. This modern thought uses verbs only in the indicative (poor subjunctive and conditionals!), and abstains from using verbs of remembering -for retelling or recounting the past- (Who knows how to use the past perfect or the remote past correctly ?), while those of the future are never used. Radio, television and newspapers compete with each other in this. In fact they talk about news and "breaking" news, neither of which requires the subjunctive or the conditional of planning (the Messianic Project, that is, the Kingdom of God). Nor do these require the past tenses of remembering.

And still the living God of the Bible created man and revealed Himself such that this distinguishes him for his ability to remember the past and plan for the future, but also to ask questions never asked before; to make predictions; to calculate probability; to invest not only in the present but also in the future. Today people talk a lot about identity. What is identity if it is not the result of experiences, traditions and memories that engrave on the character of individuals and various social groups and shape them in one way or another? What is life if one does not set some goals to reach, formulate hypotheses and be ready to modify them if they don't work?

Many believe that the present belongs to us fully and that we can change it however we want, while the past does not belong to us any more and the future has not yet come. Instead we must learn to regain possession of the past again and at the same time build for our future. The present is a bit too confining for us.

For many, this continual going back from the present to the roots of the past and then returning to the present in order to leap into the future seems to be not only a waste of time, but even a lot of expended energy that neither adds or takes away from life. Above all, it is better to have one's feet firmly planted in reality; that way we are sure that nothing will happen to us. Yet, we need to have firm points of reference, and these are mostly in the present, the verbal tense of reality. The focus on the present gives us a sense of security, but does this depend on the total appropriation of the present, or on the fact that the God who is with us today was with us yesterday and desires to be with us tomorrow? So we can go back to the past and make memories of it, and we can also open ourselves up to the future with hope. Reading the Word of God every day helps us to hear Him, to walk with Him, and to know how to use the grammatical tenses of the past and of the future. It helps us to find again the presence of God, of Him who was, and is, and is to come.

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