

8th January 2022

Beginnings

**“Beginnings are always troublesome ...
Even Macaulay’s few pages of introduction to his ‘Introduction’
in the English History are the worst bit of writing in the book.”**

George Elliot, Letter to Sara Hennell,
from ‘The George Elliot Letters’ by G S Haight

I haven’t read Thomas Babington Macaulay’s 1848 tome, *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second*, so I don’t know whether George Elliot’s critique is valid or not. But I *do* know that to decry the “introduction to his ‘Introduction’” is scathing criticism indeed! Any writer knows that a good beginning is important. The reader’s interest must be captured early so they’re prepared to invest time and commitment in reading more. The first few words, paragraphs, or even pages, really matter. And, therefore, any writer – including this one – will tell you that “beginnings are always troublesome”.

But that’s not true just for writing. Setting out on any enterprise is both important and troublesome. From marriage to a new job; from an important project to a school assignment; from musical training to a new hobby; from following a recipe to doing a home repair. Taking time over preparation gives you the best possible start. I mentioned a while ago a bookcase I built which has a mistake in it. I’d skipped over the troublesome beginning and *thought* it would be OK to “bash on”. I was wrong.

New beginnings happen all the time. But even the troublesome ones can be the beginning of something great if they are properly managed. In the Easter narratives, there’s the story of Peter – starting out on his role as a disciple of Jesus – having a troublesome beginning. Denying Jesus three times “before the cock crowed” was inauspicious. He learned, though. When Jesus met him on the shore and commanded him to “feed my lambs and my sheep”, *this* new beginning was given time and focus. Troublesome? Yes, but successful too, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Whatever new beginnings you’re engaged with as 2022 unfolds, even if they *are* troublesome, it’s worth the effort and energy getting them right. And who knows what great things will result.

A prayer for today

*Lord, when I’m at the end, I begin again –
and find your Love where it always was. Amazing! Amen*