

Last year's February letter had quite a bit of head-scratching from people. It referred to time - that thing in which our lives here are acted out - which goes in one direction: forward. I suppose the odd metaphor in that letter might not have been quite as clear to some as it was to me - perhaps I'd had one too many "Nelson's Blood." Anyway, let's have another go.

Putting aside Stephen Hawking's thoughts on time travel (which don't appear to take fully into account all the paradoxes that arise), we're still left with our existence within time itself, even if the speed at which we travel through it might or might not be variable.

The marvelous thing about our ability to perceive our existence with perspective is that we have concluded, in order for the explosion/flash of light/whatever of creation, time must have been part of that as well, because you can't have an event without time being there for it to happen in. With me so far?

The sages writing Genesis summed up this so long ago: "And God said, 'Let there be light.' and there was light." What an incredible concept: that there was a time when there wasn't time. Yes, that does sound like an oxymoron, but what other words are there to describe - albeit in temporal terms - what is literally infinite? My conclusion is that there must be another way of being that doesn't involve time: being outside it.

Time is finite and our part of it is also. So, before the dark crystal night sky gives way to lighter spring evenings, go, take a look at the immensity of it all and consider that, big as it is, each of us in due course will no longer have time. Consider, too, what someone said 2,000 years before Hawking:

I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.