



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society June 2019

Contents

[A Universal, Shareable Revelation](#)

by Rev Todd Beiswenger

[Spirit and Life Bible Study Update](#)

[A Video Game Used to Restore Notre Dame](#)

[General Church Assembly - June 18-21 2020](#)

[International Clergy Church Service & Luncheon](#)

[New Church Day Plans](#)

[Birthdays](#)

A Universal, Shareable Revelation

By Rev Todd Beiswenger

In our last newsletter I wrote about an experiment that we did with advertising online via YouTube and Facebook, and shortly thereafter I was reminded of a paragraph in *Secrets of Heaven* that talks about the unique sciences of this world. We're taught that "there are sciences here which do not exist elsewhere, such as astronomy, geometry, mechanics, physics, chemistry, medicine, optics, and philosophy; besides arts which also are unknown elsewhere, as the art of ship-building, of casting metals, of writing on paper, and of printing what is written, and thus of communicating it to all in the whole earth, and of preserving it to posterity for thousands of years; and that it has been so done with the Word" (AC 9793). We're about to celebrate New Church day because the Lord revealed Himself to us in a series of books, and this quote goes to show that this is not how God normally operates. It also shows me that God is willing to use technology to achieve His goals for us.

But now if we consider that all of the above technology is 250 years old and think of the new technology that exists today, it means that there are even more things that are happening here that aren't happening anywhere else. Are we really that special? Frankly, that's a tough pill for me to swallow, but it seems that we are. While I kind of resist the idea, we are taught that we are beings that correspond to the external and bodily senses (AC 9107, 9360), so other worlds that correspond to more internal things just don't have the interest in the worldly sciences that we do. But since we do love it, the Lord is using our love of natural science to innovate new ways of connecting with each other and spreading the Word.

Think about it. Just among the various New Church denominations there are a wide variety of efforts being made that utilize modern technology to spread the teachings around the world. There are YouTube videos, live streaming of church services, Facebook pages, online study groups, websites dedicated to making the Writings accessible... and the list goes on. Perhaps equally impressive is that many of these endeavours are run by lay people.

Not only is technology making sharing the Word easier, but it is flattening the hierarchy of the church. It's not just the preacher who has to preach these days. Everybody is being called to share how connecting with God has changed their life. It doesn't have to be a mass-market message these days; it just has to be a message that brings people together.

If you step outside the New Church, you'll find that Christians around the world are becoming more and more adept at using modern technology to share the Bible to people who wouldn't otherwise engage with it. Here's an example: maybe you've heard of the "TLDR generation?" "TLDR" stands for "too long, didn't read." The attention span of everybody is decreasing, especially so with the younger generation that doesn't read long articles, let alone long books. Well, Chris Juby, a free-lance web developer in the US, decided to condense the Bible so that even TLDRs could read it. Now, the idea of condensing the Bible isn't particularly new, as it is after all about 800,000 words. What

makes this endeavour new is that this young man has reduced the Bible to 1,190 tweets, which is one tweet per chapter. For you non-Twitter users out there, each tweet can only be 140 characters long, so it is a seriously condensed Bible.

While these tweets obviously shouldn't replace reading the actual Bible, the hope is that as people read the tweets, they get inspired to seek out the actual Bible stories and connect with Scripture in that way. My hope is that people will see that the Bible underpins our entire western culture. Governments were set up by Christians, and our language has many idioms that are based off Bible stories, so these tweets may also help increase our Biblical literacy in an increasingly secular world.

Keeping things short and sweet has been shown to be the best way for any message to get around these days. We see this with the "meme," which is another relatively recent innovation, where an image with a message gets spread around to millions of people just by sharing it on Facebook or some other social media platform. Most memes are really just one frame comics, but there are also ones like Rev Howard Thompson does that have a religious message.

Now, with these examples in mind, consider the teachings in *Secrets of Heaven* that tell us that one of the reasons the Lord was born on this earth was because of the printing press, and just carry that a bit further. Because if you think about why the printing press mattered, it was because it allowed the Word to be shared around the world. With this access we would learn "that there is a God, that there is a heaven and a hell, and that there is a life after death; and which teaches besides how a man must live and believe in order that he may come into heaven, and thus be eternally happy" (AC 9352). These are the basic messages that are being made even more wide spread through the internet. Swedenborg surely didn't foresee the digital revolution we are in today, but the same principles that made the printing press so vital surely apply to modern information technology as well. This technology has brought some divisiveness to be sure, but Christians around the world are in agreement that there is a God, a life after death and that the Word teaches us how to live.

While beings on other worlds are also taught these same things, they are taught orally via a direct revelation from spirits and angels (AC 9358). This method of revelation has different failure points than what we're accustomed to. Essentially there are "whisper down the lane" issues where the message gets corrupted, and where it will eventually die off if the lessons aren't repeated to successive generations. So while our technology based solutions do have negative side effects... internet used for pornography, live streaming of shootings, etc... it has been shown to be very effective at creating a book that remains in integrity for thousands of years.

Can you imagine what would have happened to the Bible stories if they were just an oral tradition? Just as we exaggerate the stories of our life to make us look smarter, stronger and more heroic than is actual fact, you can imagine that the credit for all of God's miracles would have over time been given over to humans. No longer would have God's right arm have freed the Israelites from Egypt, but rather the success would be attributed

to Moses' mastery of supernatural abilities. That's what we do; we take every opportunity to inflate our ego.

Yet that's not what happened, and Moses, along with dedicated scribes throughout the centuries kept the story recorded as it was intended so as to serve not only as a record of history, but to function as a connection with heaven and earth. Of course this connection had to be set up because we turned from God and shut down the direct revelation method... but still I have to think that God is pretty pleased with what we've done with it. He knows we like material stuff, so I imagine that He's happy that we've used that love to maintain a connection with Him and spread His teachings.

To me, it is like if a child moved away from their parents, and so the parents invented the telephone in order to stay in touch. The child did stay in touch, only because he thought the invention was pretty cool. I think this shows that God is really smart. He's an innovator. He knows what we love, and He uses our loves to accomplish His goals for us. As we celebrate the Lord's Second Coming, let that line "The Lord Jesus Christ Reigns" sink deep into your heart. Because when you see the wrongs of the world, you're going to be tempted to think He's not in charge... but take it from me, God is really smart, and He is using the world around you to invite you to connect with him.

[top](#)

Spirit and Life Bible Study Update

I've mentioned before that one of the projects I've taken on is uploading Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose's Bible Study classes to Youtube, and I thought I'd offer a little update. Things are starting to pick up a bit. When I first began the project last year, an email was sent out to people who were on his Bible Study mailing list, and we quickly got 37 subscribers. Then nothing. I kept uploading the videos, and they'd get some views, but no new subscribers.

That started to change a few months ago. Now it is picking up about 4 or 5 new subscribers per month. In the grand scheme of YouTube, it doesn't sound like much, but if our church attendance was growing at that rate we'd be ecstatic. Most of the videos are showing somewhere between 10 and 30 views, but there are a few outliers. "Seeing Horses and Chariots of Fire" is way ahead with 650 views, and in a distant second is "The Meaning of Grapes in the Bible" at 187.

Even these aren't big numbers, but I think there is a lot of room for growth. It will never be a channel that is "trending" on YouTube, Facebook or Twitter, but there is reason to believe that we can find a small, but dedicated group of people who really do want what we have to offer. For now my goal is to get it to 100 subscribers, then 1000. It seems quite do-able, as it will likely just take time. Like with the other online efforts there is potential for a real online community out of it. That's the ultimate goal, bringing people together so they can support each other on their path of regeneration.

[top](#)

A Video Game Used to Restore Notre Dame

Since we're on a technology theme this month, this story about the Notre Dame Cathedral is well timed. No doubt you've heard about the tragic fire that destroyed the Notre Dame Cathedral. The interior was gutted, and the wooden spire reduced to ashes. Now the task is to restore it, and the restoration crew is going to get an assist from an unlikely source: a video game.

The game is called "Assassin's Creed" and it's a game that uses real world sites in its fictional narrative. Their 2014 instalment of the game is set during the French Revolution, and centres around Notre Dame, which was painstakingly re-created for use in game play. The artist in charge says she took around two years to build a detailed model of the building, which she calls a brick-by-brick digital recreation - even including most of the artwork found inside. It's significantly more detailed than a laser scan, and some experts are now saying the model could represent the best chance for architects to study the original construction.

It seems that in the creation of this digital replica of Notre Dame, a great deal of good will was created between those who run the Cathedral and Ubisoft, the creators of the game. As a result Ubisoft has donated half a million Euros to the restoration cause. I like this story because Notre Dame didn't have to let Ubisoft create the digital replica for its game, but as it turns out the kind deed is coming back to the Cathedral. It's a triumph of goodness, and technology.

[top](#)

General Church Assembly - June 18-21 2020

General Church Assemblies have served to gather people from around the world for a time of friendship-building and focus on the faith and life of the New Church. Those of us who get to travel to church sites around the world have the privilege of seeing the variety of ways our church is serving every day. A General Church Assembly is a time for the reverse to happen, for representatives from the many parts of the Church to come together so that all may see some of that variety. An Assembly also serves to remind us of what draws us together in the first place – the messages we have been given in the Word, and the collective effort to live the life that flows from them.

The 2020 Assembly falls on the 250th anniversary of the Lord sending out His twelve disciples to the whole spiritual world "to preach the Gospel that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns" (TCR 791).

More information about this Assembly, its theme, and the programs that will be offered will be published in the coming months. In the meantime if you have input that you would like to offer, particularly along the lines of what would inspire you or others to attend, we would love to hear it. Please contact gcassembly@newchurch.org

[top](#)

International Clergy Church Service & Luncheon

Would you like to meet some of our international clergy? As part of our Regional Clergy meetings, all of our international visitors will be joining us for our church service on **Sunday, June 2nd**. Our international delegation includes seven Korean ministers, two from Japan and three from the U.S., along with Dick Keyworth from New Zealand. The service will be led by **Rt Rev David Lindrooth**. From Australia we'll have David Millar and a group from Roseville including Rev Howard Thompson as they are cancelling their service that Sunday to join in with us. We're expecting 40 people or more, so this will turn out to be a big event for us.

After the service we wanted to provide some social time with our guests, so the Hurstville Society are providing lunch, and we are looking for your help to pull this off. At our society meeting we agreed that members of our church will provide the food, pot-luck style (except in a planned fashion). **Please let Jenn know by Monday May 27th** if you are planning to join us and *what* you are willing to bring for the event. jenn@beiswenger.net Thanks very much, in advance!

[top](#)

New Church Day Plans

As you will likely notice on the calendar, we are celebrating New Church Day on the **16th of June** this year. Normally, after the service we have some social time, followed by a slaying of a dragon piñata and a social lunch. This year, because we will just have had a large meal with the international clergy attending the regional meetings, we'll forego the big lunch and have *refreshments*, probably along the lines of veggies, dips and cakes, instead. We'll still have the usual social time, piñata and gifts for the kids. We do hope you'll join us!

[top](#)

Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Angela Heldon** and **Michelle Heldon** (8th), **June Kirsten** (9th), **Izaak Horner** (17th)

[top](#)