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THE DIGITAL CHURCH

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If you ask the average Christian what a digital church is, he might respond by saying it's an online church. A more elucidative response might of course be that a digital church is one that adopts and adapts digital technology for its purposes. And if we ask the average Christian who a digital pastor is, perhaps he'll say he's one who carries a smart phone, or reads his sermon from his iPad. And talking about iPads, the way Christians produce iPads in church when it's time for Bible reading... one might actually think they're bringing out shields of faith!

The digital agenda is one I have been pushing for some time now, hoping to encourage the adoption of the frontiers of digital technology by the Church. It's the only way to reach this generation. The least the Church can do is undertake a massive adoption of social media. The average Bible verse is the size of a tweet - 140 characters. I therefore view the Bible as a collection of tweets. My popular Twitter series - *#Letr2Jack*, *#Letr2Jil*, was created from this simple insight. I realized I could serialize an entire letter into tweets, just like Paul's letters. Perhaps our memory verses will be easier to cram if we tell the kids it's just a tweet.

But let's take things up a notch. I am sure you didn't invite me here just to tell you the Bible is a collection of tweets. Let's play the mad scientist a



little, or the mad conceptualist. You see, I work as a conceptualist at Alder Consulting. Don't ask me what that means, it's the only title that fits my talents. Essentially, I employ the use of creative intelligence, generating ideas for nations, corporations and individuals. Requires a lot of insight to do, but my basic raw material is imagination. I spend my time re-imagining things. It's how we create new products for our clients and improve on products and services. Sometimes that requires an understanding of the nature of nature.

I have spent some time thinking about the human configuration. The classical anatomy of man in Christian theology is that man is a tripartite being. He is made up of spirit, soul and body. Now, we have a great deal of understanding of the human body - the mechanics, the plumbing, the piping, the chemical and electrical systems. The brain is however a great challenge for us. It's a convoluted mystery. Much of what we know about the human body is due to advances in medical science, especially in the last few decades.

As for the spirit, we know nada about it. We don't know what it's made of, we don't understand its interface with the soul, or even the body. It represents a paradox to us. How is it possible that the Spirit of God who is transcendent and dimensionless is able to occupy a human spirit

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containerized in a human body? How can dimensionlessness occupy a dimension? How is it possible that a legion of demons would possess a human? A legion is the principal unit of the Roman army. It comprises 3,000 to 6,000 soldiers. How can 3,000 powerful entities inhabit a man?

And how is it possible that spirits don't die! Humans don't really die. The spirit of man can never die. The eternal life promised us by Jesus is not referring to longevity of life. It's a genre and quality of life. Whether you're born-again or not, you won't die. And talking about the born-again phenomenon how does the human spirit translate in an instant? You get born again in the twinkling of an eye.

Jesus is the light of the world. When he speaks about the whole body being full of darkness, is it just figurative, or is the darkness some form of energy occupying the spirit of man, like the invisible dark energy cosmologist speak about? There's too much we don't know!

What we do know is that we make contact with the extraordinary dimension (the spirit realm) through our spirit. And the spirit makes contact with this world through our bodies. Once the body packs up the spirit departs. It de-copulates from the body like a rocket detaching from a spaceship going into orbit.



But if the spirit is puzzling, the soul is intriguing. We've defined the soul in Christendom as the mind, the will and emotions. It's not an elegant definition and it's not comprehensive but will do, for now. Let's look at the technological attributes of the soul. I'm going somewhere.

The soul is some piece of advanced technological equipment. It has Wi-Fi capability. It also comes enabled with a Bluetooth technology. If what I'm saying sounds strange to you, consider these illustrations. I'll give you three scenarios.

Scenario 1:

Have you ever wondered how you know someone is staring at you, from your back? You can't see the person physically but you're so sure you're being stared at. How do you know? We never think about it but our system must be configured with sensory mechanism. That's how you know. Not just that, the person staring at you must be beaming or leaking signals that are caught on your receiver. Since the five senses are not involved we must assume the signal is not processed by the body. Therefore what we call the soul is some very sophisticated system that transmits and receives signals.

Let's look at Scenario 2:

There's a party going on and the house is full. There are many people in attendance but somehow a boy and a girl, Emeka and Rose, just seem to connect, from across the room. Somehow, Rose knows Emeka is the one for her even though he hasn't spoken a word to her. How is this possible?

Note that we try to do matchmaking using computer algorithms, asking people to fill questionnaires online in order to produce a profile that can be matched to another profile to generate a relationship. But the truth is, nature will consider such approach unintelligent, soul-less and mechanistic. Emeka and Rose didn't fill any questionnaire. She and Emeka just matched themselves wirelessly, just as I know there's a lot of wireless transmission going on in this auditorium now. There are invisible signals zig-zagging the auditorium. The signals are looking for transponders. (A transponder is a device which receives a radio signal and sends out a signal in response). If you see a young man grinning sheepishly at a lady at the end of this program it's nothing but a technological progression. We mate digitally.

Now this is my mad scientist explanation of this phenomenon. I think we generate Bluetooth codes when we think. These thought codes are broadcast

Emeka

as we move through life, and they come in batch numbers. We get along with people with correspondent batch numbers. The greater the correspondence of numbers, the more the chances of a relationship. And a very good match leads to marriage.

The Bible says as a man thinks so he becomes. Our reasoning changes us genetically, shaping the way we look, the way we talk, the way we dress. Reasoning is thus a self-modification technological device. It's a virtual scalpel with which we perform plastic surgery on ourselves. But our reasonings are influenced by cultural exposure. It's why Emeka seems to like a girl of a certain configuration, of a certain affectation, of a certain sartorial standard. When reasoning codes click there's a match. It's why cool guys date cool girls. They have the same type of cultural exposure. Their thought codes match. If all this sounds like science fiction or movie script, note that life often imitates fiction and the world is a stage.

Scenario 3:

This third scenario must be very familiar to all of us.

You go to some homes and you can feel tension and quarrel in the air. The atmosphere is filled with bitterness and strife. You're waiting downstairs in

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the living room and the couple is one story up but you can feel the pain and anger in that home. How?

Of course you know the tension in that home is not being generated by the air-conditioning unit. An air-conditioner doesn't have the capacity to generate pain and anger. It can't generate resentment and hatred either. It's all coming from the souls of the couple.

On the other hand if you go to certain homes you can feel peace, love and harmony. It's like you're in some sort of viscous medium, a surfeit of the soul that translates one into meditative rapture. It's almost like you're floating. The tension drains from your body. Where did that atmosphere come from? It's from the souls of the couple. Their love permeates the physical space.

The simple point being made is that we radiate pulses not detectable by any instrument we've devised so far, and we have Wi-Fi transmission capability. In other words, man is an awesome piece of digital technology.

The Church as you well know is not a building. The Church meets in a building, can meet in any venue - nightclub, cinema, bingo hall... The venue is not the Church. The Church is an organic entity, an incorporated organic entity. It is a meshing of souls



into a federated cosmic nationalism. In Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, Paul wrote. There's no Nigerian either. No, Paul didn't write that, but you get the point. At the local level we retain our national identities, but in Christ Jesus we take on a heavenly citizenship. Thus Christ is a political entity.

Here's the link to our discourse.

If humans are awesome pieces of digital technology, then Christians are digital as well. Christians are human. The Church is digital, the world is digital, God is digital. God is like an open internet network into which we all plug, for free. God is always on. He neither sleeps nor slumbers. There's no downtime with God. And he's suffused his creation with digitalism. Nature is totally networked. It's why seeds respond to soil conditions. It's why creation is groaning, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. There is a digital connection between creation and the Church. It's why we can speak into the atmosphere.

The Great Commission is transmission of revolutionary data to those not connected to the broadband network called the Spirit of God. They cannot connect because of faulty gear, analogue legacy issues, limited bandwidth, or atmospheric interference. The issue is not digital church, the issue is digital connection.

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Digital equipment gets upgrades. So does the digital capacity of the human race. God upgrades it in generational batches. It's why a three-year old can pick up a smart phone and figure it out in less than a minute, whereas his parents struggle with it. There are generational upgrades.

There was however a major upgrade to the human race itself about 2,000 years ago. According to the Bible there are two Adams: Adam 1.0 and Adam 2.0. The guy in Genesis was Adam 1.0. Jesus is Adam 2.0. Sin degraded the capacity of the 1st Adam hence the need for an overarching upgrade of the human race. Adam 1.0 suffered a massive psychological damage as a result of sin. He became paranoid, hiding from God. Paranoia is a personality disorder. He even accused God of causing his sin. It's called psychological projection - blaming others for our wrongdoing. And you can see evidence of psychological damage in his generations when Cain killed his own brother out of jealousy. And we have no stronger proof of Cain's psychological disorder than the fact that he insulted God when questioned about the murder. Am I my brother's keeper, he asked. And we are further convinced of psychological damage when Cain asked for state protection from prosecution for murder! Where have you seen criminals asking for state protection from prosecution? To be honest



with you, only Nigerian politicians have dared approach the courts for immunity from criminal prosecution.

So messed up was the human race that God had to recreate humanity in Christ Jesus. Christians are Adam 2.0. It's why they're endowed with incredible capacities. Through the agency of Jesus they can raise the dead, their shadows can heal the sick; they can pass energy into handkerchiefs which are then laid on the sick and they'll recover. Christians are supposed to operate on a higher level of intelligence because they have been given the mind of Christ. This is the same mind that conceived the universe and executed the blueprint. It's the mind that conceived the disciplines of Physics, Chemistry, Biology. It is an incredible mind. No Christian functioning in that capacity can fail an exam!

The gospel is not mere words. It is a coded algorithm. There is a capacity embedded in those words that triggers the power of God, unleashing God's creativity and capabilities into human circumstance. When there is a digital connect with the word of God - what we essentially call faith - there is a release of awesome power, and we are told in scriptures that that power is the power that raised Jesus from the dead. That power has transformative capacity, turns human lives around.

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It has regenerative capacity as well. It's been known to recreate wombs, physically lengthen legs, grow retinas, culture tympanic membranes. The deaf hear, the lame walk, the dumb speak. And so the idea of a digital church is not fancy phraseologization. It is reality.

What I am saying in effect is that there are two arms to our topic of discussion. There is the organic digital Church; and there is the adoption and use of technology by the church or local assembly.

It is inconceivable in this day and age that the Church will choose an analogue approach. Such approach makes the church look primitive, ominous and unsophisticated.

The Church has always been behind the technology curve. The Church was late to television. We called it the Devil's box because Christians could not intellectually distinguish platform from content. Technology is agnostic and amoral. It will host whatever you put on it. Instead of throwing out the baby with the bathwater the Church ought to have concentrated on the creation of content, especially cultural content. Media, entertainment and education are the three great influencers.

We have taken a very simplistic approach to the concept of the digital church. Yes, we stream

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services every Sunday and every Wednesday, but the concept of Church is a 24-hour cycle. Christianity is life not church attendance.

Perhaps in the church of the not so distant future, every seat will come equipped with a personal digital console - a Holy Tablet, just like every airplane seat. We used to have hymnbooks and programs on church pews. These were analogue media. Now we have projectors. The next evolution is Holy Tablet. From my console I should be able to watch the service as it's streamed live. And I should be able to pause the sermon, rewind and listen for emphasis. The wordings of worship songs will of course scroll on my Holy Tablet, and I will give my offering through my digital console. No more offering bags. The digital console will have an interactive messaging board. Congregants will post comments as the pastor preaches.

Of course the digital church will have huge interactive digital screens. The comments from congregants will appear on the screen as the service is going on. (There'll be an administrator moderating the posts). The postings are linked to Twitter accounts so people post comments using their Twitter handles. Hashtags are created. The good thing about an interactive service is that comments can be garnered from around the globe. Everyone will be on the same page, literally. This is

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particularly useful for churches whose members are scattered around the globe, or for churches with branches, or overflows. The current system of live streaming is no different from analogue TV. It's a one-way broadcasting service, and it's dumb technology - very much like my grandfather's "Rediffusion" in those days. A rediffusion was essentially a radio that talked incessantly from morning till evening, even when there was nobody in the house. Didn't care if anyone was listening. It was totally clueless. I'm not sure it had an off button.

But wouldn't all this be distracting, you ask? Holy Tablets, messaging boards, twitter hashtags... So much digital noise! The reason we raise this as an issue is because we don't understand this generation, and because we choose to be religious with God. This is a multi-tasking generation. They engage as many senses as possible at once. Someone actually described it as a dyslexic generation. It's a multimedia generation and God understands that. He made them so. God deals in generations. He's the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Three generations. An interactive service is exactly what God wants for this generation. It's a text-based generation. They sit right next to each other and converse in texts. Why? Because texts amplify feelings. And you can say anything through text, connect in a way you just can't do with voice.



The Holy Spirit likes noise, digital or vocal. Didn't noise herald Pentecost?

At the end of the service, the Holy Tablet will sync with my phone and I auto-download the sermon and songs, and carry church home with me. And I continue my interaction with other members of the church. That way, members of the church stay connected beyond church service. The Digital Moderator will moderate the discussions to drill down the experience and the message from church. You can imagine how useful this can be to a new convert. And those who need counseling can access help through the app. And the Pastor gets direct feedback on his sermon. He can answer questions raised. He'll know what to emphasize when next he preaches. Interactivity. That's what's missing on our digital platforms.

And we can take it further. The gay community has apps like Adam4Adam, Bros4Bros and Grindr. According to Queerty these are three of nine apps that make casual sex and dating so much easier. Some of these apps pinpoint the exact location of a nearby gayman. A church ought to have such an app. Members can locate each other in the same vicinity. This is particularly useful for singles in church. Imagine three young women who after shopping at the mall decide they want to see a movie. The app will help locate other singles,

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preferably male of course, who won't mind investing in tickets and pop corn. Can the app be abused? Of course! Just like Twitter can be abused, and Facebook can be abused, and Instagram can be abused. We don't throw the baby out with the bathwater.

God is a technologist. He created angels. Angels are incredible technologies. They can fly in and out of dimensions. That's not as easy as you might think. The bodies of angels are essentially space suits. They are made up of composite materials that can withstand escape from earth's gravitational field and survive the extreme energy environment of the extra-terrestrial dimension we call Heaven. That space suit is the technological equivalence of holiness. These angels stand in the presence of God. Without holiness no man can see God. Our space suit can't withstand such forces or energy fields. Our bodies are space suits. We are actually in space right now, travelling on a space ship. Our space ship is our planet. Relative to our position on the planet, our space ship is rotating at 1,666 km/h and orbiting the sun at 107,000 km/h. And we are locked in an armada of spaceships called the Solar System, which is revolving around its galactic core at 675,000 km/h; which also is in turn locked into the galactic system which is moving through the Universe at 3,600,000 km/h. If you're feeling dizzy right now I won't be surprised.

Leonard

The knowledge for technology is dispensationally released to mankind by God. The Church cannot be behind the technology curve. It's an anomaly.

It goes without saying that a church must adopt social media. It's by far cheaper than TV. And it's interactive. The reach is unprecedented. With *#Leter2Jack* and *#Leter2Jil* I reach two million every month.

The digital church is not an option. Really, what else can the church be?

Thank you and God bless!