

Great webs of connection circle the earth

I moved to Sonoma from back east in early 1979. I was already fifty-one years old, born in 1928, ninety-two years ago. I grew up in the 1930's – veterans of the Civil War were still alive, Custer's Last Stand had occurred only fifty-nine years earlier. Indeed growing up in the 1930's amounted to living in even earlier times because we still had lots of horse drawn vehicles, coal furnaces, window boxes to store perishables during the winter months; flight was possible but risky, the planes being made of balsa wood and tissue paper. In other words I am a creature from way before the times we live in now. Something changed around 1995 or 2000. Just look at the old movies. By old I mean films made as recently as the 1980's and 90's – offices showing no computers, only typewriters; no cell phones but plenty of phone booths around town.

I used to drive down to San Francisco twice a week after the morning rush hour to lunch with my son Philip who was having problems – and then to spend two hours at USF's library. What a library! Great roomy collections of literature, history, theology, art! The University began in 1855 and so it had lots of time to collect a copious, accessible amount of books. Of course I had to head home before the home-from-work traffic. To indulge my interests I had to travel round trip about 90 miles.

Today I don't have to move from my home. The world is at my fingertips, shopping, books, take out, weather, trivia – at my fingertips. Connections abbreviated, global in range, in infinite detail – with the touch of a key, the tapping of an icon – and bingo! Images of all the artwork of Picasso or Rubens or whoever . . . to say nothing of the batting statistics of the 1926 Phillies! But our world somehow seems more disconnected than ever, information too exhaustive and mercurial to retain. Though we have access to so much through our fingertips we seem more out of touch than ever. But thanks to a poem by Carol Penner of Conrad Grebel College we are reminded of what, of who? holds things together, gathers rather than scatters – whom we call "God" – who shows up in a census every winter – an infant in a barn somewhere called Bethlehem.

Great webs of connection circle the earth. / They burrow in cables under the ocean, / they permeate the air with radio waves, / they bounce off satellites in space. / The world is teeming with nets of interaction, / a global feast of signals, prepared and digested / each and every minute of every day. / Byte by byte, God scans the fragmented world. / Comfortable with every platform, / fluent in every operating system, / God follows every thread to its ultimate conclusion. / God knows where you log on, / when you are off-line and on-line. / God knows your usernames, your passwords, / your physical and virtual memory. / God can hack through every firewall you build. / Maybe you want to think of God as a Webmaster, / so you can choose to surf a different site. / Or maybe you see God as a great Provider / that you'll log in with someday. / It doesn't matter if you didn't look at the readme files. / Someday a window you have never seen will open, / showing you something so fleeting and beautiful, / it will capture you completely. / You will glimpse the power source between us / that has nothing to do with keyboards and electricity. / Great webs of connection circle the earth. / You won't want to press control alt delete ever again.

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