

Chapter I

Blessed is the wood by which righteousness comes.

Wisdom of Solomon 14:7

This line was written over two thousand years ago and refers to a *New Beginning*. Taken from the “Wisdom of Solomon” its meaning is directed towards both Noah’s Ark and the foreshadowing of Jesus’ crucifixion on the Cross. But it would take two thousand years before its meaning is renewed with the printing of the Holy Bible onto ground-wood paper. In this new beginning, paper becomes the greatest medium for the collection and spreading of knowledge. It also becomes the greatest initiator for mass advancements to follow. This new beginning starts at the awakening of the Communication Age; the inevitable awakens.

The year 1455 is pivotal in Western culture. In that year, Johannes Gutenberg invented the first printing press with movable type. Just over sixty years later Martin Luther posted his “Ninety-five Theses,” and during the next few years translated the Bible. This was of a huge movement that freed education, science, and nations from the dominance of the Church.¹ People started to question things.

From Gutenberg, to the Age of Enlightenment, and from the Age of Discovery, to the Industrial Revolution, the printing press provided universal access to knowledge. No longer did the general populous have to rely on the words of one entity, a national voice had erupted and ideas were flying in all directions. For centuries, knowledge had been controlled by the Church; only priests and other designated religious members were interpreters of the Bible. But when Luther told the people to read the Bible for themselves, he set in motion events that would change the world:

He was a poor, plain man, only a doctor of divinity, without place except as a teacher in a university, without power or authority except in the convictions and qualities of his own soul, and with no implements save his Bible, tongue, and pen; but with him the ages divided and human history took a new departure.²

These events were bulked with new knowledge and radically new ways of seeing the world. Its dispersing required more efficient and effective mediums of communication. People began to see; it was an open door that drew in humanity’s greatest and weakest trait: curiosity. But it also built up, in great momentum, an unstoppable force which provoked one of the greatest mediums of information-transfer: paper.

Chronologically, there have been only few major turning points in our journey through written communication: language, the alphabet, early writing mediums and systems, the printing press, and information-recording mediums (such of photography, telegraphy, the phonograph, gramophone, and modern paper). But more importantly, as knowledge poured out, an advent of wide-spread literacy was provoked thus calling for a

more literate and aware society. This in turn increased the demand for printed material and information transfer.

The 19th-century saw many inventions that changed our lives and our understanding of the world: electricity, magnetism, radio waves, photography, lenses, flight, trains, steam, and printing—the possibilities must have seemed endless for those working the ideas and those reading about them. These inventions filled the headlines in every major newspaper of the time. And as the discoveries accumulated the demand for paper increased also. But this was also a time when paper was becoming increasingly expensive because of the growing shortage of cotton, hemp, and flax rag. The papermakers reached their peak in the old ways of paper production, and their main resource to make paper was now inadequate.

As the world greatly changed, the need to communicate was never greater. That need to communicate became an explosion waiting to happen, and it also drove humanity to one of the most crucial discoveries ever.

Charles Fenerty is an important focal point in the chronology of communication. His method of producing cheaper and more accessible paper gave to the press and to the people the boost they needed to rocket into this *Brave New Century*. His life is typical of any person out of the Renaissance and post-Reformation—at the start of discovery. His story begins in 1839, just before telegraphy and just at the beginning of photography; the embryos of our media saturated life. He takes us into a time when the communication of information now defines our whole reality.

¹ This movement (The Age of Enlightenment) was heavily influenced by the Freemasons. Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, was Grand Master of the Nova Scotia Lodges.

² Seiss, Joseph A. *Luther and the Reformation: The Life-Springs of Our Liberties*. New York: Porter & Coates, 1883: 1. Note: Special thanks to Project Gutenberg for this ebook, downloaded from <<http://www.gutenberg.org>>