

THE TELSTAR OF GOD

By L. R. FUGIT



TELEVISION audiences on the North American and European continents were treated to an added marvel of electronics on July 23, 1962.

A highly intricate mechanism, called Telstar had been shot into space some time before. This television instrument now circling the earth every 158 minutes, we are told, follows an elliptical path with an apogee (point furthest from earth) of 3,502 miles, and a perigee (point nearest earth) of 593 miles. When the Telstar moves over that portion of earth where television signals can be beamed to it, in turn it relays such signals to desired areas where special equipment is prepared to pick them up. The use of solar cells allows it to manufacture its own electricity for transmission. The American Telephone and Telegraph Company developed the Telstar at a cost of more than one billion, fifty million dollars.

Television signals are so complex, apparently, that submarine cables or radio waves bounced off the ionized layers of the upper atmosphere do not furnish satisfactory transmission. The television signals must travel on microwaves which follow straight lines as a beam of light. This requires relay stations high enough to rise above the curvature of the earth.

The Telstar, although greatly limited for dependable and constant transmission, has achieved this purpose by its great height. The satellite is actually a mobile television station which both receives and transmits. Users of more than fifty-six million television sets in America now can tune in, for brief periods during the day, on live scenes and events across the world, by the way of outerspace. This is enough to capture the interest of moderns who are intrigued by the new.

But as Solomon said, "There is no new thing under the sun." God long ago placed in the sky His own Telstar, commonly called the "Star of Bethlehem." The

mechanics of the two Telstars are different, but they are alike at many points of principle and purpose.

Both were developed as means of communication. God's Telstar was a divine creation and infallible. That of the electronics expert is man-made and subject to all manner of hazards. One functions only at prescribed times and in certain areas, the other is constant and universal. Almost fifty of these man-made satellites would be required to furnish around-the-clock viewing. God's Telstar is wholly sufficient and given without price to man.

A basic similarity exists between the two, for both were used to furnish highly selected information.

Stars and Scripture

Stars have a prominent place in Scriptures related to God's effort to communicate with man. The Messianic prophets recognized the "bright and morning star" Jesus Christ as the means of His self-revelation. How fitting then, that a star should guide watchers to find Him!

Stars are frequently employed in the Word as symbols of persons in high place. The patriarchs were shown to be stars, as recounted by Joseph in his dreams (Genesis 37:9). King David is designated as a "star out of Jacob" (Numbers 24:17).

The stars were used to oppose evil men: "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera" (Judges 5:20).

Again, John was given to see that stellar being in heaven, "And upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (Revelation 12:1). The sacred record closes with Jesus proclaiming himself, "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star" (Revelation 22:16).

The heathen prophet, Balaam, in the days of Moses appeared to have some gift of prophecy. He saw the ultimate triumph of the patriarchs and said, "There shall

come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17).

The Magi were wise men of the East who studied the stars, for in ancient times guidance by the stars was a matter of belief and expectancy. For Matthew says, "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy" (Matthew 2:10). They had judged aright, for they said, "We have seen his star in the east" (Matthew 2:2).

Overcoming limitations

With all of man's ingenuity his inventions are greatly limited. The creations of God are limitless. The Telstar of July has yet to prove its practical benefits to mankind.

Major interest in this space marvel at present sees something more than just pictures from outerspace. Scientifically, Telstar has preceded two or three other possible alternatives in its field. Suggested alternatives for oversea viewing would be either booster stations located every thirty-five miles (line of sight), or a kind of stationary oceanic tower four hundred miles high. It is imaginable that a "synchronous" satellite could be boosted to the proper altitude with speed equal to the exact rotation of the earth and thus in a fixed position relative to senders and receivers of its message. The cost of any of these would be astronomical.

Undersea cables and the radio-telephone from ship to shore have been in use for a half century or more. They are economical and dependable.

Whether the recent Telstar is merely a stunt or portends a tremendous advance in technology probably remains to be seen. An enemy could easily jam the signals, and climatic conditions will often make it unreliable, especially in summer. A procession of telstars for uninterrupted viewing, strung out like beads in space, would be an engineering feat of unbelievable cost.

The Telstar of God, which appeared to introduce the gospel day, does not suffer these hazards. Satan will never succeed in jamming the signals. Publication of the glad tidings need never be limited by expense, for there always have been men who have been willing to pay with the precious coins of sacrificial blood. There will never be a divine power failure, for our Lord said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Hostile climatic conditions will not keep it from sending the gospel news to all the world, "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

One limitation is suffered in common by man's Telstar and God's. That is the receiving set that is not tuned to its message! The lack of appreciation by man keeps the message of God's Telstar from getting

through. Disregard for this heavenly information keeps our spiritual television screens dark.

For years the National Stewardship Council has told us that only about one-fourth of the members of American churches support the church with any degree of regularity. The minister of a large church among our people recently told the writer that ten per cent of the membership paid ninety per cent of the expense. When men learn to bring themselves and their treasure to the house of the Lord, then will be brought to pass the promise of Malachi, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (3:10).

There is a divine economy in the universe which rules that all thoughts and acts of man must be paid for in one way or another. The money we refuse to give to God is taken from us in high taxes. The time we refused to the worship of God is taken from us by the tyranny of things. The sons we did not advise to use their educated talents for Christian service, are taken by war.

God's Telstar has always used the pulpit of the church to flash its signals clearest and best. But a new infidelity, "higher criticism" has infiltrated our pulpits through our colleges.

In relation to the Wise-men's star, some are being taught that the account of it is a historical "myth," or that the star itself was a convenient junction of three planets seen together. Allowing it may have been a natural phenomenon, rarely seen, its being coincidental with the birth of Christ would show the hand of God. Neither was the account of it an artful piece of religious propaganda, for the Old Testament prophecies were all written four hundred years before this event.

If the miracle stories of the Bible were only literary stunts, then the fantastic interrelation and significance of them defies the imagination. Religious leaders need constant self-appraisal. Humility becomes them more than any cloth or peculiar intonations, for "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

The Telstar of the Scriptures communicates the most blessed information men will ever receive. When this Star began to transmit over the plains of Bethlehem, it was the herald of the gospel day. The signals have never ceased, nor will they, until that full day with all its glory shall come.

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and

the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it (Revelation 21:23, 24).

END

Memories of the Master

A Meditation at the Lord's Table

By LEE CARTER MAYNARD

Astoria, Illinois

AS many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:12-14).

Again we are approaching the Christmas season with all its trees, trinkets, Santa Clauses, bright lights, gifts, programs, and advertisements. What is the significant thing about Christmas to you? To the merchants, it seems to be an opportunity for big sales and profits. To the choir, it seems to be a time for singing and music. To little children, it is a time for presents. To the sick and aged, it is a time for cards and remembrances. To the Christian, it is a time of remembrance of the Saviour's birth. It is a time to present gifts, rather than to receive. The remembrance of the birth of Jesus makes the table of remembrance precious. Not only do we remember His birth, but we share in His victory over death for us.

read in your publication I simply pass on to my congregation on Lord's Days, reading them in Spanish directly from your papers. . . . I am opening in my home a commercial school in which I shall teach the English tongue so necessary for young people these days. I still preach every Lord's Day and lead my class of grown people in the study of the Word . . .

—ENRIQUE T. WESTRUP
MONTERREY, N. L., MEXICO

To Buy in Johannesburg

Thank you for your recent issue (July 28) which pictured the church building we are hoping to purchase here in Johannesburg. We appreciate your help in letting the churches know of this work and the present need.

We were happy to learn here that our option is still available to the churches of Christ, and no deadline has been set, although we need to hurry, lest some other church group step in before us. The owners of the property we want and so badly need have given us longer to raise the down payment, and there is even the possibility here now that all but three thousand dollars will be loaned to us for over a period of years, how many we are not yet certain.

—A. W. HAMILTON
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA



MAIL BOX



Quit Passing the Buck

The article which appeared in the October 13 issue of the CHRISTIAN STANDARD under the heading, "Split-Level Preacher," is outstanding and much appreciated. Dr. Van Buren's treatment of this subject shows a very comprehensive view of the field of the ministry.

It often appears that the minister must be the "jack of all trades," but the old adage must be dropped at this point and he should endeavor to become "master" of one, this being his first love.

While reading this article it occurred to me that when it appeared we were lagging in the matter of recruiting folk for the ministry, we began to "pass the buck" in respect to who was at fault. The minister blames the congregation and says they have failed to make the ministry attractive by the manner in which they have treated those who have served them. The church in turn [says] the minister has failed to challenge folk with the appeal

of the service. Let's quit blaming others and start to improve in our own fields whether it be that of the minister or the congregation.

In most cases a preacher will get just what he deserves in respect to consideration from a congregation. In like manner most congregations will secure and hold the type of ministry they deserve.

Brother Van Buren's article, coupled with the excellent essay by brother Russell Bowers on "The Mission of a Minister" in this same issue, ought to be read and considered by every minister and congregation.

—WILLARD L. HOCKLEY
ROCHESTER, MINNESOTA

Continues in Work

I was eighty-three years of age last July 15. I am trying to do as much as my strength permits me in the vineyard of the Lord. The publications you send me regularly have always been of great help in my work for Christ. Many things that I