

Publishing Editor's column

PICK up a newspaper today and you will find extensive lists of television and radio channels. If we have the appropriate equipment we can receive the sounds broadcast by hundreds of radio stations; through another piece of equipment we can pick up pictures as well as sounds from television stations, potentially hundreds of these if we have the equipment to pick up what is broadcast from satellites. The content of these broadcasts is very variable, some profitable, some instructive, but much of it evil. The fact that it is instantly available at any time of day or night is a source of temptation to us that we have to resist, temptation which other generations did not have to contend with.

It is a matter of amazement to me that the air is filled with hundreds of different signals, each capable of being interpreted into sounds and sights. I find it difficult to understand how it can be, but that is because, not being a scientist, I do not understand the scientific principles which make it possible. People of another age, if transported into the present, would be completely amazed, but we grow up with it and take it for granted. However, though we take for granted the fact that television and radio programmes are instantly on tap, there is a certain fragility about these things. Nuclear explosions or natural phenomena such as sunspots could be very disruptive of these modern means of communication.

The atmosphere is not just used for transmitting entertainment, however. The business and commercial world is now interlinked across the globe and is heavily reliant on communications through the atmosphere. Major disruption of these links would not just mean people being deprived of their entertainment. There is potential here for widespread disruption of the very fabric of society. Is this what is referred to in the words, "the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Lk. 21:26) in the context of the distress of nations and the fearfulness of men that will precede our Lord's return?

Given all this simultaneous communication through space, it should not be difficult to accept that the great Creator of all things should have the ability to know what is going on in His creation, including the thoughts of each one of us. As we switch on the box in the corner and receive a programme transmitted though the air from far, we should be aware that our Creator knows what we are doing and also the thoughts generated by what we watch or hear. And the same applies, of course, to all parts of our lives. It also means that He can hear all our prayers. It follows also that He has the power to transmit His thoughts to our minds if He so chooses. But it is not as easy as that. Instead God has used His power to inspire men to speak and to write down His words, and we are expected to gain their message by reading and pondering them for ourselves, rather than being directly guided by God. The atmosphere is full of messages from man, but not from God; we need to take these into our minds from the Word He has provided for our learning.

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