

4. Ears To Hear

On a lovely warm May evening in 1945, my wife and I strolled round our industrial parish. We had a problem on our hands. The BBC had asked me to consider the post of the first religious broadcasting producer to be appointed in Scotland. Religious Broadcasting, thanks to the courageous planning of Dr James Welch, the wartime Director, was making a real impact in several directions. *Lift up your Hearts* posed the opportunity to give a Thought for the Day to the whole nation; *The Man Born to be King*, Dorothy Sayers' play-cycle on the life of Jesus, had opened up new possibilities for religious drama, while Ronald Selby Wright's 'Radio Padre' talks had taken religion right out of Sundays and into the everyday lives of everyday people, whether in the armed services or not. To be associated in the development of such work in Scotland was an exciting prospect.

On the other hand, we were immensely happy in our parish. We had developed a large youth club of 120 industrial youngsters, and for three years had been teaching them New Testament religion in and through the very Biblical drama which Dorothy Sayers had inspired. Industrial chaplaincy work had opened up the whole sphere of Industrial Mission, and after years of slogging was beginning to break through. Parish Mission itself had been our repeated concern, and at the end of a two years' effort we not only had covered every home in the parish with most encouraging results but we also had almost as many lay folks as the biblical Seventy, dedicated to Mission, studying and working to approve themselves in every aspect of the community in which we lived. How could one give up such promising, down-to-earth work, for the airy-fairy, ephemeral sphere of broadcasting?

As we turned back to the manse, my wife said, 'Did you notice

what all those wireless-sets were broadcasting?' Most windows had been open in the warm, evening air and there was a blare of radio sound right round the streets. 'Yes. Hymn-singing, wasn't it?' 'It was,' she replied. 'We spent two years getting into all those houses through our parish mission. The BBC's in them every day.' And so a new challenge for mission laid hold on us.

It was Dick Shepperd, the radical vicar of St Martin's-in-the-Fields, who first seems to have made the discovery, back in the nineteen-twenties, that not only large numbers of churchgoers were listening to his broadcasts but, more excitingly, large numbers of those whose churchgoing had ceased, or indeed had never begun. He asserted, 'In broadcasting, Christianity has perhaps the greatest instrument ever placed in the hands of men in the whole history of Christendom.' Almost 20 years later a Church of England report on the post-war situation, *Towards the Conversion of England*, stated in a chapter on broadcasting, 'The true task of religious radio is missionary and evangelistic, especially for those who do not attend church, though broadcasting can only plough the land and sow the seed. The Church in its parochial aspect must tend and reap.' In our experience, that put the situation concisely and exactly.

It is worth recalling in more detail the impetus given by the wartime broadcasts. *Lift up your Hearts*, a *Thought for the Day* as its sub-title then stated, was devised during the first winter of the war by Melville Dinwiddie, the then Director of BBC-Scotland, on the grounds that just as there was an early morning P.T. programme, *The Daily Dozen*, to keep our wartime bodies fit, so there ought to be its spiritual equivalent. In due course, London took over the programme, which still continues under its old sub-title, and rather more integrated into the morning news and current affairs programmes than was formerly the case. For the last decade, so far as Scottish listeners are concerned, the programme has once more originated in the land of its birth. In addition, the two local, independent radio stations in Scotland, Radio Clyde and Radio Forth, have followed the BBC's example in this respect, having had, since their beginnings in 1974 and 1975

respectively, a *Thought for the Day* morning period of differing length and content. The actual content of this vital, short space has varied immensely over the years. There have been straight-from-the-shoulder talks, Bible reading and comment, a hymn and a prayer, pop music, profoundly religious expressions, meditations with no observable religious or at least distinctively Christian content. As it was in the early days, so today the *Thought for the Day* programmes offer a wide field for discussion, argument and dissent, thus no doubt justifying their title. Whether or not they continue to lift up the heart is another and more contentious matter. The fundamentally important thing about them all is that they are thoroughly integrated into the average weekday morning; they are not relegated to a Sunday ghetto. Those producing them must surely always realize that they have both an opportunity to speak a Word from the Lord, in one of the most difficult, and one of the most important, spaces in all religious broadcasting to fill satisfactorily.

The Man Born to be King was epoch-making in every sense of the word. In February 1940, Dr James Welch, the BBC's Director of Religious Broadcasting, wrote to Miss Dorothy Sayers inviting her to write a series of plays on the life of Jesus, for broadcasting in *Children's Hour*. She replied that she would, on three conditions: (1) she must introduce the character of Our Lord; (2) she must be allowed to use complete realism in the portrayal; (3) the plays must be in modern speech. Welch agreed and in December 1941 the first went on the air. We have been reminded recently, when a new production of them has been broadcast, of the extraordinary outcry against the original production, before the plays even began. Those who wish to study the fascinating story, both of their origins and the reactions to them, may read of these in the book of the plays itself. That is not our purpose, even if the violent anti-reactions are similar to others we have experienced from Churches and churchmen, down the years, when some radio or television experiment did not appeal to their traditional minds. So far as religious broadcasting was concerned, the plays began a new era because they brought the whole, wide dimension of

drama and dramatic productions to its service. This has been one of the fundamental ingredients, both in the interests of realism and popular teaching appeal in religious radio programmes ever since. Sadly, it was not carried over into television, chiefly on the score of the immense costs involved, but also because of the other extravagance, the need for a whole team of specialist producers. But in the flowering years of radio religion, from 1945 to 1952, drama played a quite vital role in evangelism, as we hope to show.

The third wartime development was that of the direct and personal communication of the radio talk, as used by Ronald Selby Wright, the Radio Padre. There had been radio talks and radio talkers in abundance long before Selby Wright, but he developed a new, intimate technique, and indeed, style, which really brought home the true meaning of President Roosevelt's *Fireside Chat*, some of which, incidentally, addressed the listener as if he were a public meeting! Selby Wright was a master broadcaster. He was friendly and pleasant to listen to; the listener felt he was speaking directly and personally to him; he spoke about everyday problems which worried not only servicemen and women, but even more, their fathers, mothers, wives and sweethearts. Supremely, he spoke a meaningful Word from God, entirely relevant, entirely contemporary, entirely 'on target', to use the RAF phrase. No one who had listened regularly to his talks, whether as a producer or at home, could ever again accept the stuffy, theologically phrased, out-of-touch, religious talk. All of this tended to be rather unpopular with churchmen with their minds set on higher things, but Selby Wright knew his listeners and their needs and spoke directly to them. The war, as in other spheres, drew from him hitherto unknown possibilities which both Church and State were late in recognizing.

There was a fourth wartime discovery. A very simple, straightforward one at that; that people loved to sing hymns and to listen to them, probably more than any other religious activity. This we have already marked in the rise of television's *Songs of Praise*.

The immediate post-war years, 1945-50, and indeed on to 1952 when television crossed the Border, were exciting years in Scottish broadcasting. They have been rightly dubbed 'The Golden

Years'. The Scottish Home Service developed into a fully comprehensive broadcasting service for the Scottish home, according to Andrew Stewart's dictum when he inspired us all as Programme Director. Melville Dinwiddie and he had built up a first-class team around them, many of them already being international figures in the broadcasting world.

Music was presided over by that expansive and friendly expert, Herbert Wiseman, while Ian Whyte conducted the BBC Scottish Orchestra and incidentally trained such brilliant young conductors as Colin Davis, Robert Irvine, Alexander Gibson and John Hopkins. All these young men worked with us conducting studio choirs, although some were more sympathetic than others towards religious programmes. Drama had the lively, articulate and at times controversial Moultrie Kelsall who, on Andrew Stewart's instruction, took us under his wing to teach us the rudiments of radio drama. Howard Lockhart looked after Variety, Hugh McPhee was a host in himself for the world of Gaelic, both sacred and secular, while Robert Kemp and Archie Lee's feature programmes, together with the more rural ones of Peter Thomson and Harold Gray, constantly kept the inner workings and traditions of the Scottish people before the viewers.

Kathleen Garscadden, or 'Auntie Kathleen' of *Children's Hour*, was the splendid centre of them all! Five evenings a week she poured out a host of brilliant programmes for children. In the process, Kathleen discovered the young stars who have grown into the Moira Andersons, the Gordon Jacksons and the Stanley Baxters. Not only so, but she sought out promising scriptwriters too, with the result that she became the benevolent and knowledgeable adviser for all the radio producers.

Certain it is that Scotland has never been so well served by television as she was by radio in those days when the Scottish Home Service could command 60% of listeners to the Light Programme's 40% during the peak listening periods between 6 p.m. and 10 p.m.

This atmosphere was most stimulating in which to work. Religion, too, indulged in a veritable plethora of experimentation. True, there was normal and formal worship. Every Sunday

morning, listeners had their morning service, of the best quality, broadcast from well-known churches with well-known preachers and traditional worship at its best. But on Sunday evenings as well as on week-nights, we felt free to experiment. First there came a youth series, *Youth asks Questions*. During the war there had grown up a remarkably healthy Youth Movement which took many forms, sacred and secular. The Church of Scotland alone developed its own youth clubs from zero to a federation with over 400 member-clubs. In addition, the Scottish Association of Boys, Girls and Mixed Clubs expanded the excellent work they had established in the twenties and thirties. Pre-Service Training Units had a healthy social life, while uniformed organizations like the Boys' Brigade, Scouts, Guides and Guildry were vigorous and strong. This was, in some respects, due to the deliberate policies of the State which sought to direct young people of both sexes into what is described as 'Pre-Service Training Units', the idea being that the young person who had had some form of discipline, however elementary, would fit more easily into the military pattern of things when call-up came. When the war ended, the impetus to youth work was to continue for at least some years to come.

Most responsible youth organizations, meeting for social purposes on Sunday nights, wished to close their proceedings with an epilogue or some form of religious observance. Indeed many wished a more positive religious period during their night's activity. So we developed our youth series to fit into their night's programme. We set out broadcast within the framework of a simple Act of Worship into which all could enter. Instead of an address or sermon, we broadcast a dramatized episode in which the Youth Club members of 'St Ninian's Parish Church, Anytown' asked their minister, the 'Rev. David McIan' (there being no such person!), the kind of questions which were bothering young people. Soon, more positively, the series title changed to *Youth Seeks the Answer*, with the same programme-format, but this time the dramatized episodes were concerned more with the Christian witness in the life of society, young people's society at that, than simply answering questions. This series, with specially printed

leaflets for local club participation, was widely popular with young people—and hated by older folk who could no more understand what motivated the young then than their successors can today. At one stage we dramatized the better-known Parables of Jesus, putting them into an entirely modern setting. This caused trouble in some areas and I was invited to attend more than one Presbytery and Ministers' Fraternal in order to justify our policies and persuade the members that we were not propounding unusual heresies.

The very success of the series led to its final dissolution. We invited comment and suggestions throughout, from youth clubs and organizations, about further subjects for discussion the next year. We got plenty of these but, sadly, as we followed them out, the series began to lose its punch and earthiness and the less well-informed and the more inarticulate clubs began to drift away from it. When we examined the reasons for this, we had to face the fact that Church youth fellowships, often with a highly articulate minority of university students, had sent in the vast majority of the suggestions and these were pitched far above the intellectual and academic comprehension of the clubs in industrial and working-class areas. We had departed from the needs of the majority in order to please the vociferous demands of the minority. This spelt disaster in terms of an important section of the listening community, a pressure which appeared by no means for the last time in religious broadcasting, that realm in which all sorts of academics, theologians and earnest liberals think they know what is good for 'them', 'them' often rejecting quite dramatically such improving works.

But the worthy 'McIan' and his flock of 'St Ninian's, Anytown', was too good a formula to die. Before very long it reappeared in a series which ran for another five years, entitled *Make Up Your Minds*. 'Make Ups', as we called them, were all founded on fact; the stories were drawn from actual happenings in the life of parish ministers. They had to do with people coming for 'White Weddings', or Baptism or Funerals, or References to begin with, the happenings which touch the lives of most folk socially at one time or another. On the one hand, the dramatization

showed McIan's often fierce refusal to allow the Christian Church to be used as a social convenience; on the other hand, the reasons why people sought so to use her, often for unworthy and even superstitious reasons, became apparent. Both sides were presented as fairly as possible and, at the end of each episode, the listeners were reminded that this was their problem; accordingly, would they please: 'Make Up Your Minds!' The subjects soon expanded to take in all manner of experiences involving business and work-a-day morality, family tensions and all that goes to make up normal living.

The Rev. Stanley Pritchard, who joined me in 1949, was himself the 'Rev. David McIan' in the original series, broadcast when he was still minister of Williamwood Parish Church. Then, on entering the BBC, he took over the production while I wrote most of the scripts. Soon he had branched out from this work and was making a tremendous contribution to the radio Children's Hour programmes with a series of Bible plays, in the Dorothy Sayers' mould, covering Old Testament and New Testament stories, as well as a considerable series on the life and works of St Paul. The point I am making is that radio enabled us to mount a considerable proportion of our output in terms of dramatic productions of one kind or another, an immense advantage in communicating religious teaching naturally, which has never been possible in television, which is such a costly medium in both financial and manpower terms. In this, as in other respects, radio remains the more comprehensive medium.

The youth series had shown us the benefit, and the problems too, of full broadcasting/church co-operation. We were soon to embark on a major experiment of this nature which stimulated the course of evangelism in Scotland for at least a decade. This was in and through the Radio Missions of 1950 and 1952.

Before we look closely at this experiment, we must consider the attitude of the Church of the day towards evangelism. This was more positive and outward-looking than at almost any other time since the end of World War I. The General Assembly had launched a most comprehensive study of the religious state of the nation, entitled 'The Interpretation of God's Will in the Present

Crisis', known more simply after its convener and master mind, Principal John Baillie, as The Baillie Commission. One of the sections of the Commission was concerned with evangelism and this section produced a stimulating booklet entitled *Into All the World*. This booklet considered the need to penetrate industry, youth work and every part of society with the Christian witness as well as the call to deeper dedication on the part of Christians in order to effect the penetration. In some ways, *Into All the World* provided a blueprint for the widespread efforts in evangelism which were to follow immediately on the cessation of World War II.

But all the blueprints in the world are useless unless they meet a genuine need on the part of those to whom they are speaking. The war years had had a few positive features, amidst the destruction, the ruin and the shortages. Both in the Forces and on the Home Front, men and women were asking questions about why such wars should happen, about the kind of hopeless society of people without work which had affected so many of them in the thirties, about the very nature of existence itself. Ministers, both as Chaplains to the Forces and as Chaplains to Industry, found themselves, often for the first time in their lives, outside the rather cosy protection of the parish ministry, living in a real, tough world which did not necessarily accept their Gospel—indeed often criticized it in the most forthright terms. Apart from such anti-church aggression, they often found the most appalling ignorance about the most elementary of Christian teaching. After the shock of that discovery passed, there arose a widespread determination to tackle this situation in terms of evangelism. Various methods and schemes were devised accordingly.

The Methodists in England were first in the field with the 'Christian Commando' technique. The name was borrowed straight from the wartime commandos and their methods of attack. A Christian Commando Campaign of a week or a fortnight's duration would be planned for a city or large area of population. After a crash course on tactics the commando teams, mainly ordained men, would then invade every possible centre of work and leisure. Factories, fire-stations, offices, department

stores, pubs, dance halls, cinemas, football parks—all were 'raided', with varying degrees of enthusiasm. The 'victims' of the raids tended to be amused, and friendly in a cynical sort of way. How deep the raiding penetrated is difficult to say. During the Edinburgh Christian Commando Campaign I went with a recording car to make a sound picture of a raid on a large fire-station. Two ministers arrived, inevitably late from their previous encounter. The firemen were politically conscious and most of their questions arose from that background. Neither of the clerics had the faintest idea of politics and seemed naïve in the extreme in their answers. Then off they went on their next raid, by now even further behind schedule. We stayed on with the firemen and got some fascinating observations from them about their recent experience. One of the most politically inclined suddenly said, 'It was good to see them here. There's never before been a minister or priest inside this building to my knowledge. But when will we see them again? In a couple of year's time when they have another stunt like this?' He expressed the common attitude of friendliness which the raids revealed, but also the inadequacies of such tactics.

After the Commando Raids came Churches Campaigns of various types, but all mounted after much more preparation and seeking to use the layman to a greater extent. Quite a number of these campaigns used or incorporated the Parish Mission techniques of the Iona Community, or the Visitation Evangelism approach of D. P. Thomson and his followers. In broadcasting, we watched all these efforts and sought to help them when we could.

Then the Radio Mission idea dawned upon us. Here we were, as in my own parish mission days, with the daily entry of radio into the homes of all listeners whether they were attached to the Church or not. It was quite clear from our audience research studies and from the correspondence received after the more penetrating religious broadcasts that there were lots of people listening to our programmes who had little if any attachment to the Christian Church. Why not mount a special campaign by radio to seek to win them for the Kingdom! The more we thought of the idea, and tested it with our Religious Advisory Committee and regular and effective broadcasters, the more imperative the idea became.

By this time we were also aware of the reality of the comments in *Towards the Conversion of England*, which I restate:

'The true task of religious broadcasting is missionary and evangelistic, especially for those who do not attend church, though broadcasting can only plough the land and sow the seed. The church, in its parochial aspect, must tend and reap.'

Broadcasting had the means to penetrate into the homes of all with the Good News. But only the local church could bring them into the household of the faithful, the local congregation. Very simply, then, the problem was how to work together, both broadcasting and local church, as a unified team. Let us consider the broadcasting organization first.

We selected six weeks of normal broadcasting time, from 24 September to 29 October 1950. Within the period, we planned 60 religious broadcasts, practically all of them in short series. We chose a team of some 24 men to carry them out, consisting of the best broadcasters from five denominations, discovered in the previous five years. Similarly we drew upon the experimentation of the past five years and had a wide variety of broadcast: normal preaching services; led-discussions with laymen and women; dramatic presentations; talks; hymn-singing programmes—the whole existing range of religious broadcasting techniques of the day. A Conference-Retreat was held a fortnight before the first broadcast to weld together the whole team.

On the Churches' side, every minister in the participating Churches received a pamphlet which stated, in effect: '(1) For six weeks the best religious broadcasters and the best religious programmes are visiting your parish or congregational area; (2) we suggest you recruit volunteers to visit every home with a pamphlet which will tell them all about the broadcasts and all about your church; (3) the volunteers should certainly visit all the homes again and seek to gather into your congregation those affected by the broadcasts.'

Through the press, church and radio publicity, we made the Mission as widely known as possible. We also planned the Mission to coincide with a special Glasgow Churches Campaign,

working out the parish mission principle in the city as well as the commando approach. We believed that this might add to their local efforts in our largest city. Then it all happened, to be followed up for eight weeks by *The Way to Live*, a mid-week programme in which the Rev. Tom Allan of North Kelvinside parish discussed the full way into Christian Life and Witness, with a group of enquirers, as the *Radio Times* billing for the series said. Tom Allan's group of some 40 strong included 30 brought in by the work of his own congregational volunteers in the Radio Mission.

Results? Very mixed indeed. First of all, the whole conception was a new idea, an unusual one at that, involving radio, still itself a comparatively new means of communication. The Church of that day, 25 years ago, was less inclined to change than even we are today. Of all the thousands of ministers alerted and whose interest was sought, approximately 24 really carried out the Mission in terms of the hard slog of door-to-door parish mission. And this tiny category of about one-hundredth of those we sought to serve, produced quite remarkable results. A church in Aberdeen, in a new housing estate, enrolled a special Communicants Class of 74 people. Tom Allan, as we've seen, found 30, and that was the kind of success which attended those who took the Mission seriously and did their local homework, by reaping the parochial harvest of the seed which broadcasting had sown.

For the rest, some rather naïve ministers widely publicized the Mission, but took no local action other than that, then sat back and waited for the converts to pour in. They were disappointed when this did not happen, although some of them did note that the attendance at the October Communion had been the highest in living memory.

In Glasgow, where the Mission had run in parallel with their Churches Campaign there was a three-fold reaction too. 'The Radio Mission was of great assistance. Many non-church people used it instead of attending Campaign meetings of which they were shy. The Mission certainly provided the best speakers we had to support us.' 'The Mission gave an important background to all that we were doing in the Glasgow Churches at the time.' 'It was a pity the two campaigns, Glasgow and radio,

clashed.' That last comment must have been the height of non-
imagination!

Thus, the Radio Mission of 1950. A set of 11 recommendations was drawn up for the attention of the Churches and for future reference. (See *Success and Failure of a Radio Mission* by Ronald Falconer, 1951.) The first of these stated that the lessons of the Radio Mission could be learnt most profitably by being applied in action, concluding 'Planning has begun for Lent 1952 accordingly.' In itself this was advance notice for the second Radio Mission. This time there was much more support and various Churches, or groups of Churches, intimated their willingness to be part of the next Mission. After consultations we selected four areas of Mission, each of which had volunteered to participate. These were: the rural town of Forfar, the Clydeside industrial town of Greenock, the down-town Glasgow district of Partick, and the old county town of Ayr. In each of these places the local churches planned to carry out Churches' Campaigns in which Parish Missions were to be at the heart of the work. This meant that broadcasting was able to help on the work of evangelism in these four representative areas while alerting the rest of Scotland to experience this work as it was happening.

At the end of this second Radio Mission, there was abundant evidence to suggest that the time was ripe for a wider movement of evangelism in Scotland than broadcasting itself could promote. Accordingly the BBC called together a meeting, held in Broadcasting House, Edinburgh, attended by the outstanding radio missionaries, the leaders of evangelism of the Scottish Churches and the members of the BBC's Scottish Religious Advisory Committee. Out of that meeting grew the united ecumenical group for Mission, soon to be known as the 'Tell Scotland Movement for Evangelism'.

During the five years of its existence and the further five in which the Kirk Week Movement dominated the scene, religious broadcasting continued to support both emphases by programmes, particularly those designed to instruct and encourage the Bible study action groups which were at the core of the Tell Scotland Movement. Much of this support followed quite naturally into the

Adult Christian Education Movement which was to follow in the sequence of such movements.

1952 was also a significant date from another point of view. In March of that year, as indeed the second Radio Mission was running its course, television came north of the Border for its first-ever Scottish religious broadcast, from St Cuthbert's Parish Church, Edinburgh, with the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Rt. Rev. W. White Anderson, preaching. It was a significant date for me personally as well, for our Scottish Controller, Melville Dinwiddie, informed me that I must now concentrate my efforts on the development of the newer medium, although retaining overall responsibility to him for the effective working of both radio and television. An exciting prospect, indeed, but one which took more and more of my time until television became a totally compulsive way of life, with little time left for thinking about anything else!

It is doubtful if radio has advanced in technique and ideas since the golden years of the Radio Missions. Perhaps the only new type of programme has been the news and current affairs format which was already present in an elementary way. But then it depended upon the cumbersome method of 'on the spot' recordings, carried out through the medium of the four-minute disc, recorded in a large and cumbersome recording van. Today, the modern tape-recorder can record programmes on light and highly mobile equipment which can be carried to the top of Ben Nevis, or Mount Everest for that matter. In 1952 there was certainly much more religious drama than today; there was a wide variety of musical programmes using various techniques; the meditation was more frequently used while laymen's groups were struggling to express their belief and their problems. In one major respect, however, radio is vastly changed. That is in and through the influence that the more popular television has had upon it. Let us then leap forward to 1975 and examine its position today.

As television took over the mass-appeal programmes, radio and radio producers fell rather sadly into the second place. For the enthusiastic young producer, television was all; radio was just 'steam-radio', as it was called in a highly developing electronic

age. Morale sagged, programme standards suffered, little new thinking emerged. This grim state of affairs was encouraged by the BBC's official policy of phasing out of existence the once-vigorous and semi-independent English Regions of North, Midlands and West. London, of course, continued to be London with more and more programmes and power centred upon the English capital.

Some five years ago, however, radio began to raise its head again. A fresh study of people's listening and viewing habits revealed quite clearly that radio still had peak listening periods. These were, roughly speaking: between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. each morning; between 12 noon and 2 p.m.; between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.; and again from around 10 p.m. to near midnight. During these periods radio was providing background listening, during the preparation of meals in the kitchen or morning activities in the bathroom, then later, while mother listened at home, father was tuned in to his car radio driving to and from work. The development of the small, easily carried transistor radio also made popular music programmes available at all hours of the day and night to the young people who are such devotees of that cult. Radio, in other words, does not require the immense concentration which television demands if one is both to see and hear the news, current affairs or any entertainment programme—for radio can go with you wherever you go as a pleasant, informative and entertaining comrade.

Within these peak listening periods, during weekdays, religious contributions are two in nature. The first, on both BBC radio and the newer independent local radio companies, Radio Clyde and Radio Forth, is a still recognizable—or fairly recognizable!—*Thought for the Day*, the BBC allowing between three and four minutes for the operation, Radio Clyde one minute and Radio Forth ninety seconds. Having regard to the time of day, the integration into on-going news and current affairs programmes, and the restrictions of the various programme lengths, there is a deal of thought and experiment to be observed. It was and remains my belief that these short morning spaces are, strategically, just about the most important that religious broadcasting has at any time of the day, whatever the medium. The right thought, properly expressed, can speak a Word from God to influence a

whole nation for good, as well as lonely individuals in dire need.

The other contribution is occasional rather than regular. It is when the Church is sufficiently in the news to merit the interviewing of a spokesman or the news-maker, as when, for example, the Church and Nation Committee makes a pronouncement on Abortion, Moral Welfare starts a Home for Alcoholics, Maintenance of the Ministry gives ministers a pay-rise which threatens the Social Contract. Sooner or later, such extravagances, under our democratic methods of news-finding, will result in an official spokesman being grilled by a truth-seeking reporter, or totally misunderstood by another who has no idea of what the Church stands for, and has for the first time consciously heard of the committee concerned. Sensible, accurate, easily understood information, attractively presented, is what is required under these circumstances. A measure of training, as we are discovering within these electronic walls of Aberdeen University's Television Centre, is essential in the support of an adequate and responsible image for the listener to behold. This becomes obvious to every participant in such a broadcast, immediately it is over, for then one feels let down by the sense of what one should have said and how one should have said it! Concise, on-the-spur-of-the-moment thinking and its immediate translation into simple, straightforward speech is not a subject upon which much time is spent at theological colleges, nor is it normally encountered in the day-to-day life of the Ministry. Hence the need for such training under active service conditions. Moreover, that training, or conditioning to the media, should surely be part of the modern student's curriculum.

Some television addicts never listen to radio at all, or if at all only for early morning news and weather bulletins. Nevertheless, as a study of *Radio Times* or the daily radio programmes of all channels in the newspaper reveals, radio still has an exceedingly comprehensive output. Indeed, there is some truth in the statement which a blind man made to me not so long ago: 'We've both radio and TV in our house. But in my experience the radio programmes are far ahead of television in their imaginative presentation.' Very few of us are physically blind so we normally

use the two senses of sight and sound and watch television in our leisure time. But to be cut off from television for a month, in a Highland cottage at the back of beyond, is to rediscover the extraordinary flexibility of radio, from its up-to-the-moment news reports, through drama and documentaries, to the meditative type of programme which very seldom appears on television and even then not so successfully as on radio.

Radio remains the more imaginative of the two media. I am not speaking in terms of exciting programme-content so much as the ability of radio to stir our imaginations in a creative way. The sound of a rather tinny kirk bell in a Highland parish at once stimulates our imaginations into creating our own pictures of the scene around that simple sound. On television, such a wee Highland kirk would be selected for us by the producer and visually presented. In radio we make our own pictures; on television they are made for us by another. He may be brilliant and may have excellent visual material with which to present us; on the other hand we may not like his pictures. Whatever the radio programme, whether drama, documentary or act of worship, we are in a more active state, mentally, than when we watch its television equivalent. On the whole, unless we are watching some impressive, contemporary happening, radio probably keeps our minds much more on the move than the visual medium. Yet we are so made that to add sight to sound beguiles most of us, especially if the sight is full of colour and attractiveness. Whatever we may say, the fact remains that the vast majority of people in these islands, given the choice of listening to the most evocative radio production, or its equivalent on a modern colour television set, will choose the latter. Probably the only exception to this rule are young people of the ages who are devoted to their pop music. For they can enjoy their music, carry out some other activity at the same time, or simply share it with their friends.

Those of us who are older (nowadays, so I'm told, anyone over 25 years of age!) find it difficult to understand, let alone participate in, what is called the 'Pop Culture'. The youth programmes of which I spoke earlier which we broadcast in the late forties and early fifties would probably mean little to this generation. Nor

indeed do so many of them meet together in clubs and other organizations. It is the day, or the night, of the discothèque and the café, both pounding out music several decibels higher than our ears can stand and, as doctors constantly warn, several decibels higher than younger ears should be subjected to. It is a curious creation, this pop culture. One wonders which came first, the love of beat music, or rock-and-roll and all its derivatives, with the accompanying bi-sexual dress, or astute men realizing that the teenager now earned money—or was given much more by parents in an affluent society—and so had become a market for all manner of extravagances, musical and dress-wise. The pop culture exists to show young people that they are different, in every way, from their elders; it encourages them so to be. It feeds upon the frustrations of being half-adult, of growing up into manhood and womanhood, in what is often an unhealthy way, separating young folk from those both older and younger than themselves. Too easily they fall victims to drugs and drink and other aberrations.

Thus, they become, in this unbalanced view of human society, a problem to their parents, their teachers and employers, and, mostly sadly of all, to themselves. One of the forms which this isolational state in which they live takes is to separate them from any serious commitment to the Christian Church. Often, one will find them serving in the most menial of ways, the underprivileged geriatric in hospitals, in grim housing conditions, almost anywhere that one finds people in need. Outwardly, they express a love for neighbour, a compassionate outreach, which shames many of us who are older. But somehow they do not see the tie-up with what they are practising and the Church of the Christ whose great Commandment was that we love one another. That may well be our faults within his Church, because we do not bear sufficient of the marks of this Lord Jesus for them to recognize him in us and the structure we have built to enshrine him.

What is certain is that the Church should be seeking to penetrate the pop culture in ways which young people will understand and which they will recognize with all the sincerity of youth as showing forth the Lord Jesus and his commandment of Love. Some are

already in this field. There are the Sydney Carters with their Christian folk and gospel music in an idiom which youth understands. There are the lyrics and the music of religious rock operas—what a title!—such as *Jesus Christ Superstar*. There is the extraordinary rise to the top of the hit parade, *Top of the Pops*, of a Victorian hymn-tune and words, *Amazing Grace* played by a combination of bagpipes and brass which must have made many a Highland Regimental Pipe-Major of bygone years turn, shrinkingly, in his grave. But a deal of this kind of religious appeal happens by pure chance.

Radio helps to penetrate this world. Programmes such as *Speakeasy* led by the pop artist, disc jockey Jimmy Saville, have a wide following, as indeed does the worthy Jimmy, a bizarre yet sincere Christian who spends all his spare time nursing the underprivileged in hospitals. Yet it seems to me that any Christian Church worthy of the name should be involved in massive efforts to seek out and to win the young for Christ. For if we fail in this, there could be no Christian Church in the not-too-distant future. Meantime broadcasting has a foothold in the pop territory into which the broadcasters too should pour ideas and effort in the attempt to enlarge the bridgehead.

One of the great disasters, so far as religious broadcasting is concerned, was the disappearance about a dozen years ago of *Children's Hour*. Some of the best religious broadcasting produced occurred within its periods, from 5 p.m. to almost 6 o'clock every day of the week except Saturdays. We remember how *The Man Born to be King* was originally commissioned and broadcast within this period. We have indicated the wide variety of programmes—Bible stories, the dramatization of Old and New Testament, quiz programmes, Children's Hour prayers and bright and cheerful children's services—all of which formed a natural and popular part of the output, particularly here in Scotland under the genius of 'Auntie Kathleen', as she was and still is known to millions. *Children's Hour* has, as we all knew it must, come back again in another guise, but alas! no religion, except here in Scotland at regular intervals, and this arising out of a unique experiment initiated by 'Auntie Kathleen'.

She began a programme called *Fireside Sunday School* to meet the needs of children in faraway places, in isolated glens and islands where there was no Sunday School. This was a result of the direct appeals made to her by shepherds' and estate workers' wives with young families. It was a simple act of worship with a dramatized Bible story at its heart. It built up a very large participating audience of children who wrote in their requests and their answers to quizzes, and this well into the television age. Kathleen's successor, Ian Wishart, a good churchman, developed it even further, but he was not long away from the BBC in his turn when it died. It was later revived, this time by the religious broadcasting department, and while it has gone through two or three forms in recent years it now appears, rather in the pattern of the old 'St Ninian's, Anytown' broadcasts, in the form of the parables wearing a modern dress for modern children. Long may it continue, for it is the sole survivor of what was once a first-class output of religious teaching in the pleasantest of ways for the young.

Children's programmes on radio and indeed on television too are of quite vital importance. For, as the Victorian hymn says, they tell the old, old story, simply, as to a little child. And that is where we should be beginning in terms of the media, in our day and generation.