

MESSAGE

MEDIA

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The Baird Lectures 1975

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Contents

Foreword by Dr William Barclay	vii
Introduction	ix
1. Jesus is the Message	i
2. Windows on the World	24
3. Eyes to See	47
4. Ears to Hear	76
5. The Good Earth	96
6. Mission for Today	119

Foreword

It is a great relief to read a book by a man who knows what he is talking about, who knows what he wants to do and who knows how to do it. Dr Falconer writes about broadcasting as an instrument of Christian education and evangelism, and he writes from the inside, both as a broadcaster and as a Christian. Dr Falconer would closely connect education and evangelism. As an evangelist, he is a teacher. His evangelism has an intellectual content which gives it a solidity and a lasting power. Dr Falconer has a gift for seeing the permanent amidst the changing panorama of contemporary religion. He, for instance, wishes to proclaim a 'total' Jesus who will meet the needs of all alike in the fullest possible way.

Dr Falconer always had about him an air of complete competence. I had the privilege of working for him on occasion and when he was producing anything I had to say, I always had complete confidence that nothing could go wrong, or if it did go wrong, it could quite easily be dealt with.

Perhaps the biggest thing about Dr Falconer was his self-obliteration. He did very little broadcasting himself. He conceived it to be his job to make it possible for others to broadcast. He was in the highest sense a servant of the Word.

This is a good book and an exciting book and a book to which all who are interested in Christian evangelism must pay attention.

WILLIAM BARCLAY

Introduction

When The Baird Trust invited me to give their 1975 Lectures, they indicated but two conditions. First, the lectures should be, in their own words, concerned with 'Getting the Message Across'. There was no doubt that by 'The Message' they meant the Christian Gospel. Secondly, they wished me to draw upon my experience of over a quarter of a century of organizing and producing Radio and Television for BBC-Scotland, seeking to assess how The Message does, in fact, get across, in and through these mass media.

After the initial euphoria of being invited to lecture in such an impressive succession of theologian-preachers as comprises the roll-call of those who obeyed the Trust's invitations these past hundred years, the task seemed daunting indeed. Even the word, 'Lecture', I found intimidating, for I am no academic, nor indeed theologian either, in the professional sense of the term. My qualifications are simply those of a parish minister whose parish was dramatically extended to include all Scotland, and that through the most testing means of communication so far devised by scientific man. The mastery of the means of communication is not the least of the story these lectures will reveal.

The lectures were delivered twice, both within the context of television studios. The first and formal occasion, was within Aberdeen University's new, colorized Television Centre which is under the direction of my old BBC-Scotland assistant, Alan Grimley, with whom it was a special joy to work.

The second occasion was within the studios of Grampian Television, the ITV company which serves the eastern half of Scotland, from the Shetlands to Edinburgh. The Grampian lectures were half the duration of the University ones, and given before an

audience of church folk of all denominations. Many of the Grampian staff were former BBC colleagues. Such were Bob Christie, programme controller, Mike Bevan, my producer, Donald Fraser, researcher, and Chris Kay, floor manager. A friendly and expert team, which is one of the hallmarks of television. Their care-free professionalism was matched by the enthusiastic support of Grampian's Religious Advisory Committee under the Chairmanship of the Rev. Scott Hutchison. The obvious respect which churchman and televisionman had for each other seemed to me to be a model of a relationship, never easy, yet always important, and to which I shall return in the lectures.

The television content of the lectures was conditioned by the medium itself. Alastair Cooke, that Prince of Communicators, states in the foreword to his book, *America*,

'TV has to be direct and immediate, at the expense of reservations and intellectual subtlety. It is inevitably oversimple. My book is about four times the length of the spoken scripts.'

This statement matches my own experience. This book is four times the length of the Grampian TV scripts and possibly twice as long as those of Aberdeen University. Yet I have preserved the illusion of delivering the lectures before the cameras since, curiously enough, this adds to their reality.

It has been a marvellous experience committing both to TV screens and to paper my reflections, theories, indeed, my heresies of a lifetime spent amidst the exciting, testing, creative and wholly satisfying realm of BBC-Scotland.

I am grateful to The Baird Trust for the splendid opportunity they have given me, and to Almighty God for his Call to do this work in his service.

St Columba's Day, 1975