

# NEW TESTAMENT ON THE AIR

## Opinions on "The Man Born To Be King" Are Mostly Favourable

**N**OW that six of the 12 plays in "The Man Born to be King" have been broadcast, it is interesting to ask who is listening to them and what is being said about them. No exact information is available, of course, either of numbers or of reactions, but the answers to some inquiries we have made perhaps indicate roughly what the effect on listeners has been so far.

It has not been easy to decide what proportion of listeners have been tuning in. Although we have been surprised by the number of people who have not even heard of the broadcasts, the number who have heard and who are listening is also large, and we cannot pretend to have discovered anything more definite than that.

So far as reactions go, we have been surprised that so few people have complained. For obvious enough reasons, we expected a fairly big volume of violent protests. But we were wrong. A few have protested, some of them a little vigorously, but an overwhelming proportion of those we have spoken to have been not only favourable but enthusiastic.

Here are some indications—not exactly collected at random, but taken from a wide enough field to be representative of that section of the listening public likely to be interested in the subject.

**OCTOGENARIAN:**—A man of 88 came to see us, and we took the opportunity to ask if he had heard any of the plays. He had heard all so far broadcast, and he had quite definite opinions about them. He did not like them.

"Dorothy Sayers may have worn out a Greek Testament studying the story but she does not know it. I have worn out two Testaments, and I say that she has not yet seen the Man of Nazareth.

"Jesus was not born to be King, even in the Dorothy Sayers sense. He was born to be our brother, our friend, our guide. But I shall not go into these mysteries. I shall just say plainly that the plays do not move me. In places I find them tawdry. In general—I am speaking of those only that I have so far heard—I find them lacking in majesty. I almost agree with a Plymouth Brother who answered when I asked him how the first play struck him, that it did not strike him at all; it was an insult to Jesus Christ. I live worlds away from the Brethren, but for once found myself speaking almost the same language."

**UNIVERSITY WOMAN:**—"For one thing, the time is inconvenient for married women—but those plays that I

have managed to hear have seemed very good, particularly the first play, which held my attention all the way, though the story was so familiar. I think the writing shows a good sense of words—not exactly poetry, but words well used, and that is very important in radio. At times I have felt the voices were unsuitable. I would say the voice of Mary has a touch of the typical heroine of current popular films, and it seems wrong to me to make Matthew, who is, after all, the author of one of the most scholarly books of the New Testament, sound like an uneducated Cockney."

**A SCOTS CARPENTER:**—Yes, he had listened once. He had not been shocked and he had not been pleased. The whole thing was plainly impossible. "Some things are better not attempted."

**MOTHER OF FOUR:**—"The only people entitled to criticise *The Man Born to be King* from a religious standpoint are the regular church-goers—the conscientious Christians. The others can only criticise it from an entertainment point of view. I am not a good church-goer, but I enjoyed listening to the programme; after all, if



Christ came back, he would speak just like ourselves. My children listened, too, but they weren't interested."

**CARTOONIST:**—"Frankly, I don't like it. It seems quite wrong, like the modern version of the Bible. The life of Christ is so important that only the rich, beautiful language of the Bible can do it justice. The programme jarred me so much that I turned it off half way through."

**MOTHER OF ONE:**—"What a dreadful programme! Blasphemy, that's what it is. Why, one man actually said 'Shut up!' in Jesus' presence. I wouldn't let my daughter listen to that kind of stuff. They've got no business to broadcast it in the children's session at all. My husband said he wasn't going to have it on in his house."

**OFFICE WORKER:**—"I thought it was an inspiration. There is a great spirit behind that writing which is very necessary to-day to bring the life of Christ home to people. We need more programmes like that. I am going to listen to every episode. There is only one thing. I don't like the voice of Christ. It seems too hard. I had always imagined His voice would be soft and gentle."

**ANOTHER OFFICE WORKER:**—"Oh, I never listen to the wireless."

**VARSIITY STUDENT:**—"What is it?"

**COLLEGE BOY:**—"I thought it was too uninteresting to listen to. I've got a much more vivid picture in my own mind of those times."

**SCHOOLGIRL:**—"It was too embarrassing hearing Biblical characters speak, and in any old voices as well."

**A GROUP of Men and Women Met to Discuss Post-War Construction:**—"A most interesting and instructive

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Left: Dr. J. W. Welch (BBC Director of Religious Broadcasting); Above: Val Gielgud (producer); Right: Robert Speaight (Jesus).

