

**THE SON OF MAN:
A DRAMA IN FOUR
ACTS**

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The Son of Man: A Drama in Four Acts by B. Russell Herts

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B. RUSSELL HERTS

**THE SON OF MAN:
A DRAMA IN FOUR
ACTS**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR :

Depreciations.

The Decoration and Furnishing of Apartments.

THE SON OF MAN

A Drama in Four Acts

By B. RUSSELL HERTS

NEW YORK
FRANK SHAY
1916

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E775 S6

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To E.

THE SON OF MAN

ACT I. *Outside the house of Jesus and Mary, the Mother, at Nazareth in Galilee.*

ACT II. *The hut of Jesus on the Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem.*

ACT III. *Outer courtyard of the Temple of Jerusalem.*

ACT IV. *Within the hut of Jesus on the Mount of Olives.*

CHARACTERS:

Jesus, Son of Mary.

Mary, the Mother.

Mary of Magdala.

Pontius Pilate.

The Twelve Apostles.

Zebedee.

Salome, wife of Zebedee.

Saducee and Pharisee priests, merchants, poor people and Roman soldiers.

PREFACE

When I conceived the notion of writing "The Son of Man," I determined to drop from my mind all curiosities and accomplishments; to forget all the hampering conventions that surround this subject, and to labor with careful devotion in the making of a work of art that should exhibit the world's greatest figure in a fresh and vital and inspiring way to the people of today.

I explain this original process of mine, not because I imagine that I have fully succeeded in this ambition but so that readers of the play may understand the psychology of its author at the time of its construction—an understanding which may be no less necessary than that of the psychology of the characters. Without the knowledge we have gained, from hundreds of essays, of the changing mental outlook of Ibsen and Strindberg, we should be far less capable of grasping the sense of their plays, while the prefaces of Mr. Bernard Shaw have served to the skeptical as assurances of his seriousness of purpose.

In this play, I have allowed myself the greatest possible liberties. I have been historical only when it suited me. I have taken lines attributed to Jesus in one period of his life and placed them in another. I have pictured the people whom I use in a way for which there is often no biblical foundation, and I have used the works on this subject of Renan, Josephus, Maeterlinck, Mr. Bouck White and others whenever I found anything in them that seemed fitting.

My explanation of this unheard of procedure is that, from my standpoint, the supreme importance of the figure of Jesus in the world today is not dependent upon the truth

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or untruth of what has been written about him in the Bible or elsewhere, or upon his divinity, or even upon the likelihood or unlikelihood of his existence, but that it is entirely due to the wealth of beauty and idealism that has come to surround the name Jesus in the minds of millions of people in every generation, a fortunate inheritance to which every generation has contributed. My reason for attempting the expression of my own conception is that I find the most generally accepted pictures unsatisfying, and I am led to believe that many other people find them so. It is inevitable that the world's vision of a man, expanding and amplifying through nineteen centuries, should have become over-elaborate, muddled and not thoroughly suited to the present needs of the race. My effort has been to select from the tangle of ideas, qualities and characteristics that has grown up, such points as conform to the scientific and intellectual developments of modernity, and since these same developments have rendered the drama modernity's most popular literary form, I have woven my concept into a play.

I do not think it should be considered objectionable to place the figure of Jesus upon the stage, any more than it is to place a painter's idea of him upon canvas, or an author's in print. The theatre is being rapidly transformed from a place of vulgarity and ugliness into one of great physical beauty furnishing a basis for a vast intellectual and ethical influence. But, finally, the very production of the play, if it ever takes place, must be in its own justification, and that is all there is to be said about the matter.

B. RUSSELL HERTS.

NEW YORK CITY, *August 20th*, 1914.