

**THAT ONE FACE STUDIES
OF THE PLACE OF
JESUS IN THE MINDS
OF POETS AND PROPHETS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649383665

That one face studies of the place of Jesus in the minds of poets and prophets by Richard Roberts

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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*"That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recombine,
Becomes my universe that feels and knows."*

—ROBERT BROWNING



ASSOCIATION PRESS

NEW YORK: 347 MADISON AVENUE

1919

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18 of Pub. Works | 110. 7. 19/19

FOREWORD

It is hardly necessary to say that this is not in any sense a volume of literary estimates. It is simply an attempt to show "the face of Jesus Christ" as certain great souls have seen it; and nothing is added to this save what seemed necessary in order to provide the proper perspective.

The selection of those whose view of Jesus is treated in this book has been determined entirely by the fact that the present writer happens to have learned more from them than from any others. Obviously other lists of the same kind might be made by other men; but one may take leave to question whether the total result would be appreciably different.

Some of the contents of the following pages appeared in the author's book, "The Meaning of Christ," which was published in 1906, but has been for many years out of print. A few paragraphs of the twelfth week's material have been taken from the author's "The Renaissance of Faith." All this matter has, however, been entirely rewritten.

CHAPTER I

Vision and Revelation

The aim of this book is to help men and women to reach a true judgment about Jesus. It does not pretend to provide all the conditions and materials of such a judgment. It will endeavor to set in order a certain *class* of material, in the hope that the reader may be stimulated to pursue the study further, and especially to consider afresh the portrait of Jesus in the gospels. To the gospel presentation of Jesus we shall naturally refer again and again in the course of the present study; but this will not do away with the need of a consecutive study of the gospels themselves. Indeed, this study will itself have proved a failure if it does not send those who may engage in it back to the gospels to seek out the face of Jesus for themselves.

It will be observed that what is proposed here is an endeavor to show how Jesus impressed certain persons. These persons are of two classes, poets and prophets. Of the company only one has an ecclesiastical connection of a formal kind, namely, Savonarola. The rest are all laymen; and consequently we may expect to find them largely free from professional and theological bias. The theological and clerical mind is perhaps open to the suspicion of partisan motives, of wanting to establish a case. The persons whom we propose to study will not suffer from this disadvantage. Indeed, some among them would have repudiated the suggestion that they ranked as orthodox Christians; one, Shelley, even called himself an atheist. It will at least be interesting to find out what

these men thought about Jesus. What was it in Him that impressed them? How did they react to Him? Plainly this study should yield us some important material for a complete portrait of Jesus.

Perhaps, indeed, it may turn out that this is the most important material of all, outside the New Testament. There are in the creeds and confessions abundant definitions of the Person of Christ, but we have begun to recognize that formal statements of truth have grave limitations. Usually they have been fashioned in the fires of controversy; and consequently they overmuch reflect the bias of partisan views. But we also know nowadays that intellectual propositions cannot compass the whole meaning of life.

"In divinity and love
What's best worth saying can't be said,"

says Coventry Patmore in one of his poems; and this is particularly true of religious experience—most of all true of men's experience of Jesus. The touch of life is not in the creeds, in articles of faith deliberately and systematically drawn out. We are much more likely to find what we want in the spontaneous and often unguarded utterances of persons who simply spoke as they saw and were not in the least concerned to expound or to defend a particular view or tradition.

DAILY READINGS

First Week, First Day

Howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect: yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, which are coming to nought: but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God fore-ordained before the worlds unto our glory: which none of the rulers of this world knoweth: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory: but as it is written,