

**"THE HUMAN RACE" AND  
OTHER SERMONS:  
PREACHED AT CHELTENHAM,  
OXFORD, AND BRIGHTON**

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"The Human Race" and Other Sermons: Preached at Cheltenham, Oxford, and Brighton by  
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## SERMONS

“THE HUMAN RACE”

AND

OTHER SERMONS

PREACHED AT

Cheltenham, Oxford, and Brighton

BY THE LATE

*William*

REV. FREDERICK W. ROBERTSON, M.A.

INCUMBENT OF TRINITY CHAPEL, BRIGHTON

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# SERMONS.

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## Fifth Series.

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### I.

#### TYPIFIED BY THE MAN OF SORROWS, THE HUMAN RACE.

(FROM AUTOGRAPH MS.)

*Preached for the Hospital. Christ Church, Cheltenham, April 26, 1846.*

"A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him."—Isaiah liii. 3.

THESE are two aspects in which we may consider the Redeemer of the world. We may think of Him as the Christ, or we may think of Him as the Son of Man. When we think of Him as the Christ, He stands before us as God claiming our adoration. When we think of Him in that character in which He so loved to describe Himself, as the Son of Man, He stands before us as a type or specimen of the whole human race.

There is something exceedingly emphatic in that expression, Son of Man; it is a most wide and extensive appellation. Our Master is not called the Son of Mary; but, as if the blood of the whole human race were in His veins, He calls Himself the Son of Man. There is a universality in the character of Christ which you find in the character of no other man. If you take, for example, the life of Abraham, you have a man with all the peculiarities of that particular age belonging to him. You have a man moulded into a particular character with particular habits, particular prejudices. Abraham is by no means one to whom the whole human race can lay claim, and say he is our countryman.

He was the son of Terah, the offspring of a Syrian stock, the child of that generation. Abraham is full of rigid individual peculiarities. You have a distinct portrait that represents that one man, and no man else. Take, again, the character of David. It is a life of eminent saintliness, but you cannot mistake the Jew. There is Jewish exclusiveness, a Jewish way of looking at the world, Jewish faults, Jewish narrowness. He is not the son of man, but the child of Israel. Take, once more, the character of Paul, a man, if ever there was one, emancipated from exclusive feelings; generous, universal, catholic in his character. And yet it is not possible to take the portrait of the Apostle Paul and mistake for one moment to what age and nation he belonged. You could not for an instant say the man was born a Grecian; you could not take his character and say it is a character of the nineteenth century. You have unmistakably the disciple of Gamaliel, the man of peculiar education, the man of peculiar temperament; not the son of man, but the son of a certain father and a certain mother, the disciple of a certain school, with the peculiarities and the phraseology of that school. But when you take the character of Christ, all this is gone. Translate the words of Christ into what country's language you will, He might have been the offspring of that country. Date them by what century of the world you will, they belong to that century as much as to any other. There is nothing of nationality about Christ. There is nothing of that personal peculiarity which we call idiosyncrasy. There is nothing peculiar to any particular age of the world. He was not the Asiatic. He was not the European. He was not the Jew. He was not the type of that century, stamped with its peculiarities. He was not the mechanic. He was not the aristocrat. But He was the man. He was the child of every age and every nation. His was a life world-wide. His was a heart pulsating with the blood of the human race. He reckoned for His ancestry the collective myriads of mankind. Emphatically, He was the Son of Man.

The task which the master painters of the Middle Ages for centuries proposed to themselves as the highest aim of art was to realize on canvas the conception of the Anointed One of God. It was their grand work to paint a Christ. And what they made their business was not to turn off a portrait, but to embody the highest idea which genius could conceive of glorious humanity.



If the Italian painter or if the Spanish painter produced a form which bore the peculiar national lineaments worn by the humanity in his own climate, so far he had failed. He might have idealized the grandeur of the Italian form or the grandeur of the Spanish form, but he had not given to men's eyes that grandeur of the human species which belonged to a conception of the Son of Man. He had got a portrait to which a nobly formed individual of one nation might have sat, but an individual of no other. He had got the perfection of the Italian or of the Spanish type, but not the perfection of manhood. Now, that which the painter aimed at in the outward form, that Christ was in inward character. He was the type of the whole human race. He was the essence, the sublimation, of humanity. It was a noble endeavor of the Apostle Paul to be all things to all men. To the Gentile he became as a Gentile, that he might gain the Gentiles; to the Jew as a Jew. But in all this he was acting a single part for a time. He made it his business while the Jew was with him to try to realize the feelings and enter into the difficulties of a Jew. He laid it upon himself as a Christian duty while he was reasoning with a Gentile to throw himself into the Gentile's position, to try to look at things from his point of view, and even to fancy himself perplexed with his prejudices. But directly he had done with the man he wished to win, he threw himself out of his constrained position, he laid aside his part. He was neither Jew nor Gentile; but he was Paul again, with all Paul's personality and all Paul's peculiarities. That which Paul was for a time, Christ is forever. That which Paul was by effort and constraint, Christ is by the very law of His nature. He is all things to all men. He is the countryman of the world. He is the Mediator, not between God and a nation, but between God and man. He was the Jew and the Gentile, and the Greek and the Roman, all in one. He can sympathize with every man because He has, as it were, been every man. There is not a natural throb which ever agitated the bosom of humanity which Christ has not felt. The aspirations of loftiest genius and the failure of humblest mediocrity, the bitterness of disappointment and the triumph of success, the privations of the poor man and the feebleness of corporeal agony, Christ knew them all. He came into this world the Son and the Heir of the whole race of man.

It is for this reason that the passage before us is selected for

our peculiar purpose to-day. It is our business to dwell to-day upon some of the sufferings common to the human species. And, therefore, we take up words belonging especially to Him who was the type of the human species. They were peculiarly true of Him. But they are in their measure true of every one whom the world can class as a son of man: "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

Here are two distinct facts which require consideration:

I. The lot of humanity in this world. This is the portrait of the species—"a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

II. The treatment which depressed humanity commonly experiences—"we hid as it were our faces from Him."

I. The lot of humanity in this world was the position which Jesus occupied on earth. For the most part, that lot is one of suffering. But suffering is of two kinds: pain which we endure in our own persons—Christ was "a man of sorrows;" and pain which we know by familiarity with others' sufferings—Christ was "acquainted with grief."

1. First of all, then, we are to consider the personal trials of a son of man upon this earth—"a man of sorrows."

He that doubts whether we live in a ruined world or not has to account for this fact, that man's universal heritage is woe. Men of poverty we are not all, men of weak ability we are not all; but the man not of sorrows is yet unborn. It is the result of a universal survey of human life—"man is born to trouble." Therefore trial fell to the lot of Christ, and simply for this reason, that He was man—a man, therefore "a man of sorrows." In this time-world those two things shall not be severed. Bodily and mentally, the constitution of a son of man is such that escape is impossible. Look at that surface of the human frame which is exposed to outward injury. There runs beneath it, crossed and recrossed in windings inconceivable, a network of nerves, every fibre of which may become the home of pain. There is no interstice large enough to admit between them, in a space that does not feel, the finest needle's point. Beneath all that there is a marvellous machinery. Man anatomized is like an instrument of music. The combined action of ten hundred thousand strings, each moving in its moment and in its place, is the melody and the harmony of health; but if one chord vibrate out of tune, you have then the

discord of the harp, the derangement of disease. Our bodies are strung to suffering. That we suffer is no marvel, that we want the repair of the physician is no wonder; the marvel is this—that a harp of so many strings should keep in tune so long.

Look next at the mental machinery of a son of man. These incomprehensible hearts of ours, my Christian brethren, have their liability to a derangement infinitely more terrible than bodily disorganization. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear! The inner mind, wrapped up, as it seems, by impenetrable defences, is yet more exposed to shocks and wounds than the outward skin tissue; and the sensitive network which encompasses that mind is a thousandfold more alive to agony than the nerves that quiver when they are cut. There is such a thing as disappointment in this world. There is such a thing as affection thrown back upon itself. There are such things as slight and injury and insult. There is such a thing as an industrious man finding all his efforts to procure an honest livelihood in vain, and looking upon his pale children with a heart crushed, to feel that there is nothing for them but the poor-house. There is such a thing as a man going down the hill that leads into the sepulchre, and acknowledging, as the shadows darken around him, that life has been a failure. All this is sorrow; and just because of the constitution with which he is born. In some form or other, this is the portion of the son of man.

And, brethren, we remark this—the susceptibility of suffering is the lot of the highest manhood. Just in proportion as man is exquisitely man, he is alive to endurance. There is a languid, relaxed frame of body in which pain is not keenly felt. The more complete the organization, the severer the endurance. Strong and able manhood suffers more the division of the nerve than softened and debilitated frames. So it is with the spirit. The more emphatically you are the son of man with human nature in its perfection in you, the more exquisitely can your feelings bleed. That which a base and a craven spirit smiles at is torture to the noblest and the best. It was for this reason that Christ was in a peculiar sense the "Man of sorrows." Things which rough and scornful men would have shaken from them without feeling went home sharp and deep into His gentle and loving heart. The perfection of His humanity insured for him the perfection of endurance—"Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow."