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ever 'the oldest, the clearest, and the most in conformity with the common reason of all the arguments for God's existence.' I have in mind Professor L. J. Henderson, who in his books, *The Order of Nature* and *The Fitness of the Environment*, contends that the 'fitness' of 'the actual distribution and conjunction of properties' in the physical constitution of the earth to render it the environment of life 'becomes intelligible only if you read it as a teleological pattern, as a preparation for life'; and Mr. C. J. Shebbeare, who in two works, *The Challenge of the Universe* and *The Design Argument Reconsidered* (the latter containing a debate on the subject with the well-known secularist Mr. Joseph McCabe), has argued that the real issue raised by the Argument from Design is whether there is any alternative to regarding as ultimately *accidental* much that we should find it very difficult so to regard except the conviction that the world is actually ordered on principles which are revealed to us through our moral and æsthetic intuitions, and whose origin cannot be satisfactorily explained by natural selection. The part of his argument relating to æsthetic principles is developed by Mr. Shebbeare with especial originality and force.

I have left myself no space for dealing with the extensive literature which testifies to the great interest in mysticism which is a notable characteristic of the present day. It stands, however, in intimate connexion with the stress laid by recent theology on religious experience and on Divine immanence. It is the more important to note that a writer of genius who in his *Mystical Element in Religion* has made a contribution of the first importance to the study of religious mysticism, the late Baron von Hügel, was an uncompromising opponent of all theories which emphasized Divine immanence to a point inconsistent with allowing that Divine transcendence the acknowledgment of which in his judgment—and he was no mere academic student of religious phenomena, but, as all who had the privilege of his friendship knew, a master of the spiritual life—was indispensable to a truly vital religion. He died before what he meant to be his principal work—on the Reality of God—was ready for publication. But there is good reason to hope that it will yet appear in a form tolerably complete; and its appearance will be awaited with impatience by all who know the greatness of the spirit whose main message to his generation it will contain.

Jesus Christ and the Four Penitents.

By J. Rendel Harris, Litt.D., LL.D., D.D., Birmingham.

This picture is a copy of a great work by Rubens, which hangs in a gallery at Düsseldorf. It may be taken, just as in the January number we took the Rembrandt in the Louvre of the Supper at Emmaus, to make gospel to the eye, or, as the philosophical people say, to employ art in the service of religion. The theme to be illustrated is Penitence, and the artist is to select a number of cases of notable repentance, in order that we may, from his treatment of the theme, obtain a clearer idea of the Love of God towards penitents which was in Christ Jesus our Lord. Four of these cases are delineated by the artist for our study and our edification.

We must, however, premise that, if the art-work is to be effective, it will be necessary for both artist and observer to have a correct idea of the place of Repentance in the scheme of Christian thought. We are not making a study of Natural Religion, for, as I pointed out recently, Natural Religion has no place in it for broken and contrite hearts; certainly, when Natural Religion gravitates into Pantheism, as it almost always does when left to itself, we shall find our canvas bare of figures. The two words Penitence and Pantheism are adjacent in the dictionary, but far removed in any other category of ideas. A Pantheistic artist will either say, 'Let us change the subject,' or else he will make his typical penitent say, without tears or sighs, but with an impertinence that tear or sigh would have excluded, 'Man's forgiveness give and take,' as Omar Khayyám does in his poem.

So we shall assume that all the figures presented in the guise of penitents will agree with one another in this: they will all come in at Repentance Gate, they will all go down Sorry Street, and get as

far as Broken Heart Corner; when they get as far as that, some one will meet them, with adequate credentials of the authority to give remission, which credentials the artist is to be allowed to expose, for their regard and for ours; he will say, 'Behold my hands and my side'; then they will hear, each one, the oracle which George Fox heard, that 'there is One, even Jesus Christ, that can speak to thy condition'; if we are on the wireless, then at this point there will be a choir invisible, such as Jesus speaks of, and such as He was always hearing, which He called 'Joy in heaven,' a music for which either then or now, the Pharisees have no head-phones.

Now, when we ask ourselves what figures the artist is likely to introduce, our first impulse is to say, that the leading place will be given to the Prodigal Son. He will be a perfect incarnation of regrets, from his unkempt head to his shoeless feet, from the rags that expose his ribs to the hungry look in his eyes. If our artist is of the Renaissance he will supplement the moment of the Prodigal's arrival by throwing into the corner of the picture some illustration taken from his past, or by the use of far distances to present the pigs of the story so far away that you would almost take them to be sheep! And here comes in our first surprise, that the painter, instead of giving us a Prodigal Son, has given us three prodigal sons and a prodigal daughter, but not the conventional Prodigal. Evidently he was not satisfied with imaginary characters or parabolical forgiveness, he wants real people, real regrets, and personal remission.

Then another surprise comes to us; for, if we ask the question, what is the most notable actual conversion in the New Testament, the answer would be the Conversion of St. Paul, a story which is told over and over in the Acts of the Apostles, as well as implied in Epistle after Epistle. Now Rubens, if I remember rightly (or was it Vandyke?), did paint a great picture of the scene on the way to Damascus, and that shows that he saw the importance of such a great historical conversion; but he does not in the picture before us give the least hint that Paul was one of the Lord's great penitents. He does not appear as one of the three prodigal sons, he does not stand side by side with the prodigal daughter, nor share the words 'Go in peace' with any of them. So we turn to the figures that are actually presented, and proceed to identify them.

First of all we notice that in the background there is a figure, almost a shadow, but the shadow of a king. That means in the first place that the king, whoever he may be, is an Old Testament character. Here is a surprise of a new kind. We expected a group of worthies (I mean unworthies) from the days of Christ's flesh, and here we are carried back into the days of His Spirit. Does that take us away from Jesus or bring Him nearer to us? There are many people who are so beset with theories of forgiveness and schemes of reconciliation that, to hear them talk, it would seem as if Calvary had invented Divine Love, whereas it was Divine Love that invented Calvary. And we may be sure, that whatever the pre-existence of Christ may mean, it cannot mean less than the pre-existence of Divine Love.

In the next place, we notice that the person represented (may I call him one of Christ's former penitents?) is in an artistic withdrawal and retreat; he is purposely in the background, not merely historically in the rearward of time; his crown is only left on him in order that we may be able to recognize him; if we could identify him without it, the artist would have given him neither gold nor gems; he would take the purple from off his shoulders, if he could be sure that you would know him unadorned. If he had been a Byzantine artist, he would have contented himself by painting a scroll of letters across the figure so as to say, 'This is David the king.'

Suppose, then, that we have identified him rightly (and there are only two candidates for the place in the picture, one of them is King David, and the other King Manasseh), it must surely be the author of the 51st Psalm who is here represented. The 51st Psalm is the greatest of the Penitential Psalms; you will remember it begins 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness,' and it is full of evangelical doctrine and refrains. Did you ever notice that Jesus makes the Prodigal in Lk 15 reproduce a strain from the 51st Psalm? How do these compare together:

> Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight!
>
> Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight!

There is other evangelical matter in the great Psalm: 'Clean heart, right spirit, broken heart, contrite spirit, wash me, cleanse me.' Our hymn-books are in evidence on this point. What is this

prayer about a whiteness beyond the snow? If we set David to sing his penitence, or if, versifying ours, we take our pattern from his, would it not be something like this:

Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole:
I want thee for ever to dwell in my soul:
Break down every idol, cast out every foe;
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow?

Now let us turn to the second figure in the group. We made the remark just now that an artist who was pantheistically inclined would, if he had condescended to paint penitents, have given them neither sighs nor tears. That is not the case before us; so far as outward form can betray breaking hearts, these four figures are in evidence. Tears and sighs are canonical; here is one whose head is waters and whose eyes are a fountain of tears; presently we shall see another whose breast throbs with her emotion, nor will she be devoid of tears, for some one's feet. But the artist has made a special study of tears in the case of the second figure. He paints a very large tear (you can see it from the end of the room, or down the farthest corridor of time), which is his way of saying that 'the man weeps bitterly.' Then we are sure he is trying to represent St. Peter whose tears tried to wash out his threefold denial and could not succeed in erasing it. No, Peter! for all of us there is a sacred stanza, relating to all denials and applicable to all defects:

Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

The gospel has something more to say on this subject than that Peter went out and wept bitterly: it tells us of Christ's prayers as well as of Peter's tears, and how 'I have prayed for thee when Satan sifted thee'; it tells, too, of messages to be carried to 'my disciples and Peter,' the last specially included, when he might have expected a special denial such as is made before men and angels; and most of all there is the scene by the lake, where the threefold denial was drowned in the response to a threefold question, 'Simon, Son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' Can we set that to music, either for earth or heaven? Will it not be like this:

Hark, my soul! it is the Lord;
. . . . . .
Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou Me?

So much for the second figure and his tears. After all, the human race has discovered for itself that tears have a kind of human sanctity. The Egyptian religion was not all ridiculous; if it conserved cats and crocodiles or even human bodies, it had also its tear bottles, for remembrances and regrets. Jesus keeps an array of such. David supplied one: 'Put my tears,' he said, 'into thy bottle and into thy book'; but all the saints contribute a like parable of regret. 'Jesus has some of mine too,' they will say. And Mrs. Browning tells us that God turns these tears into pure crystallines which other workers may wear for amulets.

Now let us go on to the third figure, the one that is bearing a cross and holding it up before the Crucified. As you know, the prophet had foretold that the Suffering Servant should be numbered with the criminals; it is just conceivable that a hostile criticism might say that the prophecy was responsible, in a non-historical manner, for the event. What it is not responsible for, and cannot be, is the conversation that is reported between the two robbers, and between this particular robber and the Lord. You can watch him reading the inscription in the darkened day, and those letters which we abbreviate into INRI (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews); he fixes his attention, not on Nazareth, not on Judæa, but on the letters I, R, and the words Jesus—King, and he believes the statement which the libel or label was meant to confute. He turns his belief into a prayer: Remember me; Think of me, Jesus. The faith and the prayer make the poor wretch into one of the shining figures of the gospel. When Jesus says, 'To-day . . . with me . . . in Paradise,' he turns Calvary for this poor soul into Tabor, and death into martyrdom and into glory. How could any artist of fiction ever have produced such a scene, even if he were told to take Isaiah for a text? The man has become a great human representative of sinful and penitent people; in his own way the chief of sinners, and, in the order of accomplished redemption, the first of believers. Is it any wonder that he has a place in the hymnology? We may not always like the versification when it tells of a fountain filled with blood, but if we replace it by a Fountain flowing with Love, we can pass from the doubtful æsthetic of the first verse of a hymn and go on with:

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day!

And now we come to the fourth figure among our group of penitents. We have no difficulty in deciding who she is, though when I say that it is *Blessed Mary*, the critics may interrupt and ask questions, and say, 'Which Mary is it?' To them at the present time we give no other answer than that 'It is this one.' And may we not call her *Blessed Mary*? Yes, that is what George Herbert calls her:

When blessèd Mary wiped her Saviour's feet
Whose precepts she had trampled on before.

Some of us will remember, too, some lines written about her by a sixteen-year-old girl, named Christina Rossetti:

She came in deep repentance,
And knelt down at His feet
Who can change the sorrow into joy,
The bitter into sweet.

She had cast away her jewels
And her rich attire,
And her breast was filled with a holy shame,
And her heart with a holy fire.

Her tears were more precious
Than her precious pearls—
Her tears that fell upon His feet
As she wiped them with her curls.

Trembling betwixt hope and fear,
She sought the King of Heaven,
Forsook the evil of her ways,
Loved much, and was forgiven.

I wonder what Mary, the Blessed, will say when she comes to the choir or the place where they sing? That will depend, partly, upon the Church with which she is affiliated. If she is a Primitive Methodist she will sing:

My Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine.

A very lovely song too, in the judgment of all true penitents; but if the music and the words do not fit our traditions, we might ask her to lead our devotions and lift our thoughts by singing:

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds.

In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Little by Little.[1]

'And the Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee.'—Dt 7^{22}.

THE other day I read about a working man in India who never, all his life, had a bigger wage than fourpence a day. That isn't much, is it? You wouldn't get much of a bag of sweets for that; and he had a home to keep, and a wife and family to clothe and feed, and all out of that poor fourpence a day. And yet, do you know that when he died he left twenty-five thousand pounds that he had saved. Well, to begin with, I think that he was a very foolish fellow. On to the end he was just a working man (that may have been all right), who lived in the same little house (that may have been all right), and slaved as hard as when he had only his fourpence wages (that may have been all right). But, if my paper was correct, he made his wife slave too, which, I think, was a pity, and gave his children nothing more than when they had been very poor, which sounds to me as if it were rather a shame. What was the use of all that money lying doing nothing? What is the good of anything, unless you use it? You have got rows and rows of books you never read. You used to love them long ago, when you were very wee. But they are baby books, and you don't care about them now. And there they stand and only gather dust and are no use to you at all. Why not give them away to other children who would love them? I would keep some of them just for the old times' sake. I think that Dad would miss them, if you gave them all away. For sometimes he looks at them even yet, and they bring back to him the old days long ago when Somebody was very small, and always early, early in the morning, as soon as it was light, there used to come the pattering of little feet, and then the door handle turned so very cautiously,

[1] By the Reverend A. J. Gossip, M.A., Aberdeen.