the execution; but on the other hand, there is a marked absence of that mechanical rigidity, that endeavour to run all subjects into one mould, and to treat them from the same point of view, which is apt to appear in works of the kind proceeding from one hand. A general plan or order of treatment was furnished to the writers, who were, however, at liberty to modify it when the subject seemed to require some other method. While exercising a general supervision, the Editors have not sought to abolish individuality of treatment, believing that the form naturally adopted by each writer, after a careful consideration of a common scheme, would be that in which he could best achieve the great end which all had in view.

The original scheme (for which editors and writers are not responsible) was constructed on the principle of bringing into view a series of great subjects in Biblical history and teaching. The arrangement was not meant to be exhaustive or strictly chronological. In the treatment of the lessons, therefore, only such connecting links have been supplied as were necessary to render each lesson intelligible. As a rule, each lesson consists of an introduction, outline of narrative, the central idea or principle illustrated by it, running commentary, and practical application. A few explanatory notes are usually appended upon points which required to be treated more fully. The aim is to supply the teacher with all the information and suggestion practically necessary for his work, and to do this in as direct and simple form as possible, so that the materials may be at hand and in a teachable shape. The notes, however, are intended to aid, not to supersede, careful preparation on the part of the teacher; some things being for the teacher only, not for the scholar; but by preliminary hints, by suggestions here and there throughout the lessons, and by guiding those teachers who are able and willing to inquire further to suitable sources of information, it is hoped that the work of the Sabbath school will be made both pleasant and profitable. Special attention has been given to the accentuation of Scripture names, and also to secure that the practical inferences drawn should be only such as are distinctly suggested by the subjects under review. While in order to make the books as generally useful as possible, critical questions and extreme statements have been avoided, modern aims and needs have been kept steadily in view, freshness and spirituality of tone have been maintained, the commonplace and the sentimental being anxiously set aside. It is the hope and prayer of those who have been engaged on this work that it may promote the efficiency, both from an educational and spiritual point of view, of Sabbath-school teaching in the Church of Scotland, and even, if they might venture to think it, in the sister Churches also.

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR JAMES ROBERTSON, D.D.

The foregoing statement regarding the scheme as a whole and the three books in common, leaves very little to be said as to the several volumes. One feature, peculiar to Grade III., remains to be mentioned—the "Questions" appended to each lesson. These are not so much questions on the lesson itself, as suggestions of lines of thought or hints of subjects for fuller examination; in certain circumstances they may be useful as themes for written exercises. In this grade the order in which the elements of the lesson are put down is pretty uniform, viz. "The Lesson Proper," "Notes," "Practical Lessons," and "Questions." In the "Notes" are placed such details of information as could not well be introduced into the body of the lesson without impairing the general effect. Such are details of topography, history, archæology, and so forth, which are fitted to illustrate the lesson in hand. Matters of criticism are purposely avoided. If such matters are to be introduced into Bible classes at all, it is perhaps better that they should form part of a formal course of instruction in Bible Introduction. The scheme of lessons in which editors and writers had to work does not contemplate a connected exposition of any of the books of the Bible. The lessons form a series of *subjects*, and in all the grades one common aim has been kept in view—the edification, and not merely the enlightenment, of the pupils.

Exposition of the First Epistle of St. John.

BY PROFESSOR RICHARD ROTHE, D.D.

CHAPTER II. 1, 2.

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."—(R.V.)

VER. 1. In the preceding chapter John has laid stress upon the fact that no one whatever, not even the Christian, is without sin. From this assertion of the actual universality of sin even among Christians, the natural mind of man may very readily, as John fears, draw the conclusion, that sinning is not a matter of very great importance, seeing it is something unavoidable and therefore justifiable. He does not, however, admit the validity of this conclusion of the natural man, but asserts its opposite. He made the above remark, he says, with *this* end expressly in view, that he might put

his readers into the position of *not* sinning; that he might waken them out of their moral security, not that he might rock them into it. For, in point of fact, nothing makes one feel so secure morally as the delusion that one is sinless. The universality of sin should make the readers sensible of the great earnestness which they must oppose to this sin that is still so powerful even in them. John is far from being under the delusion that the knowledge of sin could become a cushion to the sinner. A knowledge of the power of sin over us, which should be able to set us at rest, would not be a knowledge of sin as sin. He who knows sin as sin must, in view of the prodigious power which it still has over him, shrink back from it with double abhorrence. But this knowledge implies a great deal, and even Christians easily deceive themselves in regard to it. That which causes Christians such an abhorrence of sin is often only the consequences of it, and not its culpability in itself. He who should find satisfaction in the thought that sin is something unavoidable, and that he is not accountable to God for it, would not yet know sin as sin.

Scarcely, however, has John entered this protest, when it already seems to him to stand in need of a restriction. It might possibly be understood in such a way as to destroy one's peace of mind with God and joy in God. Such an interpretation John cannot admit; and accordingly with the words, "and if any man sin," on to the end of ver. 2, he adds a restriction to that protest. In ver. 3, however, he again fears that with this restriction he has done too much for his readers, and he therefore leaps over once more to the other side. We must not be surprised at this. Between the two positions, which in themselves are equally irrefragable: the Christian is absolutely separated from sin, and: the Christian is never altogether free from sin, John seeks to set up the true, healthful balance. He does this, however, not by means of a reasoned adjustment of the contradiction in which they seem to stand to one another, but he attempts it in an external manner, by balancing the two positions over against each other, and taking the side, now of the one and now of the other. He himself may have felt the faultiness of this empirical method; but he is very far from being a dialectician like Paul, and therefore does not know how he can otherwise get over the difficulty. "And if any man sin" expresses the mere objective possibility; it actually happens that we really sin.

We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, viz. we Christians, we who belong to Christ by faith, and only we Christians. In John's Gospel the Saviour calls the Holy Ghost the Advocate (Paraclete, xiv. 16, 26, xv. 26, xvi. 7). Here John describes the Saviour Himself as a Paraclete. From John xiv. 16, however, where Jesus speaks of "another" Advocate, we see that He already looked upon Himself as an Advocate. Here John says we have in the Saviour an Advocate with the Father, exactly as it is said in Rom. viii. 34: at the right hand of God (*vid.* also Heb. ix. 24). Philo frequently uses the expression "paraclete" of the Jewish high priest as the advocate and intercessor for the sins of the people; he also uses it of the divine Logos, to whom he assigns the same function. Wherein the office of the Saviour as Advocate consists according to John's notion, we learn from ver. 2. It has its significance in virtue of its relation to the "propitiation in respect of our sins" effected by the Saviour. In relation to the ever-recurring sins of those already standing in fellowship with Him through faith, the Saviour makes the efficacy of His propitiation valid before God for the procuring of their forgiveness. In this consists His advocacy. It has reference only to those who are already really converted and who already really belong to Him, just as also in the other passages cited it is only these that are spoken of. Popularly conceived, the idea is as follows: The Christian knows that in heaven with God, Jesus, whom he knows as his best, yea, his only friend, manages all his concerns; Jesus, of whom he knows that all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth. He knows Him as the unceasing manager and disposer of all his dealings with God. Even for the Christian nothing can be more consoling. Already during the earthly life of Christ every one who was candid with himself must have conceived a confidence and trust in Him. Now this is true of Him also in His state of exaltation. He, to whom Christ should have said, that he could have no fellowship with Him, must have despaired upon the spot; for he could not but have seen that while Christ was free from sin, He was also grace itself. Upon this ethical quality of Jesus, however, rests also the certainty of the conviction of its continuance. Jesus also lives on for us; if He looks upon us with gracious eye, so long must despair remain far from us.

John characterizes Jesus Christ as a *righteous* One, in order to set forth His qualification for being the Advocate with God. Only the righteous, the guiltless One, the One separated from sin, can be an Advocate for sinners with God; He alone can be the Mediator of salvation, and make good His friendship for us before God; because only such an One has access to God and fellowship with God (Heb. vii. 26; 1 Pet. iii. 18; John xvi. 8, 10). Such an One, however, can put in His intercessions only in an absolutely holy manner. On the other hand, His holiness and righteousness are a guarantee to us that His advocacy is well-pleasing to God. He can espouse the cause only of such as are in their inmost nature really separated

from sin. In that case they no longer belong to sin, however much sin still cleaves to them. God's process against sin is no longer directed against the man who is affected with sin; but in such a man there must be effected an objective and subjective separation from sin.

Ver. 2. John now explains in how far Christians really have in Jesus Christ the righteous an Advocate with God. In so far, viz., as He Himself is the propitiation for their sins, and therefore makes them pardonable. Stress is evidently laid upon the "Himself:" He in His own person. John emphasizes the fact that here, in Christ, the Advocate and the means of atonement upon which the advocacy is based meet in one Person—in this respect altogether different from the state of matters in the Old Testament (which is plainly glanced at here as a typical institute), where the interceding high priest and the means of atonement (the sin-offering) are distinct. "To propitiate" is in the usage of Scripture to bring about the *moral* possibility of fellowship on the part of God with something sinful—the possibility, viz., that God *notwithstanding His holiness*, and without violating it, should forgive the sinner his sins, and so let him once more enter into His fellowship (so also iv. 10). Here, therefore, propitiation is the means in virtue of which fellowship with sinful man is (morally) possible for the holy God, or in virtue of which the wrath of God against the sinner is done away with. Christ is represented here as this propitiation in respect of our sins in exactly the same way as it is said in Rom. iii. 25: God has openly set forth Christ in His blood as a means of atonement through faith (Heb. ix. 11–15, 23–26). Just as in the Old Testament propitiation is effected by means of a sin-offering, so in the New Testament this propitiation is effected by the sacrificial death of the Saviour; but "propitiation" is not on that account the same as "sin-offering." In the word "propitiation" in the passage we are considering there is not even an express reference to the death of Christ considered as an atoning death (as is evidently the case in Rom. iii. 25). For here it is the Saviour Himself, the whole Jesus Christ, and not merely an individual act done by Him (such as His death), that is represented as being the propitiation in respect of sins. In how far now is the Saviour in the sense indicated the propitiation in respect of sins? So far as, viz., in the *perfection* of His own ethical development (Heb. ii. 10, v. 8, 9), He is absolutely qualified to be the operative causality of a real complete abolition of sin in humanity. For without prejudice to His holiness God can enter into a positive fellowship with the sinner (by forgiving him his sins) only on the presupposition that the future abolition of sin in the latter (in the event of such an antecedent forgiveness) is securely guaranteed. Now, the surety for this is given by a Redeemer (Heb. vii. 22), *i.e.* by a Person who is absolutely qualified to bring about this abolition of his sin in the sinner, so far as the latter enters into a real living connection with Him, viz. by faith (which is for this very reason the only, but at the same time also the absolutely indispensable, condition of the forgiveness of sins). By His having sanctified Himself wholly, the Saviour has become the power adequate to expel sin entirely out of the world. John distinctly points us here to the fact, that our trust in Christ, even as regards our ever-recurring sins, rests upon the certainty of an already effected propitiation. Faith in the forgiveness of sins cannot be religiously and ethically innocuous, unless it is associated with faith in the propitiation.

"*But also in respect of the whole world.*" These words are meant to remove the misunderstanding that might be occasioned by the statement "in respect of our sins," as if the propitiation provided in Christ referred only to the sins of Christians. No doubt it is operative only for these; but in itself it refers to the totality of human sin. The "world" is, according to its idea, sinful as a whole, a mass of sin, and does not merely have individual sins attaching to it. Therefore the propitiation in Christ concerns the whole sinful world; but only they that believe in Christ have an Advocate in Him. The contrast which John makes between the "we" and the "whole world," is the contrast between Christians and non-Christians. Not only was it the Saviour's purpose to make a propitiation for the sin of the whole world, but the propitiation made by Him is sufficient for the sin of the whole world. There is thus no partiality shown to some in preference to others, which would again have cast a shadow upon the holiness of God. The Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, when held in all its stringency, inevitably involves the appearance of such a partiality. It is also of importance to notice how in this respect the interests of humanity and of the individual are inseparably connected. From the nature of the case it is impossible that there should be a propitiation for the sin of any one man, if it were not a propitiation for all. Even in this most intimate concern the individual is not to regard himself outside of his connection with the whole of his race. He can become blessed only so far as his race becomes blessed. Thereby the Christian becomes free from all egoism and from all religious sentimentality in respect of himself. He cannot desire a blessedness for himself alone. In working at his own salvation he is never to forget the interests of the salvation of the whole of humanity.

Dr. Forbes on the Authorship of Isaiah.

The Servant of the Lord in Isaiah xl.-lxvi. reclaimed to Isaiah as the Author, from Argument, Structure, and Date. By JOHN FORBES, D.D., LL.D., Emeritus Professor of Oriental Languages, Aberdeen. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1890.

AT the advanced age of eighty-seven, Dr. Forbes takes the field against the numerous and ever-increasing band of critics who hold the theory of a "Second Isaiah." His task is certainly arduous; many would pronounce it hopeless. Of this the author himself is well aware. He candidly admits that he does not expect to alter the opinion of those who have already come to an opposite conclusion, but he does cherish the hope that he may "convince younger scholars who approach the question without prepossession." Vigour of assault and defence, candour, and learning, all mark the execution of his purpose. While the general tone of the work is unexceptionable, it may be questioned whether Dr. Forbes has always done justice to the distinction between believing and unbelieving criticism. Is it not going a little too far to ascribe the current opinion as to the "Second Isaiah" simply to an unwillingness to admit that Cyrus could have been named so many years before his birth? Were this the only difficulty, it could easily be got rid of by the theory of an interpolation. It is far more difficult to explain how the whole scope and spirit of the prophecy and the view-point of the prophet are unexampled elsewhere in Scripture, if Isaiah was the author. Again, a whole school of critics will remain unmoved even if it can be shown that the book of Isaiah, as we now possess it, reveals the intention of forming a unity. Dr. Forbes, indeed, denies the freedom which Professors Robertson Smith and Cheyne allow to "*soferim*" and "*redactors*." Manifestly, if we grant that the present form of the prophetic Scriptures is due to the latter class, a large part of Dr. Forbes' reasoning is robbed of force. Specially does this apply to his argument from the alleged transposition of chapters 36 to 39. If indeed there be a transposition (which is extremely doubtful), what more natural than that it is due to a redactor who wished to bridge the gulf between the two parts of the work? Strong as the objection appears that so powerful a writer as the author of chapters 40–66 should be a "Great *Unnamed*," the supporters of this theory might fairly retort that we are met by a similar fact in regard to the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews. All the arguments in favour of the traditional view, that can be drawn from resemblance of expression, play upon names, etc., are adduced with much force and ingenuity in the work before us. In addition to the polemical element, we have a careful analysis of the prophecy and running comments upon it, all of which possess enduring value. The candour of the author, which tempers his general conservatism, is strikingly displayed in his treatment of the expression, "The Servant of Jehovah," as well as in his long appendix dealing with the Immanuel prophecy of chap. 7. To not a few this last will probably prove the most interesting part of the book. Dr. Forbes admits, what indeed it seems impossible to deny, that the child spoken of must have been born within a brief period after the prediction, if his birth and history were to be a sign to Ahaz. Immanuel, indeed, according to Dr. Forbes, was a son of Isaiah's own. At the same time, by the device of a typical reference, he contrives to conserve the Messianic character of the prophecy. For the identification of the Immanuel of chap. 7 with the Maher-shalal-hash-baz of chap. 8, he adduces arguments which deserve careful examination. Whatever view may be taken of the success of the special aim of this book, all careful students of prophecy will find in it much that will repay diligent perusal.

J. A. SELBIE.

The International Lessons.

PAPERS AND PRIZES.

REPORT FOR MAY.

Age under eighteen.

1. Marion Baird, Auchenheath Tile Work, Lesmahagow.

Age under thirteen.

1. Cecilia C. Gray, Free South Manse, Elgin.

2. Ernest James Pike, 23 Teviotdale Place, Stockbridge, Edinburgh.

Next in Order of Merit.—A. M., G. G. O., F. M., F. H., T. G.

EXAMINATION ON THE LESSONS FOR MAY.

(Answers must be received by the Editor, Kinneff, Bervie, N.B., not later than June 12.)

Age under eighteen.

1. Explain: "Trouble not the Master;" "She is not dead."

2. What was the purpose of the Lord's Transfiguration as regards the disciples?

3. What were the instructions given to the Seventy?

Age under thirteen.

1. Tell in your own words how Jesus raised Jairus' daughter.

2. Explain the words: Tabernacles, Fragments, Decease.

3. Our Lord sent out Seventy disciples, besides the Twelve. What were they to do?