

through every member of the tribe. The Covenant takes up that element into itself and transfigures it. Perhaps the average Israelite was all his life content with a covenant of give and take; so much religious service for so much outward prosperity. Perhaps a few thinkers reached independently the higher conception of a prosperity that included the loss of all things, and of a service that expressed itself best in a broken spirit and a contrite heart. But only a religious genius (forgive the modern word) like Isaiah, could reach the sublimity of an innocent man taking upon him the calamities of other men, and even (marvel of marvels) actually carrying their sin. But that also was due to the Covenant. It was a natural, and with God to guide, an inevitable outcome of the engagement into which Israel entered with Jehovah, that day they said 'We are witnesses.'

Is there a still greater thing that can come out of it? Not on the part of Israel. Israel has exhausted the possibilities of the Covenant on the human side when it has found a man of whom it can say, 'Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.' But on the part of God there is. St. Paul puts it into words, 'God made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us.' To be sin—it is not that. Isaiah discovered that. Who knew no sin—it is that. Even Job who held fast by his integrity, in face of the calamity which had swept over his house, never claimed to be, or hoped to find in this world, one who knew no sin. God found Him. God sent Him to give His life a ransom for many. In His unspeakable gift God made known what had been His purpose when He made a Covenant with Israel, and said, 'I will be your God.'

The Tests of Life.¹

BY PRINCIPAL THE REV. J. IVERACH, D.D., ABERDEEN.

THE Kerr Lectures have won for themselves a position second to none, among the lectures of our country. From the first lecture by Dr. Orr down to the latest by Mr. Law, the Kerr Lectures have reached a high level, and have taken their place among the books which must be read by students. The former series were philosophical or theological, or dealt with subjects on the borderland of both. Mr. Law has made a new departure. He has made a book of Scripture the subject of his lectures, and as he has treated it, he has made a wise choice. From whatever point of view we regard these lectures they are admirable. If the reader desires an exegetical study of the First Epistle of St. John, Mr. Law gives him in the exegetical notes at the end of the volume a series of studies in which the wealth of modern learning is exhausted, and the exact meaning of words and phrases is set forth with a fulness and vividness

which leaves nothing to be desired. Does the student desire to know what can be said regarding topics belonging to Introduction proper, then his desire is amply gratified in the chapters given to that discussion. Authorship, date, readers, and so on are discussed with ample learning, historical knowledge, and critical judgment. Is he interested in theology? in the elucidation of special ideas peculiar to, characteristic of the Epistle? or in the concatenation of these ideas, then the main part of the volume is given to the satisfaction of that desire.

There are other features of interest in this admirable volume. There is the wide learning which has taken note of all the relevant literature which has clustered around this Epistle, throughout the ages. There is no parade of learning, no ostentation in the reference to books, but a student can see behind every paragraph the wide reading and the anxious pondering of a man who has resolved to leave nothing unransacked which could help him in his arduous task. Best of all the author has not allowed the material

¹ *The Tests of Life.* A Study of the First Epistle of St. John. Being the Kerr Lecture for 1909. By the Rev. Robert Law, B.D., Minister of Lauriston Place Church, Edinburgh. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. 7s. 6d. net.

gathered round the Epistle to come between him and the Epistle itself. He wears his learning lightly, he is determined to come into direct contact with the Epistle itself. There are signs that he has brooded over the Epistle, given his days and nights to it, until it has become, as it were, part of himself, and what he sends forth to his readers has become a vital part of his own experience. He has lived in the Epistle, and he speaks forth what his own life has won. We do not know anything better even on this Epistle, and when we write so we remember Rothe, Candlish, and the wondrous work of Dr. Watson of Largs, along with such commentaries as those of Westcott, Haupt, and the luminous recently published work of Dr. Findlay. These Lectures occupy a distinguished place in the literature of the Epistle, and will keep that place for a lengthened period.

As to the Lectures themselves we wish we had a larger place to note the various features of them which would justify a lengthened notice. There is the analysis of the Epistle, which deserves commendation for its thoroughness, its lucidity, and its exhaustiveness. It takes full account of everything, and neglects nothing in the Epistle. It takes full account of the peculiarities of thought and diction of the sacred writer, and traces the connexion of thought and feeling in a way which is persuasive and convincing. The opening chapter, called Style and Structure, is too condensed to suffer further condensation at our hands. But the condensation has not interfered with lucidity. One of the most admirable features of the book is the absolute clearness of the style, and the admirable lucidity of the arrangement. The remarks on style and structure are full of learning and insight, and prepare the way for the exposition which follows. We find that this chapter is a real help towards a right understanding of the Epistle. Exact historical knowledge appears in the chapter on the Polemical Aim of the Epistle. This chapter tests the historical knowledge of the author. For it supplies a test as to his insight into the conditions of the time in which the Epistle has been written. Does he know, can he appreciate the various forces at work in that seething and creative time in which the Epistle was written? Can he measure them? Estimate their value and their influence? What has he to say about Græco-Roman culture, about other influences at work at that time when all the separate streams of ancient

civilization met in the unity of the Roman Empire? One finds that here, too, Mr. Law has worked and thought to purpose, and the chapter is luminous and instructive.

Equally good is the chapter on The Writer. Since the rise of historical criticism this has been a bone of contention. It has been keenly contested, and the contest still goes merrily on. Some have, indeed, ceased to discuss it, and calmly take for granted that the Johannine writings are the product of an Ephesian school at the beginning of the second century. Others contend that the Apostle John was the writer. Into the contest we do not enter. But we say that the readers of this volume will find themselves in the hand of one who has read, thought, meditated on the question, and has come to conclusions which he can defend on reasoned grounds. He has put much in a few pages. His reasons and conclusions will be found in the book itself, and readers will find them satisfactory. But the main strength of the author has been directed towards the elucidation of the doctrines and the teaching of the Epistle, and in this attempt he has been singularly successful. It will be well to give the names of the topics which he successively discusses. The doctrine of God as life and light, the doctrine of God as righteousness and love, the doctrine of Christ, the witnesses to the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of sin and the world, the doctrine of propitiation, eternal life, the test of righteousness, the test of love, the test of belief, the doctrine of assurance, the growth of Christian experience, eschatology, and finally the relation of the Epistle to the Fourth Gospel. In connexion with some of these topics, there are some additional notes, dealing with difficulties which seemed to the writer to need further elucidation.

While particular paragraphs form the starting-point of his expositions, and are dealt with in some fulness, yet the plan of the writer is not to give us a continuous commentary on successive sections of the Epistle. His plan is to take a particular topic, *e.g.* the doctrine of God as Life and Light, and to trace that doctrine through the whole Epistle. He notes the broad and general statement in which the doctrine is first expressed in the Epistle, and then follows it throughout the Epistle, noting its development, its varying uses and applications and qualifications, until the whole doctrine as it stood before the mind of the Apostle

is fully and clearly stated. The method has its advantages; it also has its drawbacks. If, on the one hand, it enables the author to trace the main thought through all its spiral ascents, and into all its relations with other conceptions, it sometimes hinders him from doing full justice to the thought in itself, and in its majestic entrance into the Epistle.

To pass from that, we notice as worthy of the reader's attention the masterly discussion on the theme God is Light. What is the meaning of the term? Mr. Law asks, does it refer to Essence or to Revelation? He had shown that light is used in the Scriptures in both meanings, and then he continues: 'For the interpretation of the Epistle, it is of some importance to determine with which of these ideas, essence or revelation, St. John's conception of the Divine Light comes into line. In my judgment it is with the latter. That God is light expresses the self-revelation of God: First, as a necessity that belongs to His moral nature; secondly, as the source of all moral illumination. But while maintaining this interpretation, I must admit that the exegetical authorities, almost with one voice, declare for the opposite view, namely, the Light here denotes the essential Being of God. "It is the innermost, all-comprehending essence of God, from which all His attributes proceed" (Haupt); "Absolute Holiness and Truth" (Huther); "The Absolute Holiness of God, especially as love" (Rothe); "the new idea of God as unconditional Goodness, holy Love" (Beyschlag); "the love which constitutes the essence of God" (Grill).

'To this whole class of interpretations there is only one objection—a serious one, however—that they are irrelevant to the context' (pp. 58-59). Mr. Law is not daunted with the weight of authority against his view, in fact this independence of judgment, and fearlessness of the weight of authority against him when he believes he is right, is one of the noteworthy things in the book. It seems to me that he is right in his interpretation, and we recommend his readers to follow him in his detailed justification of his view. Support might be had for his view from the great American divine, Jonathan Edwards, to whom Self-Communication was the essential characteristic of God. Perhaps a better word than self-revelation to express what Mr. Law means would be the word used by Edwards, namely, that of Self-Communica-

tion. It is something more than self-revelation, or rather self-revelation is a step towards the self-communication of God, which may be looked at as the goal of all the activity of God. It is not possible for us to follow into detail the luminous exposition of this thesis, God is Light, but we commend it to the careful study of our readers.

The other discussions are also worthy of the deepest study. We invite special attention to the Excursus on the Correlation of Righteousness and Love, appended to the chapter on the Doctrine of God as Righteousness and Love. We call attention to this excursus as it reveals in Mr. Law qualities which throughout are rather kept in the background. In the main parts of his book he is expository, he is Biblical, and theological so far as regards the particular theology of this book of Scripture. In this excursus he reveals himself as a thinker and a theologian of no mean order. The excursus manifests such qualities and such possibilities, that we look forward to just such work as is here as the main contribution which Mr. Law is fitted to make to modern theology. If every age has to write its own theology, we look to Mr. Law to take a prominent share in the rewriting of theology for the immediate future.

There are many topics which invite notice and discussion. We might have noted the admirable chapter on the Doctrine of Christ, and the worthy discussion on the Doctrine of Propitiation. But we may not linger on these, but we lay particular stress on the chapter on The Growth of Christian Experience, which is valuable in itself, and noteworthy as a contribution to the theology of St. John. The concluding paragraph we quote: 'To take as starting-point the gift of God in Christ, the forgiveness of sins and the knowledge of the Father, then to advance, with this as our strength and the Word of God as our weapon, to faithful and victorious warfare; finally through this, to arrive at the sure perception of the Everlasting, in union with Whom our human life and its results become an eternal and blessed reality,—such is the curriculum which St. John here maps out for human experience. It is well to remember the alternative to this—the experience which teaches with equal intensity the illusiveness of all good; which writes "vanity of vanities" upon the life of man and all with which it is concerned; which proclaims, as the sum and end of all wisdom, that "The world passes away

and the lust thereof," because it has not "known Him that is from the Beginning," nor that "whosoever doeth His will abideth for ever."

Lastly, there is the masterly chapter on Eschatology, on which we should like to linger. All we can do in this relation is to quote: 'Even of this body of flesh and blood the soul is, in wonderful measure, the sculptor. Faces are made pure by purity of heart. Strength and nobility sit upon the countenance, when high resolve and heroic endeavour fill the mind. There is a calmness of feature which is an index to peace in the soul; a dignity and beauty which patient suffering alone gives; and when some strong tide of the spirit is sweeping through a man's heart, it alters the fashion of his countenance, causes his very form and figure to dilate, and makes the weakest like an angel of God. These facts, so far as they go are a prophecy, and, indeed, a beginning of that final transfiguration by which Christ "shall fashion the body of our humiliation into the likeness of the body of His glory." The very idea of a spiritual body is that it perfectly represents the character to which it belongs. As the material body is strong or weak, comely or uncomely, according to

the animal vitality, so is the spiritual body according to the spiritual vitality that animates it. The outward man will take the mould of the inward man, and will share with it in its perfected likeness to the glorified manhood of Jesus Christ.'

It is significant of the spiritual life of to-day, that the writings of St. John are gathering to themselves more and more of the study and devotion of our time. Is it too much to say that the theology of the present is becoming more and more Johannine? We remember how Principal Rainy in his later years dwelt with increasing devotion on the writings of St. John. His thought and his life were passing more and more under the thought and life depicted in the Johannine writings. Twice from the Moderator's Chair, once in the Union Assembly, and once when he was Moderator during the time of stress and strain, he quoted as his highest word to the Assemblies the concluding verses of this first Epistle of St. John: 'We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and Eternal Life.'

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF REVELATION.

REVELATION I. 10.

'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.'

THE SITUATION.

St. John is about to tell how he received the messages for the Seven Churches in Asia. He mentions the place, the condition, and the time, bringing them close together by the use of the same preposition. He was in (*ἐν*) the isle that is called Patmos—that is the place. He was in (*ἐν*) the Spirit—that is the state or condition. And it was on (*ἐν*) the Lord's day—that is the time. We have to do with the state and the time.

THE LANGUAGE.

1. *I was.* The verb he uses is not the verb to be (*εἶναι*), but the verb to become (*γενέσθαι*). We cannot easily express it in English. If it were

an event we could say 'it came to pass that.' But as it is a person, we can only use a phrase like 'came to be' or 'found myself in'; or else simply say 'was,' leaving the distinction unexpressed.

Does the past tense mean that he was no longer in Patmos? Not necessarily, but probably it does.

2. *In the Spirit.* To be 'in the Spirit' (with *εἶναι*) is the normal state of the regenerate man, just as to be 'in the flesh' is the state of the unregenerate (Ro 8⁹). But here (with *γενέσθαι*) it is a higher state than the normal, the state of the prophet, under special inspiration, for some special purpose. There are, indeed, four states to be distinguished. First, two of the unregenerate man, his normal state of being in the flesh (Ro 8⁹), and his abnormal of being possessed with an unclean spirit (*ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ*, Mk 1²⁸). Second, two of the regenerate man, his normal