

thus foretold the glories of the Millennium: 'Vines would then grow, each with 10,000 branches, every branch with 10,000 bunches, every bunch with 10,000 grapes, and every grape so large that when pressed it would yield 1000 litres of wine. The corn should match them: from every seed 10,000 stalks should grow, every stalk should have 10,000 ears, and every ear yield 10 pounds of pure flour.' And not only this, which was certainly not meant to be symbolical, like some well-known passages in our Gospels; but he also says of Judas the betrayer, that his body swelled so much that he could no longer pass through a door wide enough for a waggon; he could not even put his head through; and his eyes lay so deep that he could neither see with them himself, nor could a doctor see them through a tube. Now we know that, of the death of Judas, Matthew and Luke have different accounts, and the latter's account is not very clear; but if we had not his story, we should not stumble at that given by Matthew, nor should we stumble at Luke's without Matthew's, except for its want of

clearness. Compare this with the story of Papias. The difference is enormous. The Church historian Eusebius says of Papias, that his understanding was small, and that he was ready to accept all that any impostor fabricated. The Talmud contains a great many similar stories, with still more unmeasured lies. Rabbi So-and-so saw a frog in the desert, which was as large as a village with sixty houses; then he saw a snake which swallowed this frog; then a bird that swallowed the snake, and then flew up on a tree. Now you may imagine, he concludes, how large this tree must have been! The Gospels, in spite of their Oriental origin, have none of these truly Oriental features. They must therefore be received in a very different way from the usual Oriental stories. For that matter, even Papias deserves ordinary confidence when he relates anything from his personal experience; for he is only accused of stupidity, not of falsehood. But the authors of the Gospels cannot be charged with stupidity, which would have been impossible to deny had it existed.

The Best Books of 1906.

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IF I am asked to say, which seem to me the best books of 1906, I reply with a full knowledge of the limitations under which I labour. It is possible that I may not have heard of, it is certain that I have not seen, all the books of the year. For one of the difficulties of our time is, that the broad stream of current literature, which once flowed between recognizable banks, is now, like the Euphrates of prophecy, smitten into many minor streams, and it is given to few literary navigators to trace all the channels in the course of the year. A writer, unless he be a novelist like Miss Corelli, or a theologian like Mr. Campbell, appeals only to a section of the public; and while a reader may know some or many of the books which come down his channel of the divided stream, he may very likely know nothing at all of equally good works which come down the other channels. I fear this divided stream is not very favourable for the production of good books. We have no Ruskin, or Carlyle, or Tennyson, or George Eliot to whom

every one listens; we only have writers who in their own coteries are placed higher than these authors, while outside their coteries they have no place at all. I give my opinion, therefore, very modestly, and shall not be offended if some one else says that my authors are unknown and their books are unread, while I have ignored the great writers and the literary masterpieces of 1906. But of the books which I was able to read in the year three stand out as pre-eminent and valuable, marked for re-perusal and future study. First, there was Mr. Stanyon's translation of Herrmann's *Der Verkehr des Christen mit Gott*. I had not read the original, though the translation has driven me to it. The book is a landmark in one's study and in one's life. I am not asked to criticize or review the books which I mention. But the effect of this book on my mind is this: It shows how a man in these difficult times, confronted by science and criticism, can find a Christian faith and a Christian life, to which neither science nor criticism can

object. If my faith in Christ is something more than Herrmann's, if the mysticism which he condemns is to me the breath of life, if his severe adhesion to the historic Jesus, and obstinate clinging to the fact, without the fascinating metaphysics of the person and the work of Jesus, leaves me a little starved and chastened; all the same I recognize the value of this self-denying *askesis*, and I cannot but hope that many sober, matter-of-fact minds will be led into communion with God by this way of history and experience, when they cannot understand the airy voices, and the appeals of transcendental movements in the spiritual world.

My second book was the Rev. W. L. Walker's *Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism*. I suppose Mr. Walker chose the title on the same principle that Mrs. Eddy puts a prohibitive price on *Science and Health*.

Odi profanum vulgus, et arceo;
Favete linguis, carmina non prius
Audita, musarum sacerdos
Virginibus puerisque canto.

Unfortunately, the young men and maidens who might profit by the book are warded off only too effectually by the title. If he had (in harmony with the refined taste of our time) called his book *Haeckel heckled, or the Biter Bit*, he would have had abundance of readers. But for my part I love a man who throws at me a lumbering title,

describing exactly what the book is, saying plainly, 'I mean business; if you do not, you need not read me.'

But what a noble apologetic this book is, what a fine blend of the Old Theology and the New! When the book gets into our pulpits and is discussed by the young men of our senior classes, it will be known that we have had a prophet among us.

I will mention only one more book. It is Professor Gwatkin's *Knowledge of God*. It is not comparable with the other two. It is not a book wrought out of the soul's experience and written with the pen of fire. It would hardly bring a soul to Christ, or convey the knowledge of God, of which it speaks. But it is a fine piece of work, a monument of Cambridge scholarship, an armoury for the preacher. It would be a pleasure to me to meet Professor Gwatkin and thank him. As for Herrmann and Walker, I am content to meet God, and thank *Him*.

Certainly we cannot charge an age, which in one year produces three such books, with spiritual deadness or lethargy. If they do not live for future ages, it is only because the output of books is now so vast, the bosom of the waters is so crowded with craft, that they jostle and sink each other. But for our time these men speak, and happy are they who hear!

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF ST. LUKE.

LUKE X. 18.

'And he said unto them, I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven.—R.V.

EXPOSITION.

'And he said unto them.'—To the seventy missionaries who had returned to Jesus with delight that they had power even over demons.—ADENEY.

'I beheld Satan.'—The verb is in the imperfect, meaning 'I was beholding,' *i.e.* during the course of this successful mission. The tense of the verb pointing thus to a continuous beholding, as well as the context, forbids the idea that this is a reference to Christ's sight of the original fall of Satan in his pre-existent state. The triumph of the gospel of the kingdom is in itself the fall of Satan.—ADENEY.

At the very time when His ministers were casting out Satan's ministers,—nay, even as He was sending them forth to their work,—Jesus knew that Satan was being overcome. In the defeat of the demons He saw the downfall of their chief. This passage is, again, conclusive evidence as to Christ's teaching respecting the existence of a personal power of evil. Compare 8¹² 13¹⁶ 22²¹. In all these cases it would have been quite natural to speak of impersonal evil.—PLUMMER.

'As lightning.'—The precise point of the comparison has been variously conceived: momentary brightness, quick, sudden movement, inevitableness of the descent—down it must come to the earth, etc.—BRUCE.

'From heaven.'—This seems to be figurative, implying the pride and height of Satan's power.—KIDDLE.

'Fallen.'—Last with emphasis. The 'fallen' of R.V. is no improvement on the 'fall' of A.V. 'I beheld Satan