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far as 'to indicate some of the problems upon which this letter may be expected to throw some light,' and to address it directly to members of the Student Movement. Mr. Micklem thinks that the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians is but little read in these days. His book on it will be read. And then the Epistle.

The Life of *Joseph Gundry Alexander* has been written by his son Horace G. Alexander (Swarthmore Press; 7s. 6d. net). There were no letters or diaries of any importance, so it is a short biography by the biographer's own hand. The man is easily understood and inevitably esteemed. A Quaker, he gave himself chiefly to the suppression of the opium trade and to peace. The story of the efforts made by him and his friends to induce the Government to deal with the opium traffic is at once humiliating and exalting. He lived to see one blow, and a big one, struck for righteousness. When Campbell-Bannerman's Government accepted the resolution in May 1906 'that this House re-affirms its conviction that the Indo-Chinese Opium Trade is morally indefensible, and requests His Majesty's Government to take such steps as may be necessary for bringing it to a speedy close . . . "the happy band of pilgrims"—J. G. Alexander amongst them—who had fought so long to reach the goal now in sight, linked each other's arms and marched down from the lobby to the street singing the doxology.'

But the War was an unbearable calamity. He was a pacifist and encouraged pacifists. He died on the 26th of February in 1918. 'His seventy years had been lived to the full, and those who met to commemorate the completion of his life on earth could readily echo the words, "Servant of God, well done."'

For the moment both Christian Science and Theosophy are suffering eclipse, so popular is the third of these modern substitutes for religion, Spiritualism. But Spiritualism will disappear, and then the itching ear will be ready for the Theosophist or the Christian Scientist again. We had better be ready also. And to be able to defeat the pretensions of the Christian Scientist, we could not do better than read now *The Truth about Christian Science*, a searching, impartial, unanswerable book, written by Mr. James H. Snowden (Philadelphia: Westminster Press; \$2.40 net). Mr. Snowden has experienced the weariness, almost nausea, of working through the 'Bible' of Christian Science, Mrs. Eddy's *Science and Health*, just as every other person has experienced it. But he has persevered to the unprofitable end. He has read all Mrs. Eddy's books, and all the literature worth reading by other Christian Scientists. He has a scholar's training and a well-balanced judgment. He is singularly free from prejudice. And he can write clearly if not emotionally. Moreover, the book is large enough to cover the whole ground. No other is necessary.

Signum Contradictionis.

BY THE REVEREND F. W. FULFORD, B.D., CAMBRIDGE.

THE 'Nunc Dimittis' of Symeon gives us the far distances and the King in His beauty. The address to the Virgin which follows shows the narrow gate through which faith must pass before these joys are attained. It indicates the preliminary test. It reveals the glory of Israel as also dividing Israel. It represents the supreme Sign of God's Love and Presence as subject to gainsaying. Division is indeed its master thought.

And this division of men is part of the purpose of God and of the commission of Jesus Christ.

καίτοι εἰς . . . 'He is appointed for' that work. The words may seem harsh, but Christianity is such a great religion, with privileges and promises so magnificent that admission cannot be indiscriminate. The test is whether one is willing to recognize the visitation and love of God in a questionable form—in One who is a sign.

A sign is something or somebody that arrests attention—something or somebody by means of which or whom something else may be known indirectly. It cannot be judged by the appear-

ance, but only by faith. A five-pound note sent as a birthday present to a small child is a sign of greater love than a box of chocolates, but it has to be accepted as such on the word of some older person. It cannot be judged according to the appearance, nor does it to him speak plainly.

So Christ is a sign—of the love and presence and visitation of God in a questionable form. He must not be judged according to the appearance. The sign of the fulfilment of all Israel's hopes was just a babe. 'This shall be the sign unto you: ye shall find a babe,' looking quite ordinary, or remarkable only for the poverty of its surroundings. And later in the earthly life, Christ may have fulfilled the Scriptures, but did not fulfil the expectations of Israel. He was in fact a puzzle. Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, even suggests the parallel of one who, before entering on the full life of marriage with his beloved, makes himself strange to her in order to test her faith in his love.

For a sign, if it is to be such indeed, cannot make itself plain. It was thus only at times when appearances were against them that our Lord made lofty claims. It was when they took up stones again that He said, 'I and the Father are one.' It was after He had carefully recited how upset in Him were the saint, the average man, and the specially favoured that He claimed to have unique knowledge of the Father, and invited all to come unto Himself. It was before the Sanhedrin, when He stood alone, that He swore to being the Christ, the Son of the Blessed. So in the parables He spoke, but not plainly; in that of the Wicked Husbandmen, *e.g.*, hinting at rather than stating His Divine Sonship. He compares Himself to Jonah, who was a sign to the Ninevites—a stranger from a far country, speaking a language scarcely understood, and proclaiming an immediate end that did not come.

A more minute study of each of the four sentences that make up the prophecy of Symeon and of the fulfilment of each in history will make plainer, that to test men's willingness to make the venture of faith is a preliminary purpose of the religion of the Incarnation:

(1) *κείται εις πτωσιν και αναστασιν πολλων* ('He is appointed for the fall and the raising up of many'). It may be said that the word *αναστασις* means, as often in classical Greek, 'destruction.'

This meaning is, however, hardly established in Hellenistic, though it would fit more closely the sustained sternness of Is 8¹⁵. At any rate, the 'fall' is mentioned first, and the whole emphasis of the prophecy is on the darker side of truth, on denials and pain of doubt and inward disputings. Nor can we say that it is the same people who fall and afterwards rise again. The whole idea of the passage is separation, and the prophecy is fulfilled in Judas and Caiaphas or Mary of Bethany and the ministering women, rather than in St. Peter, whom we see offended and then restored.

(2) *σημειον αντιλεγόμενον*. That Christ was 'subject to gainsaying' is a fact that needs no proving. We overhear the words of the wranglings of men chiefly in St. John: in the Synoptists we read constantly that men were 'offended' in Christ, but often spared the actual blasphemies. The best translation of *σκανδαλίζειν* is our familiar 'upset,' and it was the constant experience of Jesus Christ to have people upset over His claims, or teaching. And it was bound to be so because, in respect for human freedom, our Lord would not cease to be a sign, would not throw off the incognito to enforce belief.

(3) *ρομφαία*. In a famous saying, our Lord declares that He came not to send peace, but a sword. He came to divide men, to spoil the unity of home-life, because the relation of souls to Himself and to His words is all-important. There the word for 'sword' is *μάχαιρα*, and it has been thought that *ρομφαία* stands for destruction, only *μάχαιρα* for division. But may we not say that in Rev 1¹⁶, where Christ is pictured with a sharp two-edged sword (*ρομφαία*) going out of His mouth, we have represented the power of His words to divide men? Certainly here it is the conflict between appearances and the truth revealed to her that is to make the soul of the Virgin a kingdom divided against itself. She was to need, just as much as St. John the Baptist, the distinctively Christian Benediction, 'Blessed is he who-soever shall not be offended in me.'

(4) And all is 'that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.' The earthly life of the Incarnate was thus a stiff examination for those contemporary with it, in which very few were successful. By the test of being a sign, Christ sifted and thinned the ranks of His followers, and the Majesty of God was protected from the merely selfish or casual. It has indeed been said that the penitent

thief was the only contemporary Christian, the only one who had the grace not to judge according to the appearance.

It is widely believed, no doubt, that this prophecy of Symeon was of more importance for the mother of our Lord than for us, that it is interesting historically rather than as giving the key to the narrow gate through which we pass to the beauty and joy of Christianity. But if Christ is indeed the door by whom 'if any man enter in, he shall be saved,' then these two verses are really the key to the profitable reading of the New Testament. The Gospels, in which the contemporary situation is portrayed in all its difficulty, come before the Epistles as a warning voice.

Each has first to throw himself back into that situation and ask what he would have thought and done, in order to be ready for any testing crisis, in which facts seem to clash with expectations and presuppositions. We try for the sake of numbers to make Christianity easy for the intellect, and to think that we do God service. But anything distinctively Christian, whether in dogmatics or ethics, whether Church or Bible, is knowable as such by the fact that it can be spoken against with a fair show of reason. And we prepare ourselves for that truth by 'going back to Christ.' And 'going back to Christ' means making ourselves His contemporaries, in order that rightly we may make Him ours.

In the Study.

Virginitus Puerisque.

Amen.

'Amen.'—Rev 22²¹.

THIS is one of the words you hear most frequently in church. It comes at the end of the hymns and prayers, and sometimes the minister says it at the end of his sermon. Did you ever stop to think what the word meant? It is not just a sign that we may open our eyes and raise our heads if we have been praying, or sit down if we have been singing. The word has been put there for a purpose. It means that we really mean and believe all that we have been praying or singing, that we are in earnest.

'Amen' is a very old word. Originally it was an adjective and meant firm, true, steadfast. It was in use in very early times among the Hebrews. When they wished to give their assent to any very solemn statement or command they answered 'Amen.' You remember when King David was dying he sent for Zadok the high priest and Nathan the prophet and Benaiah, captain of his bodyguard, and told them that he wished Solomon to be made king in his stead. Then he gave orders that these three men were to bring Solomon down to Gihon and there crown him king. And Benaiah answered, 'Amen: the Lord God of my lord the king say so too.' That just meant 'Yea, verily, may the God of David grant that this may be so.'

But Benaiah didn't stop at saying 'Amen.' That 'Amen' meant that he had pledged his word to carry out the king's commands. And not only did he carry them out to the letter, but afterwards he stood by Solomon to defend and deliver him from his enemies.

In later times the word 'Amen' was taken into the worship of the Jewish synagogues. It was used by the congregation as a solemn response to the prayers or hymns of praise of the minister. By answering 'Amen,' they made, as it were, all that the minister had said their own, just as if they had prayed the prayers or sung the hymns themselves. Then from the synagogue it was taken into the worship of the Early Christian Church, and so we have it in our church worship to-day.

Do you know that this word 'Amen' was a very frequent word on the lips of Jesus? Unfortunately the men who translated our Bible have tried to turn it into English. When Jesus was about to say something very solemn or very, very important, something that He wanted to assure His hearers was very true, He began by saying, 'Verily, I say unto you.' If you had a Greek New Testament you would see that the word translated 'verily' is just 'Amen.' And when Jesus said, 'Amen, I say unto you,' He meant that because He said it they could count on its being true.

There was once a small boy who was trying to