

Not As I Am.

Not as I am, but with this plea,
That I might more like Jesus be,
And follow Him who died for me:
O Lamb of God, I come!

Not as I am, O heart of mine,
While walking in the light divine,
With life becoming more like Thine:
O Lamb of God, I come!

Not as I am—not tossed about,
But rising over sin and doubt;
No foes within, no fears without:
O Lamb of God, I come!

Not as I am, but free from fear,
"With peaceful visions calm and clear
Foretastes of heaven drawing near:
O Lamb of God, I come!

The Christian Religion.

We have received a letter from a young man who asks us to answer the following questions as briefly and as clearly as possible:

1. What is the Christian religion?
2. What reasons are there for believing in it?

He says he has listened to many sermons, but has not been able to obtain from them satisfactory answers to these questions.

Then we fear we cannot satisfy him, for the demand is a pretty serious one. It is to teach young men how to answer these questions that our theological seminaries give them three years' instruction, and then often fail of the object. How can they be answered in a paragraph or two?

And yet simple and ignorant people can know and tell what Christianity is and why they believe in it. We will try, praying that the Divine Spirit will help us, and will help this young man and others like him to profit by our answer.

If you want to know what the Christian religion is, read carefully the Four Gospels. Even one of them will be enough. As you read it and carefully attend to the teachings of Jesus Christ, see how you like them. Do they seem to you good, worthy? What do you think of his character? It is a pity to ask us what Christianity is when you have a Testament in your satchel, or can get one easier than you can the Independent. Next Sunday you need not go to church, to listen to a sermon; but stay at home, and at a single sitting read Matthew. If you then do not quite understand what Christianity is, read John through at another sitting. It is no larger than a dime novel. Do not fail to do this. And, as you read, pass judgment on the teachings of Jesus. Do they please you? Do you like that character? Do you love the man who has thus lived for others and died for others?

Perhaps you will find out—but do not take our word for it—that Christianity is something like this. It is a religion which teaches that God sent his peculiar and special Son Jesus Christ into the world to teach men how to be good, and sweet, and loving, and helpful, and brave; that Jesus Christ taught the best teaching that man ever heard; that he performed miracles of love; and that he died a cruel death and rose again on the third day; that through him pardon and forgiveness and Heaven are offered to all that are sorry for their sins, and love him and try to imitate him in living lives devoted not to their own selfish aims, but to the honor of God and the good of men. You will find perhaps, that the life required by the Christian religion is a life in which you will have to resolve and labor, not in form and pretense, but really, to make everybody as happy and good as you can, and to keep yourself as true and pure as was the Son of God.

But you want to know "what reasons there are for believing in it." Very good. That is proper. But, first, how do you like it? What do you think of its requirements on you? Are they proper and sensible? Is it not well that you should crush your own selfishness in the determination that you will henceforth live for the world, which is many, and not for yourself, who are but one? If this does seem to you something noble, beautiful, begin with this first; no matter whether the Christianity that teaches it to you is true or not. Begin with this, which carries its own reason and does not need to be argued to you. An infidel could tell you that.

Now, have you done it? Have you made that fateful resolve? Then we thank God, and proceed to the next step.

Is it not something of an evidence or the truth of Christianity that it has such noble teaching of self-devotion and duty? Not another religion on the face of the earth has such a beautiful doctrine of duty, and not one has begun to have such an influence to promote goodness as the Christian religion. Its ministers are preaching it all the time, even when they do not practice it. That love and life of

K. D. C. the Great Spring remedy.

Christ are being held up to the world as the model of human life, and its influence is advancing, and seems likely to advance until it shall put an end to wars and wrong. Is it not a presumption in favor of a religion that it is the chief influence which is promoting this unselfishness which you are adopting?

Another reason for your believing in the Christian religion is that it is generally believed in by intelligent men. If you do not believe in it, you must give a reason why. You must satisfy yourself pretty positively that it is not true. One part of it you cannot help believing to be true. If you have a right moral nature, you have already accepted as your own, its precepts for the conduct of your life. All you can doubt is the less important part, the history about Christ. But have you got a good reason for disbelieving that? Try to think what your reason is, whether it is enough to make you reject the general agreement of intelligent and excellent men all over the civilized world. That common consent to a religion which is so good, which teaches as no other religion teaches, is an argument for believing in it that you cannot easily meet.

Then for further reason read the story again. It is true beyond question that Jesus lived; that his disciples lived; that they wrote the other books in the Bible; that the story in Acts is substantially true. There is a direct, unbroken chain of writers from Matthew and Paul down through the early ages of the Church, who have brought us this story of Christ. They believed it beyond question who walked and talked with Jesus. What reason is there for disbelieving these witnesses that would not bear against the historians of the War of the Rebellion? Read what they have to say. We will trust you with the record. Why should it be false?

That is all. That is enough. If Christianity appear good to you, if you like it after reading about it, we are not concerned with any fear that you will not see reasons in itself and in its record in your Testament to believe in it.—Independent.

The Sin of Swearing.

When Dr. Scudder was traveling on a certain steamer in the west, his ears were pained with profanity. He called up the offender and pointing to his son, said: "That boy was born and brought up among heathens. He has seen men worshipping idols all their days. But he never heard an oath before." In view of such testimony, it will not do to call the habit a heathenish one. It certainly is not Christian. A physician threw his Bible away in petulance. "We are not Christians, or the Bible is wrong. We swear too much or else Christ forbids too much." Which is it?

Men are tempted to most sins by some apparent or temporary advantage. If one lies it is to escape some punishment, or gain advantage. If one drinks wine he feels a certain exhilaration for a time. A thief gets possession of property for which he has not given an equivalent. But the blasphemer gets no return. He commits his crime and gets nothing for it. He is like the fish that bites the bare hook. He is too big a fool for any use.

It is not the sign of a gentleman. Polite and well-bred people do not swear. It is a vulgar and indecent style of conversation. During the Revolutionary war, Gen. Washington issued orders in which he expressed his desire that the officers might lend their example and influence to extinguish profanity. "There is little hope of the blessing of Heaven upon our arms," he wrote, "if we insult it by our impiety and folly. Added to this it is a vice so mean and low, without any temptation, that every man of sense and character despises it."

There is a great deal of ejaculation that approaches irreverent language. Some very good people do not reverently use God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word and works. When such people are surprised at something they say "Mercy!" You wonder why they are praying for mercy. It would be as well not to say what we do not mean.

Cursing is hateful. It would scarcely seem conceivable that a man would pray God to damn his own soul to everlasting punishment. Surely no creature would invoke the Almighty to separate him from the heavenly being, condemn him to the society of the ungodly and wicked, and doom him to an environment that would entail eternal temptation, cut him off from the help of the Holy Spirit, quench all possibility of penitence, and put him in lasting misery. But more men are praying the prayers of damnation than those of salvation. Who shall say how many of them are answered. Irreverence is a fatal fault.

For immediate relief after eating use K. D. C.

Belshazzar had no honor for Jehovah. His father had been blessed of God, but punished for his pride. The son failed to profit by this dispensation. He called for the consecrated chalices that he with his thousand lords and concubines might drink wine in them. His sacrilege brought on his doom. The judgment was written before his bleared and horror set eyes. "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways hast thou not glorified. Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting." In that same night was Belshazzar slain.—Free Baptist.

Ministers—Old and Young.

A few years ago, we heard a good deal about the "Dead Line in the pulpit." It is said that men, who are the strength of the denomination, are nearer sixty than fifty-five; yet there is no mistaking the call for young men. Youth has some advantage in the pulpit; but the experience of a lifetime, if the minister has made the most of his opportunities, should make him a more successful pastor and preacher at sixty than at forty. Will the older brethren, however, permit two or three suggestions?

1. Do not talk about being an old man. By no means claim to be younger than you are. Be honest; but if one is continually talking about his age, people begin to feel that he is old, and that his age is a disadvantage, and others will generally agree with him. Let him simply do the work the Master has given him, as well as he can.

2. Do not claim to be a young man. It is not wrong for an elderly man to cut up boyish capers, but it is not natural. Each period of life brings with it some peculiar power. There is a grace of childhood. When the old minister is continually telling people about how much younger he feels than he did thirty years ago, and is determined to act like a boy, he does not strengthen his influence. People expect a man of his age to bear the dignity of manhood.

3. Realize the value of time. A boy feels that life is very short, and that he must get a good deal done in a minute. Time is worth something to him; he has not much to spare. So also realizes that other people have not much time to spare. So he preaches short sermons, and respects the busy moments of others. An elderly man feels that he has all eternity before him. He can not see why the people should be so fussy as to want a half-hour's sermon. Is not the gospel important enough for one to listen to the presentation of it, by a man of his experience, for an hour? And why do these people consider time of so much value? Why can not they give him an hour for a talk? An hour is not much. Brother, beware. Each man has his peculiar temptation, and should guard against it. This is yours. Young men may occasionally preach an hour without falling into the habit. They will come back to a half hour next time. For you it is not safe. No matter how much you may be interested in your subject, no matter how much good you believe could be accomplished, never—never—NEVER—allow yourself to preach over forty minutes. Have a clock or watch where you can see it; in some way see that you do not get the reputation of preaching long. No matter if you did preach an hour forty years ago. Times have changed. Men can not do it now—least of all, can you do it.

4. Do not attempt to live on the work of years ago. Some men never learn anything after they leave school. Other men learn little in school, but add to their knowledge every year of their lives. What we have learned this year, is fresh to us, we can present it with far more power than what we learned a year ago. If we are preaching to the people of a generation ago, using their idioms, thinking their mode of thoughts the people of to-day will not listen to us. We wonder why they should go in raptures over some young man with half old thought. He talks their language. All his references, his unconscious allusions, are to matters with which they are familiar.

5. It is fair for a man to ask himself the question. Have I improved as a preacher with each year of my ministry? or have I merely been repeating the faults of manner that I fell into in my youth? Did I say in middle life? I am too old to learn, and so stop learning? If one has made no improvement, and lost something of the fire of youth, how can he expect to be as good a preacher as the young man?

There is no question but that a minister ought to improve every year that he occupies the pulpit. He should be getting rid of the bad habits which he perhaps fell into when a young man. He should have been so careful a student, all his life, that he be now better educated than any young man can be. He should know the latest presentation.

K. D. C. the household remedy for stomach troubles.

tions of the subjects now studied in the schools. He should have formed habits which make work easier for him. He should ask no favors; and, claiming to be neither old nor young, be a man whose knowledge and utterances command respect, and win attention from old and young alike. We have many such men in the Baptist denomination. Such men as Spurgeon and Beecher did not lose their power as they grew old. If a minister is not a better preacher at sixty than at forty, supposing him to have good health, is there not something wrong with the man or his methods?—Ex.

Christ's Presence.

The reality of Christ's presence is made known to us by His own unqualified word. He did not say, "Lo, I am with you always, so long as you maintain a sensible evidence of it, or so long as I see worthiness in your character." Nothing of this sort did he say. He announced to His followers, "Lo, I am with you always," and we dishonor His word by not accepting His precise meaning. Observe that here is not a revelation to the believer of a mere possibility, but an actual experience. We ought not to hesitate; hesitation is unbelief.

This is not a hasty and unwarranted assumption; neither is it a mere deduction of the understanding. His word, "I am with you," is so plain that the little child may understand it and not make a mistake. And this promise is so frequently repeated in Scripture statements that we marvel on account of our dullness of appreciation.

"I am with thee." He hath said it, In His truth and tender grace; Sealed the promise, grandly spoken, With how many a mighty token Of His love and faithfulness.

If we think upon our daily experience, we may easily see how all this is illustrated, even in our human relations. We sit down at home near a chosen companion, and become absorbed in the perusal of an attractive volume. We forget, for the time, the nearness of one whose presence is just as real as though we were engaged in actual interchange of thought. The influence of that presence is immediate, and unconsciously to ourselves, enters the realm of personality, silently affecting us. How is this to be explained? No one can tell. Yet the fact is admitted.

Inadequate as this illustration may be, it still may serve our purpose. This life has its perplexities and responsibilities. Material things press close upon us on every hand daily, demanding our undivided attention. Problems often confront us that are difficult to solve. Conclusions must be reached in the home, in business affairs, that require sound judgment and concentrated thought. Is He with us during all these experiences? We do not whisper His name; we do not declare our formal allegiance to Him. Our thoughts are engrossed with the tasks He gives us.

Is He absent? By no means. How blessed are these hours of secular or social duties, because His presence is assured us. Our faithful, loving Friend abides with us in an unbroken companionship. During these hours we are liable to errors of judgment. But He will graciously counteract these if we preserve this true fellowship with Himself. He does not withdraw His love. He is not alienated from us because of our feebleness or mismanagement. He is true, though all others about us are faithless. The one most comforting word is, "Lo, I am with you always."

The Obstacle As Opportunity

Some people always lose heart when they come to an obstacle. They turn squarely around and say: "O, well, that puts an end to this scheme. It does seem a pity that I can't take hold of anything without being balked!" The trouble is that most persons do not understand the true nature of an obstacle. They look upon it as something final, immovable, insurmountable. They seem to consider that it is something intended by a frowning Providence to put a stop to the particular thing which they are doing. Now, this is something quite contrary to the true purpose and economy of obstacles. They are not intended to discourage, but to increase energy.

Take a stream of water, for example. That stream understands the nature and purpose of an obstacle. It is something to pile up and amass and concentrate energy; it is something to climb upon and dash over with ten times augmented force. The same thing is true of obstacles in the human pathway; yet how many people are as wise as the stream to understand it?

Instead of regarding the obstacle as a discouragement and a sign that we are working in the wrong direction,

For nervous headache use K. D. C.

we ought to look upon it as a providential opportunity—an opportunity to test and to augment strength of purpose; an opportunity to rise to the level of higher power; an opportunity to gather new resource and expand to wider channels of usefulness.

How often has the obstacle, attacked and surmounted, broadened a man's outlook upon what it is possible for him to do! How many great and good enterprises have widened and deepened in scope and power by being for the time obstructed and delayed? Wonderful is the revelative power of the obstacle—its power to open men's eyes to the real possibilities of what they have undertaken! Wonderful is the inspiring power of the obstacle—its power to expand vision and spur energy! Most wonderful of all is the dynamic and strengthening power of the obstacle—its power to reinforce the strength which assails it, and augment the resources which are gathered against it!

O, the foolishness of misinterpreting obstacle! It is as if a bird should complain against the pressure of the air which buoys it up. We rise only by that which opposes; we strengthen only by that which antagonizes. Opposition is the life of endeavor. The man who succeeds is the man who makes obstacles the steps of his ladder.

Views of Heaven.

A leading divine says: "When I was a boy I thought of heaven as a great shining city, with vast walls and domes and spires, and with nobody in it except white angels, who were strangers to me. By and by my little brother died, and I thought of a great city with walls and domes and spires, and a flock of cold, unknown angels, and one little fellow that I was acquainted with. He was the only one that I knew in that country. Then another brother died, and there were two that I knew. Then my acquaintances began to die, and the number continually grew. But it was not until I had sent one of my little children back to God that I began to think that I had a little interest there myself. A second, a third, a fourth went, and by that time I had so many acquaintances in heaven that I did not see any more walls and domes and spires. I began to think of the residents of the Celestial City. And now so many of my acquaintances have gone there that it sometimes seems to me that I know more in heaven than I do on earth."