

is the truth about religion? The great and awful truth—awful in its stupendous simplicity—is this: that these infinite blessings are seeking us before ever we searched for them, and are waiting, not for our proof, but simply for our acceptance. We think we discover, verify, and prove them. Scholars knock at their door with the books which solve these problems; and, indeed, there are mysteries enough to satisfy all learning and research. But the deepest mystery of all is this: that, if the love of God, the power of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, are to have any reality for us, it must be as living and active forces, knocking at our doors and asking to be let in. How are we to think of God? It must be as always accessible, if we would but have it so, searching for us before ever we searched for him. We love him because he first loved us. When we turn to him it is but our answer to his call to us. It is the father of the prodigal waiting with an infinite patience and love, and coming to meet us, if we will but turn even with faltering step, and make ourselves accessible to him. How are we to think of Christ? Behind all the aspects of him as the problem of the ages, and all the perplexity of his wondrous personality, lies the power of his practical and present leadership. We do not first find him, but he finds us. It is not the sheep which look for the shepherd: it is the shepherd who searches for the sheep; and, when they hear his voice, they follow him. Even so Christ calls to men, "Behold I stand at your door and knock. If you will not hear my voice, I cannot enter; but, if any man will hear my voice, I will come in." And how shall we think of that forgiveness of our sins for which we pray? It, too, is waiting for us,—waiting with the infinite pathos with which a parent waits for his sinning child, knocking at our door if we will but let it in. There is nothing complicated or mechanical or unnatural about the forgiveness of sins. There is only one thing that forbids it.

It is the locked door of our own hearts.

See, then, the wonderful simplicity of religion. Here, on the one hand, are our own lives, shut in, limited, and self-absorbed; and here, on the other hand, are these great powers of the universe wanting to get in to us, and between the two only one barrier,—the barrier of our own wills. What a terrific thought it is that the spirit of God is forever thus trying to reach us, and that the power of a Christian life is standing like a weary traveler knocking at our door!

God grant that in these moments of withdrawal, when we turn from the stir of our busy lives to the quietness of this place, there may be a little of this opening of the doors of our wills to these heavenly visitants! It is not a work that makes a noise or sensation,—this unbarring of one's life. It is not a work that one man can do for another, or that can be preached or forced into a life. No power—not that of God himself—can open that door from the outside. Only the soul itself can open itself. But if, with perfect simplicity and unaffectedness, any one of us is able just to put aside the bolt of his own wilfulness, and open his door and say: "Almighty God, come to me! Spirit of Christ, be thou my guest! Father, I have sinned, forgive me," then it is as if these sharper days of winter were melting into the approaching spring, and as if one of us came down some morning in his heated house, and should throw his door open to the gentler air, and there should flow in upon him the milder freshness and the purer fragrance of a renewing and reviving world.—[Christian Register.

EIGHTEEN REASONS WHY I AM A FRIEND.

1st. Receiving all of the commandments of Christ binding on us without abridgment or controversy—such as thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not swear, under any circumstances in which we may be placed.