

RELIGION AS FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

pressed too far they have led to fatal errors in our doctrine and our lives. But look at the atonement in the light of a manifestation of friendship, and see how full it is of significance and of power to save and to uplift. God comes to man and claims to be his friend. What proofs does He give? The beauty and the grandeur of the earth, the richness of the fruits it yields for man's comfort and joy, these all speak of His care. But that is not enough. There is the terrible problem of sin and unrest that spoils all these things, and often makes them the means of unhappiness and of soul loss. What has God done to meet it? Christ and Calvary is the answer. Christ was not the victim of the wrath of God. He was God reconciling man to Himself in that wondrous life and death of love. Father Damien, who went among the loathsome lepers and gave his life a victim to that awful malady, had a right to claim for himself the sacred name of "friend of the lepers." How much more has the Maker and Sustainer of the universe, who became man and died the death of the cross, the right to claim that thrice-blessed name. We are saved, not by the cross or the sufferings