

## VIII

"But, in order to abolish the evil from which we are suffering," those will say who are preoccupied by various practical activities, "it would be necessary that not a few men only, but all men, should bethink themselves, and that, having done so, they should uniformly understand the destination of their lives, in the fulfilment of the will of God and in the service of one's neighbor.

"Is this possible?" Not only possible, do I answer, but it is impossible that this should not take place. It is impossible for men not to bethink themselves--i.e. impossible that each man should not put to himself the question as to who he is and wherefore he lives; for man, as a rational being, cannot live without seeking to know why he lives, and he has always put to himself this question, and always, according to the degree of his development, has answered it in his religious teaching. In our time, the inner contradiction in which men feel themselves elicits this question with special insistence, and demands an answer. It is impossible for men of our time to answer this question otherwise than by recognizing the law of life in love to men and in the service of them, this being for our time the only rational answer as to the meaning of human life; and this answer nineteen hundred years ago has been expressed in the Christian religion and is likewise known to the vast majority of all mankind.

This answer in a latent state lives in the consciousness of all men of the Christian world of our time; but it does not openly express itself and serve as guidance for our life, only because, on the one hand, those who enjoy the greatest authority, so-called scientists, being under the coarse error that religion is a temporary and outgrown step in the development of mankind and that men can live without religion, inculcate this error to those of the masses who are beginning to be educated; and, on the other hand, because those in power, sometimes consciously, but often unconsciously (being under the error that the Church faith is Christian religion), endeavor to support and excite in the people crude superstitions given out as the Christian religion. If only these two deceptions were to be destroyed, then true religion, already latent in men of our time, would become evident and obligatory.

To bring this about it is necessary that, on the one hand, men of science should understand that the principle of the brotherhood of all men and the rule of not doing unto others what one does not wish for oneself is not one casual idea out of a multitude of human theories which can be subordinated to any other considerations, but is an incontestable principle, standing higher than the rest, and flowing from the changeless relation of man to that which is eternal, to God, and is religion, all religion, and, therefore, always obligatory.

On the other hand, it is necessary that those who consciously or unconsciously preach crude superstitions under the guise of Christianity should understand that all these dogmas, sacraments, and rites which they

support and preach are not only, as they think, harmless, but are in the highest degree pernicious, concealing from men that central religious truth which is expressed in the fulfilment of God's will, in the service of men, and that the rule of acting toward others as one would wish others to act toward oneself is not merely one of the prescriptions of the Christian religion, but is the whole of practical religion, as indeed is stated in the Gospels.

To bring about that men of our time should uniformly place before themselves the question of the meaning of life, and uniformly answer it, it is only necessary that those who regard themselves as enlightened should cease to think and to inculcate to other generations that religion is atavism, the survival of a past wild state, and that for the good life of men the spreading of education is sufficient--i.e. the spread of the most varied knowledge which is in some way to bring men to justice and to a moral life. These men should understand instead that for the good life of humanity religion is vital, and that this religion already exists and lives in the consciousness of the men of our time. Men who are intentionally and unintentionally stupefying the people by church superstitions should cease to do so, and recognize that what is important and binding in Christianity is not baptism, nor Communion, nor profession of dogmas, etc., but only love to God and to one's neighbor, and the fulfilling of the commandment of acting toward others as one wishes others to act toward oneself--and that in this lies all the law and the prophets.

If only both pseudo-Christians and men of science understood and preached to children and to the uneducated these simple, clear, and necessary truths as they now preach their complicated, confused, and unnecessary theories, all men would uniformly understand the meaning of their lives and recognize one and the same duties as flowing from this meaning.