

THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE

en Rule is five hundred years older than Christ; it was laid down as the highest moral principle by many Greek and Oriental sages. Pittacus, of Mylene, one of the seven wise men of Greece, said six hundred and twenty years before Christ: "Do not that to thy neighbor that thou wouldst not suffer from him." Confucius, the great Chinese philosopher and religious founder (who rejected the idea of a personal God and of the immortality of the soul), said five hundred years B.C.: "Do to every man as thou wouldst have him do to thee; and do not to another what thou wouldst not have him do to thee. This precept only dost thou need; it is the foundation of all other commandments." Aristotle taught about the middle of the fourth century B.C.: "We must act towards others as we wish others to act towards us." In the same sense, and partly in the same words, the Golden Rule was given by Thales, Isocrates, Aristippus, Sextus, the Pythagorean, and other philosophers of classic antiquity—several centuries before Christ. From this collection it is clear that the Golden Rule had a *polyphyletic* origin—that is, it was formulated by a number of philosophers at different times and in different places, quite independently of each other. Otherwise it must be assumed that Jesus derived it from some other Oriental source, from ancient Semitic, Indian, Chinese, or especially Buddhistic traditions, as has been proved in the case of most of the other Christian doctrines.

As the great ethical principle is thus twenty-five hundred years old, and as Christianity itself has put it at the head of its moral teaching as the highest and all-embracing commandment, it follows that our monistic ethics is in complete harmony on this important point, not only with the ethics of the ancient heathens, but also