

THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE

not belief in supernatural miracles and the illusion of an eternal life.

II. It is otherwise with the divine ideal of eternal goodness. In our search for the truth we have entirely to exclude the "revelation" of the churches, and devote ourselves solely to the study of nature; but, on the other hand, the idea of the good, which we call virtue, in our monistic religion coincides for the most part with the Christian idea of virtue. We are speaking, naturally, of the primitive and pure Christianity of the first three centuries, as far as we learn its moral teaching from the gospels and the epistles of Paul; it does not apply to the Vatican caricature of that pure doctrine which has dominated European civilization, to its infinite prejudice, for twelve hundred years. The best part of Christian morality, to which we firmly adhere, is represented by the humanist precepts of charity and toleration, compassion and assistance. However, these noble commands, which are set down as "Christian" morality (in its best sense), are by no means original discoveries of Christianity; they are derived from earlier religions. The Golden Rule, which sums up these precepts in one sentence, is centuries older than Christianity. In the conduct of life this law of natural morality has been followed just as frequently by non-Christians and atheists as it has been neglected by pious believers. Moreover, Christian ethics was marred by the great defect of a narrow insistence on altruism and a denunciation of egoism. Our monistic ethics lays equal emphasis on the two, and finds perfect virtue in the just balance of love of self and love of one's neighbor (cf. chap. xix.).

III. But monism enters into its strongest opposition to Christianity on the question of beauty. Primi-