

OUR MONISTIC ETHICS

with that of Christianity. Unfortunately this harmony is disturbed by the fact that the gospels and the Pauline epistles contain many other points of moral teaching, which contradict our first and supreme commandment. Christian theologians have fruitlessly striven to explain away these striking and painful contradictions by their ingenious interpretations. We need not enter into that question now, but we must briefly consider those unfortunate aspects of Christian ethics which are incompatible with the better thought of the modern age, and which are distinctly injurious in their practical consequences. Of that character is the contempt which Christianity has shown for self, for the body, for nature, for civilization, for the family, and for woman.

I. The supreme mistake of Christian ethics, and one which runs directly counter to the Golden Rule, is its exaggeration of love of one's neighbor at the expense of self-love. Christianity attacks and despises egoism on principle. Yet that natural impulse is absolutely indispensable in view of self-preservation; indeed, one may say that even altruism, its apparent opposite, is only an enlightened egoism. Nothing great or elevated has ever taken place without egoism, and without the passion that urges us to great sacrifices. It is only the excesses of the impulse that are injurious. One of the Christian precepts that were impressed upon us in our early youth as of great importance, and that are glorified in millions of sermons, is: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." It is a very ideal precept, but as useless in practice as it is unnatural. So it is with the counsel, "If any man will take