

OUR MONISTIC ETHICS

and other religions. In many monasteries the ideal of the pious Christian is the man who does not wash and clothe himself properly, who never changes his malodorous gown, and who, instead of regular work, fills up his useless life with mechanical prayers, senseless fasts, and so forth. As a special outgrowth of this contempt of the body we have the disgusting discipline of the flagellants and other ascetics.

III. One source of countless theoretical errors and practical blemishes, of deplorable crudity and privation, is found in the false anthropism of Christianity—that is, in the unique position which it gives to man, as the image of God, in opposition to all the rest of nature. In this way it has contributed, not only to an extremely injurious isolation from our glorious mother “nature,” but also to a regrettable contempt of all other organisms. Christianity has no place for that well-known love of animals, that sympathy with the nearly related and friendly mammals (dogs, horses, cattle, etc.), which is urged in the ethical teaching of many of the older religions, especially Buddhism. Whoever has spent much time in the south of Europe must have often witnessed those frightful sufferings of animals which fill us friends of animals with the deepest sympathy and indignation. And when one expostulates with these brutal “Christians” on their cruelty, the only answer is, with a laugh: “But the beasts are not Christians.” Unfortunately Descartes gave some support to the error in teaching that man only has a sensitive soul, not the animal.

How much more elevated is our monistic ethics than the Christian in this regard! Darwinism teaches us that we have descended immediately from the primates, and, in a secondary degree, from a long series of earlier