

Celibacy, Continnence, Monasticism



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Frontispiece: American gothic (1930) Grant Wood, Art Institute, Chicago

Jesus did not teach Monasticism but the law of Continence. For morality to exist between men and women, they must follow the law of Chastity.

Thus the author of *Anna Karenina* and the *Death of Ivan Ilyitch*, the greatest psychologist of this century, stands accused of *ignoring* “human nature” by one critic, of being “the most conspicuous case out of Bedlam,” and by another¹ called “the ex-great artist.” “He tilts,” we are told, “against the strongest human instincts” because forsooth, the author — an orthodox Russian born — tells us that far better no marriage at all than such a desecration of what his church regards as one of the holy Sacraments. But in the opinion of the Protestant *Vanity Fair*, Tolstoy is “an extremist,” because “with all its evils, the present marriage system, *taken even as the vile thing for which he gives it us* (italics are ours) is a surely less evil than the monasticism — with its effects — which he preaches.” This shows the ideas of the reviewer on *morality!*

Tolstoy, however, “preaches” nothing of the sort; nor does his Pozdnisheff say so, though the critics misunderstand him from A to Z, as they do also the wise statement that “not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth” or a vile man’s heart and imagination. It is not “monasticism” but *the law of continence* as taught by Jesus (and Occultism) in its esoteric meaning — which most Christians are unable to perceive — that he preaches. Nothing can be more moral or conducive to human happiness and perfectibility than the application of this law. It is one ordained by Nature herself. Animals follow it instinctively, as do also the savage tribes. Once pregnant, to the last day of the nursing of her babe, *i.e.*, for eighteen or twenty months, the savage squaw *is sacred to her husband*; the civilised and semi-civilized man alone breaking this beneficent law. Therefore, speaking of the *immorality* of marriage relations as at present practised, and of unions performed on commercial bases, or, what is worse, on mere sensual love, Pozdnisheff elaborates the idea by uttering the greatest and the holiest truth, namely, that:

For morality to exist between men and women in their daily life, *they must make perfect chastity their law.*² In progressing towards this end, man subdues

¹ *Scot’s Observer*

² All the italics throughout the article are ours. [Ed. *Lucifer*]

himself. When he has arrived at the last degree of subjection we shall have moral marriages. But if a man as in our Society advances only towards physical love, even though he surrounds it with deception and with the shallow formality of marriage, *he obtains nothing but licensed vice.*

A good proof that it is not “monasticism” and *utter celibacy* which are preached, but only *continence*, is found on page 84 where the fellow traveller of Pozdnisheff is made to remark that the result of the theory of the latter would be “that a man would have to keep away from his wife except once every year or two.” Then again there is this sentence:

I did not at that time understand that the words of the Gospel as to looking upon a woman with the eyes of desire did not refer only to the wives of others, but especially and above all to one’s own wife.

“Monastics” have no wives, nor do they get married if they would remain chaste on the physical plane. Tolstoy, however, seems to have answered in anticipation of British criticism and objections on these lines, by making the hero of his “grimy and revolting book”³ say:

Think what a perversity of ideas there must be, when the happiest, the freest condition of the human being, that of (*mental*) chastity, is looked upon as something miserable and ridiculous. The highest ideal, the most perfect condition to be attained by woman, that of a pure being, a vestal, a virgin, provokes, in our society, fear and laughter.

Tolstoy might have added — and when moral continence and chastity, mistaken for “monasticism,” are pronounced far more evil than “the marriage system *taken even* as the vile thing for which he (Tolstoy) gives it us.” Has the virtuous critic of *Vanity Fair* or the *Scot’s Observer* never met with a woman who, although the mother of a numerous family, had withal remained all her life mentally and morally a pure virgin, or with a *vestal* (in vulgar talk, a *spinster*) who although physically undefiled, yet surpassed in *mental*, unnatural depravity the lowest of the fallen women? If he has not — we have.

We maintain that to call *Kreutzer Sonata* *pointless*, and “a vain book,” is to miss most egregiously the noblest as well as the most important points in it. It is nothing less than wilful blindness, or what is still worse — that moral cowardice which will sanction every growing immorality rather than allow its mention, let alone its discussion, in public. It is on such fruitful soil that our moral leprosy thrives and prospers instead of being checked by timely palliatives. It is blindness to one of her greatest social evils of this kind that led France to issue her unrighteous law, prohibiting the so-called “search of paternity.” And is it not again the ferocious selfishness of the male, in which species legislators are of course included, which is responsible for the many iniquitous laws with which the country of old disgraced itself? *e.g.*, the right of every brute of a husband to sell his wife in a market-place with a rope around her neck; the right of every beggar-husband over his rich wife’s fortune, rights now happily ab-

³ *Scot’s Observer*

rogated. But does not law protect man to this day, granting him means for legal impunity in almost all his dealings with woman?

Has it never occurred to any grave judge or critic either — any more than to Pozdnisheff — “that *immorality does not consist in physical acts alone but on the contrary, in liberating one’s self from all moral obligations, which such acts impose*”?⁴ And as a direct result of such legal “*liberation from any moral obligations,*” we have the present marriage system in every civilized nation, viz., men “steeped in corruption” seeking “at the same time for a virgin whose purity might be worthy” of them;⁵ men, out of a thousand of whom “hardly one could be found who has not been married before at least a dozen times”!^{6, 7}



“Blavatsky on Marriage, Divorce, and Celibacy,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series.

⁴ *Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 32; [see full text in our Living the Life Series. — ED. PHIL.]

⁵ p. 39

⁶ p. 41

⁷ *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (DIAGNOSES AND PALLIATIVES) XII pp. 243-46