







THE ANCIENT
INTERPRETATION OF LEVITICUS XVIII. 18,

AS RECEIVED IN THE CHURCH FOR
MORE THAN 1500 YEARS,

A SUFFICIENT APOLOGY

FOR HOLDING THAT,

ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF GOD,

MARRIAGE

WITH A DECEASED WIFE'S SISTER

IS LAWFUL.

A LETTER

TO

THE REV. W. H. LYALL, M.A.,
RECTOR OF ST. DIONIS BACKCHURCH,

FROM

THE REV. A. M'CAUL, D.D.,
RECTOR OF ST. MAGNUS, ST. MARGARET, AND ST. MICHAEL;
PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S;
AND A PROCTOR FOR THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF LONDON
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My dear Sir,

I have just received your letter of the 14th inst. and am glad to hear that you are still engaged in the study of the Holy Scriptures. I have been thinking much of late of the importance of this study to the Christian Church, and of the necessity of a more general and systematic course of instruction in the Bible. I have been thinking much of the value of the Bible as a source of knowledge and wisdom, and of the necessity of a more general and systematic course of instruction in the Bible. I have been thinking much of the value of the Bible as a source of knowledge and wisdom, and of the necessity of a more general and systematic course of instruction in the Bible.

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ed. 1870

THE INTERPRETATION OF LEVITICUS XVIII. 18,
AS RECEIVED FROM THE DAYS OF
THE APOSTLES.

MY DEAR SIR,

AFTER what occurred at the election of Proctors for the Archdeaconry of London, you will not be surprised to learn that I have been led to reconsider the opinion then expressed respecting the lawfulness of marriage with a deceased wife's sister. Until then I had been satisfied with the knowledge that our Authorized Version of Leviticus xviii. 18 was correct, and that the marginal translation was inconsistent with Hebrew idiom and the context. But the strong feeling manifested by some of the clergy on that occasion has compelled me to look more seriously and attentively into the matter, and to you, as my interrogator, I now address the results of my inquiry.

On some points, I think, we agree; as, for instance, that the final appeal in questions relating to marriage must be to the Word of God. "What saith the Scripture?" must be the question uppermost in the minds of Christian men. I rejoice, therefore, to see that recent writers against the proposed change in the marriage-law take their stand upon Scripture. One learned and respected author says:—"I begin by asserting that Leviticus xviii. contains an enunciation of precepts of the moral law, not merely of precepts to the Jewish nation. . . . Until near the end of the fifteenth century,

“ the Church held the precepts of this chapter which relate
 “ to marriage to be moral, and, therefore, not to be tam-
 “ pered with or reversed.” * Another learned and devout
 writer says † that his object was “ chiefly to bring before
 “ them [Her Majesty’s Commissioners ‡] the weight of
 “ what was said or implied by Holy Scriptures upon this
 “ subject, and to show how those Scriptures had been
 “ understood by the whole body of the Christian Church
 “ down to the Council of Trent.” Even with this addi-
 tion to Scripture, “ as understood by the whole body of
 the Christian Church down to the Council of Trent,”
 I do not quarrel. The testimony of the whole body of
 the Christian Church from the days of the apostles ought
 always to have great weight, and where it cannot be
 had, the testimony of a number of grave writers in
 various ages and branches of the Church must be re-
 ceived with respect. It is satisfactory to see that these
 writers reject that notion of St. Basil’s, that these
 marriage-laws are no more binding on the Christian
 Church than circumcision or other ceremonial rites.
 When pressed with the argument from Levit. xviii. 18,
 that Father says:—“ In answer to this, I will say, first,
 “ that whatsoever the law saith it saith to them that are
 “ under the law, else, by parity of reasoning, circum-
 “ cision, too, and the Sabbath, and abstinence from
 “ meats, might be urged upon us; for it will hardly be
 “ pretended, I suppose, that if we find anything in the

* “ A Scripture Argument against permitting Marriage with a
 Wife’s Sister.” By the Rev. Dr. J. A. Hessey, Head Master of
 Merchant Taylors’ School, and Preacher of Gray’s-inn. (Page 2.)

† Rev. Dr. Pusey, in his Preface to “ Marriage with a Deceased
 Wife’s Sister Prohibited by Holy Scripture, as understood by the
 Church for 1,500 years.”

‡ “ Appointed to Inquire into the State and Operation of the
 Law of Marriage, as relating to the Prohibited Degrees of Affinity,
 and to Marriages solemnized Abroad or in the British Colonies,”
 whose Report was published, with Appendix and Index, 1848,

“ law favourable to our own pleasures, we are in this to
 “ put ourselves under the yoke of the bondage of the
 “ law, but, if any of the things enacted by the law seem
 “ to be grievous, we are then to run off to the liberty
 “ which is in Christ.” * I, also, believe that St. Basil is
 here entirely mistaken, and am convinced that the laws
 in Leviticus xviii., being a part of the moral law, stand
 on a totally different footing from circumcision, or the
 Jewish Sabbaths, or abstinence from meats. Indeed, I
 believe that this marriage-law was given to the Gentile
 Churches in the famous decree of the Council of Jeru-
 salem. When the Jewish zealots wished to impose the
 yoke of the Mosaic law on Gentile believers, the Apostles
 and Church at Jerusalem refused to sanction any such
 imposition, but required the observance of four Mosaic
 precepts which they call “ necessary.” “ It seemed good
 to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater
 burthen than these necessary things (τῶν ἐπιβάναρχες τούτων),
 that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from
 blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication.”
 Why were these things considered necessary, when the
 law itself was declared not to be binding? Was it
 merely to please the Jews? No; to please the Jews the
 Church at Jerusalem must have imposed the whole law.
 The reason for these special requirements was, that
 Moses himself required these four things from the Gen-
 tiles as well as from the Jews. The apostles did not
 feel themselves bound by Jewish traditions, but acknow-
 ledged the authority of the Divine law. What the law
 did not impose upon Gentiles they left free. What the
 law imposed upon Gentiles they required as “ necessary.”
 Now, in Leviticus xvii. and xviii., these four things are
 found together, and by Moses required of the Gentiles :

* This is quoted from the translation of St. Basil's letter given
 by the Rev. W. Palmer, published by Dr. Pusey in his “Evi-
 dence.”

meats offered to idols (xvii. 8, 9); blood (xvii. 10—13); things strangled (xvii. 15); *πορνεία*,* or unlawful concubinage (xviii. 26). On this ground, I believe that the prohibitions of Leviticus xviii. are binding on all Christians, and that the prohibitions refer not merely to marriage, but to all carnal intercourse with the prohibited persons, whether openly illicit or under the name and form of marriage, except as allowed or commanded by God. I agree, further, with those who interpret the word “woman” or “wife” in these prohibitions as comprehending widowhood, so that these females are prohibited, not only during the life of their husbands, but absolutely and for ever. And, lastly, I admit, that from the prohibited marriages enumerated, compared with other parts of the Divine legislation, others not enumerated may be judged lawful or unlawful.

Granting, then, that the marriage laws in Lev. xviii. were received from the Apostles as binding upon Christians, the question arises, In what sense did the Apostolic Churches understand them? Did they receive them as they were generally understood by the Jewish people?—or did they receive a special interpretation, contradicting that common reception, if it were wrong? With regard to the sense put upon these laws, I find that only on one verse, the 18th, is there any serious controversy. Here there is an important divergence of opinion, both as to the translation and the sense. Some translate, as the English version in the text, “Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life-time,” and infer from the words, “in her life-time,”

* I take *πορνεία* not of simple fornication only, but in the Hellenistic sense, of all unlawful concubinage. See Spencer, “De Legibus Hebræorum,” lib. ii., c. 1, s. 2, & c. iii., s. 4, where he discusses the question, Cur scilicet apostoli quatuor illa, simul et conjunctim, prohibuerint? Comp. Selden, “De Jur. Nat. & Gent.,” cap. xii.

that when the first wife is dead, it is lawful to marry her sister. Others, on the contrary, render the Hebrew, according to the margin of our Bibles, "Neither shalt thou take one wife to another to vex her, to uncover her nakedness beside the other in her life-time," and infer that simultaneous polygamy is forbidden—that is, that it is forbidden to take a second wife whilst the first is living, but that when she is dead it is lawful. The first question is, then, In which of the two senses did the Apostolic Churches receive this verse? To pursue this inquiry profitably, we must remember that the Church of the Apostolic times consisted at first entirely of Jews; subsequently of two branches—the Church of the circumcision, all Jews, and the Churches of the Gentiles. The Jewish Churches, zealous of the Law, having possessed it from their forefathers, and having been brought up in the national interpretation of its precepts, would naturally continue to interpret them as they had done before, unless particularly warned against so doing. Now, the national interpretation of Lev. xviii. 18 at that time, was that which was favourable to marriage with a deceased wife's sister. The Jews as a body were, in the time of the Apostles, divided into Hebrews and Hellenists—the former speaking Aramaic, and retaining Hebrew as the language of the Synagogue and the schools; the latter speaking Greek, understanding but little of Hebrew—if they are to be judged by Josephus and Philo—received the LXX. as an inspired translation of the Hebrew text, and their great authority in matters of religion and divinity. How, then, did these two great bodies of the Jews interpret Lev. xviii. 18? Did they accept the version preferred by our own translators, and therefore placed in the text of our English Bibles, or that assigned to the margin? And do they agree or differ in their reception? Happily these questions can be answered satisfactorily, as there

is a representative of each party contemporary, or nearly so, with our Lord and the Apostles. Of the Hebraists we have Onkelos, whose Chaldee translation was read in the Synagogues along with the Hebrew original, whose testimony thus becomes the testimony of the Synagogue. His translation of Lev. xviii. 18 is similar to that of the text of our authorized version—**וְאִתָּתָא עִם אַחֵתָא לֹא** : **הַסֵּב לְאַעְקָא לֶה לְגַלְאָה עֲרִיתָהּ עֲלֶיהָ בְּחַיָּהָ** : — “And a woman with her sister thou shalt not take to afflict her, to uncover her nakedness upon [or beside] her in her lifetime;” or as Fagius has it: “Uxorem cum sorore ejus non ducas ut sit ei in tribulationem, ut scilicet reveles turpitudinem ejus dum illa adhuc vivit.”

But it may be said that the phrase, “A woman to her sister,” is simply an idiomatic expression, signifying “one woman to another;” and that, as Onkelos is notorious for the literality of his translation, his Chaldee words mean nothing more or less than the Hebrew original, and are therefore merely equivalent to the Hebrew idiom for “one to another.” The correctness or incorrectness of this criticism is easily tested. The words, “A woman to her sister,” **אִשָּׁה אֶל אַחֵתָהּ**, occur five times in the 26th chapter of Exodus. If Onkelos has in these five places, where they are confessedly idiomatic, signifying “one to another,” translated them as in Lev. xviii. 18, “A woman to her sister,” then it is plain that in Lev. xviii. 18 he thought them idiomatic too, and his translation would be favourable to the marginal rendering. But if in the five passages in Exodus he does not translate them as in Lev. xviii. 18, but by Chaldee words answering to the idiomatic phrase, “one to another,” then it is equally plain that in Lev. xviii. 18 he did not think the words idiomatic, but took them in their proper sense,—and this is the fact. Onkelos has in Exodus xxvi. 3, twice **הָיָה עִם הָיָה**, “one with one.”

In verse 5, the same.

In verse 6, the same.

In verse 17, *חד לקביל להד*, "one answering to one."

These are all the passages in the Pentateuch, where these words occur. In five, Onkelos translates idiomatically—in the sixth, Lev. xviii. 18, literally, showing that here he took "sister" in its strict and primary sense; and as this translation was read in the Synagogues, it shows the sense commonly received among the Hebraizing Jews of that day.*

We now turn to the Hellenists, who, as having more intercourse with the Gentiles, and being less exclusive than their Hebraizing brethren, are important witnesses. How, then, did they interpret Lev. xviii. 18? Their interpretation is represented by the LXX itself. It is well known that in the days of the Apostles this version was looked upon by all classes of Jews, even the Rabbinists, as an inspired book. To the Hellenists it was their Bible, the source of religious law and divinity. If, then, the Septuagint, as used by them, differed from Onkelos, and presented the marginal or modern interpretation of this disputed verse, that fact would go far to neutralize the testimony of Onkelos. It would have exhibited the mind of a very numerous, perhaps at that time the most numerous class of Jews. But the Septuagint version differs very slightly from that of Onkelos, and is equally favourable to the controverted marriage. It is, *γυναῖκα ἐπ' ἀδελφῆ αὐτῆς οὐ λήψῃ ἀντίζηλον ἀποκαλύψαι τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην αὐτῆς ἐπ' αὐτῇ, ἔτι ζώσης αὐτῆς*. "A woman in addition to her sister thou shalt not take,

* This conclusion from the language of Onkelos is confirmed by Jonathan's Chaldee translation of Ezekiel. The words "A woman to her sister" occur in chapters i. and iii. of that prophet, in the idiomatic sense, and Jonathan translates them accordingly. In Ezek. i. 13, *חד לקביל להד*, in iii. 13, *חד לקביל להד*.

a rival,* to uncover her shame, in addition to her whilst she is yet living.” But here again the question arises, whether the LXX translators did not regard the words “A woman to her sister” as a mere idiom for “one to another,” and whether, therefore, the Greek words *γυναῖκα ἐπ’ ἀδελφῆ* are not to be interpreted by the Hebrew idiom. This must be tested in the same way as in the case of Onkelos. How do they translate the Hebrew words when they occur in a confessedly idiomatic sense? Do they still retain the literal translation *γυναῖκα ἐπ’ ἀδελφῆ*, or do they give other Greek words, expressing the idiom? Let their words answer. In Exod. xxvi. 3 they have *ἡ ἑτέρα ἐκ τῆς ἑτέρας* and *ἑτέρα τῆ ἑτέρας*; in verse 5, *ἀντιπρόσωποι ἀντιπίπτουσαι ἀλλήλαις εἰς ἐκάστην*; in verse 6, *ἑτέραν τῆ ἑτέρας*; in verse 17, *ἕτερον τῷ ἑτέρῳ*, translating idiomatically where the words are idiomatic, and thus showing that in Lev. xviii. 18, where they translate literally “a woman to her sister,” they did not take the words as idiomatic but literally, *i.e.*, in that sense which is favourable to marriage with a deceased wife’s sister. But besides the words of the LXX we have the testimony of a Hellenist as to the manner in which these words were understood by Hellenists. Alluding to this verse Philo says, *Πάλιν δύο ἀδελφὰς ἄγεσθαι τὸν αὐτὸν οὐκ ἐπιτρέπει, οὐτ’ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ οὐτ’ ἐν διαφέρουσι χρόνοις, κὰν τύχη τις ἦν προέγημεν ἀπεωσμενος. ζώσης† γὰρ ἔτι τῆς συνοίκουσης εἴτε καὶ ἀπηλλαγμένης, εἴαν τε χηρεύσῃ, εἴαν τε καὶ ἑτέρῳ γαμηθῆ, τὴν ἀδελφὴν οὐχ ὄσιον ὑπέλαβεν ἐπὶ τὰ τῆς*

* For the meaning of *ἀντίζηλον* compare Ecclesiasticus xxvi. 6 and xxxvii. 11 in the original. Dean Howard translates the verse thus, “Thou shalt not take a wife in addition to her sister, of whom she would be jealous, to reveal her shame, in addition to her, while she yet liveth.”

† Mangey says in a note, “Sic restituenda videtur tota sententia, ζώσης γὰρ ἔτι τῆς πρότερον συνοίκουσης εἴτα καὶ ἀπηλλαγμένης.”

ἡτυχηκυίας παρέρχεσθαι. "Again, he does not allow the same man to marry two sisters, neither at the same time, nor at different times, even though one should happen to have divorced her whom he first married; for, whilst the first cohabiting with him is still living, even though she be divorced, (and in the latter case) whether she remain in widowhood, or be married to another man, he considered it not pious that the sister should succeed to the place of the unfortunate." Philo then understood the passage of two sisters, and that the prohibition was against marrying a wife's sister as long as the wife was alive. Thus Onkelos and the LXX and Philo give us the mind of the two classes of Jews, the Hebraists and the Hellenists, in the days of the Apostles, and all concur in taking the Hebrew words in a sense favourable to marriage with a deceased wife's sister. Indeed, the Septuagint carries us back 280 years before the Christian Era, and shows how the passage was commonly understood when that translation was made, *i.e.*, before the existence of Pharisees and Sadducees, and proves that the sense of Lev. xviii. 18, adopted by Onkelos and Philo, was not a new one that arose out of Rabbinic tradition, but the ancient interpretation. The unanimity of the authors of the LXX, of Onkelos and Philo, proves it to have been the received opinion of all classes of the Jews in the days of the Apostles, the sense, therefore, of the Jews of that time before they became Christians, and which they would naturally carry over with them into the Christian Church; and therefore the interpretation of the apostolic Church of the circumcision, unless it can be shown that the Lord taught his apostles, or that the apostles taught the Churches over which they presided, a different interpretation. But, in neither the Gospels, nor the Acts, nor yet in the apostolic

Epistles, is there any trace of any warning against the received Jewish interpretation, or of the substitution of another. Our Lord protested against the Jewish doctrine of divorce, but is altogether silent as to marriage with a deceased wife's sister. The apostles, in the decree of the Council of Jerusalem, command abstinence from *πορνεία*, *i. e.*, unlawful concubinage, but they add no explanation of what it is. St. Peter and St. Paul, James and John, are equally silent. In the absence, therefore, of any shadow of proof to the contrary, I conclude that the Jewish Churches retained the current Jewish interpretation of Lev. xviii. 18.

I grant, that if it could be shown that all the Gentile Churches received another translation, and a different interpretation, this would weaken or neutralize the foregoing conclusion. I ask, therefore, in the second place, what was the translation of Lev. xviii. 18 received by the Gentile Churches, and what the interpretation derived from St. Paul? The great Apostle of the Gentiles, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, was familiar with the Jewish interpretation and practice of the day. He could not be ignorant of Onkelos, he was well acquainted with the Septuagint, which he so often quotes as the Word of God. Did he then, in instructing the Gentile Churches as to the laws of chastity and morality, warn them against these common Jewish opinions that floated all around, and tell them that Lev. xviii. 18 was incorrectly translated, and by the Jews erroneously interpreted? Nothing of the kind is to be found in the Pauline epistles. He reproved the incestuous Corinthian. He is vehement in his remonstrances with the Galatians against the adoption of circumcision. He protests to the Colossians against the scruples about meats and drinks, and new moons, and Jewish Sabbaths, but he says nothing respecting that which is of the utmost importance, if it be sinful and incestuous, marriage with

a deceased wife's sister, and leaves the Gentile Churches to the Jewish opinions which were common all around them, and were found in the Churches composed of Jews and Gentiles.

But though nothing be found in Paul's epistles, some traces might be discovered in the versions of the Scriptures in use in the Gentile Churches, especially those made after the introduction of Christianity. Of these Churches the chief are the Syrian, the Greek-speaking, and the Latin. The Syrian are especially important. In their capital, Antioch, the disciples were first called Christians. There the Judaizers were so strong as to lead even Peter astray. There the dispute arose which drew forth the apostolic decree, and to them the decree was addressed. There, then, we may be sure that the prohibitions of Lev. xviii. were discussed, if there was any difference of opinion on the subject. There the Judaizers would try to enforce Jewish opinions, and there St. Paul would warn against any Jewish traditions which he regarded as contrary to the law of nature, and subversive of domestic purity. There the Syriac, one of the most ancient translations of the Bible, was made, early in the second century, as is commonly supposed. If, then, this version differed from Onkelos and the Septuagint, and gave the translation of Lev. xviii. 18 unfavourable to the marriage under consideration, we should have a strong reason for believing that this was the reception of the Syrian Churches derived from the apostles, and the true interpretation. But this is not the case. As Onkelos and the Seventy, so translated the Churches of Syria. וְאִתּוֹתָּא וְאִתּוֹתָּא וְאִתּוֹתָּא
וְאִתּוֹתָּא וְאִתּוֹתָּא וְאִתּוֹתָּא
וְאִתּוֹתָּא וְאִתּוֹתָּא וְאִתּוֹתָּא
 Et uxorem supra sororem suam ne duxeris, neve afflixeris eam et detexeris turpitudinem ejus super eam, dum adhuc vivit. So Walton; literally, "And a woman upon her sister thou shalt not take, nor afflict her, nor

uncover her shame upon her in her life." The Syrian translators also observe the distinction between the literal and idiomatic use of the words, "A woman to her sister," here in Lev. xviii. 18 translating literally, in Exod. xxvi. and Ezek. iii. translating idiomatically, and retaining the sense found in Onkelos, the Septuagint, and Philo. And thus this authorized version of the Syrian Churches negatives the idea that any new interpretation, differing from the Jewish reception, had been communicated to the Church at Antioch.

The Greek-speaking Christians had either already possessed the Septuagint version, or received it as the authorized copy of Scripture from the apostles; but, whencesoever derived, they received it as it was then generally received. They had no peculiar reading as to this verse, nor do we know of any warning that here this version might lead them astray. There were various editions of the LXX. Origen, Eusebius and Pamphilus, Lucian, and Hesychius, all took pains to correct the text—and, as St. Jerome tells us, the whole Church was divided between the threefold variety of Hesychius, Lucian, and Origen; Alexandria and Egypt following the first, the regions from Constantinople to Antioch the second, and the intermediate provinces Origen as edited by Eusebius and Pamphilus. But whatever differences might have existed, there is no trace of any difference in the reading of Lev. xviii. 18. All the copies of the LXX which we possess agree in handing down the old Jewish interpretation, as it existed before the coming of Christ. St. Basil knew nothing of the translation which makes Lev. xviii. 18 merely a prohibition of polygamy. If he had, he would infallibly have brought it forward as the shortest and most effectual reply to the opponents' argument. But he received the translation then as it still stands, and only argues against the inference drawn from it. Indeed, that no other interpretation was

known, or, if known, rejected, is further confirmed by the reception of the Latin Churches. They also had a version of their own, made probably some time in the second century; but that version, in its rendering of Lev. xviii. 18, does not differ from Onkelos or the LXX, or the Syriac, but gives in Latin the old Jewish sense. It is, in fact, a translation of the LXX, "Uxorem super sororem ejus non accipies in zelum." * This version was the text-book of the Latin Churches until it was superseded by that of St. Jerome. That Father, for divers good reasons, made a new translation from the Hebrew, and, in his new translation, he made many important and judicious alterations. In this text, though he has made one alteration, he does not materially alter the sense. On the contrary, he makes the application to a wife's sister more clear and intelligible: "Sororem uxoris tuæ in pellicatum † illius non accipies, nec revelabis turpitudinem ejus adhuc illa vivente."

Jerome's version gradually became the Bible of the whole Latin Church and continued so until the age of the Reformation, so that in giving the interpretation of Jerome, we give the interpretation of the Western Church for many centuries. Translations from the LXX, as the Æthiopic, the Egyptian, the Armenian, the Georgian, the Slavonian, and the Arabic, all retaining the ancient interpretation, were the Scriptures of the other Churches; and thus, as there is no trace of a

* "A wife in addition to her sister thou shalt not take to cause jealousy."

† "Thy wife's sister thou shalt not take into concubinage with her, nor reveal her shame, whilst the former is still living."

Tostatus gives the correct interpretation of *pellicatum* thus: "Dicitur quod non accipietur in pellicatum, *i.e.*, ut sit pellex sororis. Dicitur enim esse aliqua pellex, quæ est concubina aliqujus viri habentis uxorem." The sense, therefore, is much the same as of the LXX, ἀντίζηλον αὐτῆς. See also Grotius in loc.

new apostolic explanation of Lev. xviii. 18, in the Acts, or the Epistles, so there is none in the versions in common use among the Gentile Churches.

Syrian, Greek-speaking, and Latin, and those whose translations were made from the LXX, are all unanimous in witnessing that the ancient Jewish version was that which they had received from the Apostles, as it had been received by the Jews 280 years before the coming of our Lord. But not only is the translation universal. There is also evidence to show that the words were interpreted as a prohibition of simultaneous marriage of two sisters, as in the case of Jacob. Philo speaks of this as the usual interpretation in his time. The Mishna, compiled in the second century,* testifies that it was the common and received sense of the Hebraizing Jews. St. Basil tells us that it was the argument used in Asia Minor by one whom he condemned. "It is written," he says, "in Leviticus, 'Thou shalt not take a wife to her sister for a rival, beside her in her lifetime.' It is manifest, then, from this text, that it is permitted to take her after the first wife is dead." It was the sense known to the Syrian Church in the fifth century, as appears from Theodoret. In his 86th question on Genesis he asks, "Why the wives of Jacob were jealous of each other," and answers, "They were imperfect, and daughters of an ungodly man, who called images gods. For this reason God, when he gave the law, forbade that sort of marriage, for he says, 'Thou shalt not take a woman to her sister a rival of her.' *τούτου ἕνεκεν νομοθετῶν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν τοιοῦτον*

* Supposed to have been arranged in order by R. Akiva at the end of the first, or early in the second century, and completed, according to some, in the year 141, to others, 189. The latest date assigned for the completion is 219. Comp. Zunz, "Gottesdienstliche Vorträge der Juden, p. 46," and De Rossi, "Dizionario Storico," Art. Giuda Nassi, vol. i., p. 145.

ἀπαγορεύει γάμον· οὐ λήψη γάρ φησι γυναῖκα ἐπ' ἀδελφῆ αὐτῆς ἀντίζηλον αὐτῆς." It was the sense known to the African Church, as appears from Augustine, who says: — "Uxorem* super sororem ejus non accipies in zelum. Hic non prohibuit [quamlibet] superducere quod licebat antiquis propter abundantiam propagationis, sed sororem sorori noluit superduci, quod videtur fecisse Jacob sive quia nondum fuerat lege prohibitum, &c.;" *i. e.*, Lev. xviii. 18, according to Augustine, is not a prohibition of polygamy, but of a simultaneous marriage with two sisters, as in the case of Jacob. It was the sense preserved in the East, at the beginning of the seventh century, as we see from the commentary of Isychius, or Hesychius, of Jerusalem, on Lev. xviii. 18. After remarking that his command is agreeable to the will of Him who wishes all, specially relatives, to live at peace, he says: "Quod subvertit, si simul quis uxori sororique ejus jungatur, ut sorores simul habitent, et ut inter simul habitantes excitetur zelus, unde contentio rixaque generatur." †

In the ninth century we find the words of Augustine, as cited above, in the commentary of Rabanus Maurus, and thence derived into the "Glossa Ordinaria" attributed to Walafrid Strabo.

In the eleventh century, in his "De Parentelæ Gradibus," Peter Damiani, though opposed to the marriage,

* "A wife in addition to her sister thou shalt not take to promote jealousy. Here he did not prohibit the marrying of any wife in addition to the one already married, which was lawful for the ancients for the sake of abundance of propagation; but he was unwilling that sister should be married in addition to sister, which Jacob appears to have done, either because it had not yet been forbidden by law, or, &c."

† "Which he subverts, if any one be united at the same time to a wife and her sister, so that sisters dwell together,—and that between them dwelling together jealousy be excited, whence contention and strife are generated."

shows that Lev. xviii. 18 was understood of marriage with a wife's sister: "atque ut quod dicimus sacræ auctoritatis testimonio comprobemus, præcipitur in Levitico. Turpitudinem sororis uxoris tuæ et filiae ejus non revelabis." *

In the twelfth century, about 1157, we find it in the commentary of Radulphus Flaviacensis, "Quod superius de duobus fratribus, ne unam accipiant dum advivunt utrique, hoc nunc de duabus præcipit sororibus, ne uni nubant, utraque vivente. Ergo nec fratrum, si primus defunctus fuerit, uni mulieri, nec duarum sororum, si prima obierit, uni viro nuptias contradicit." †

In the 13th century the same interpretation is given in the "Postilla" of the famous Hugo de Sancto Caro, one of the greatest Bible students of his time,—famous as the compiler of the first concordance. On the words, "Sororem uxoris tuæ," he says: "Sed nunquid Jacob duxit duas sorores? Solut. Reverâ duxit. Sed nondum lex ista data fuerat, vel fraude suppositionis deceptus fuit. Nec esset justum ut priorem dimitteret, secundâ adveniente." ‡ And on "in pellicatum," he adds: "Quasi dicat, uxore tuâ vivente non ducas sororem ejus, quia non esset uxor sed pellex." §

* "And that we may prove what we say by the testimony of sacred authority, it is commanded in Leviticus, 'Thou shalt not uncover the shame of thy wife's sister or her daughter.'"

† "i.e., What he had commanded above, concerning two brothers, that they should not marry one woman, whilst both brothers are alive, this he now commands with regard to two sisters, that they should not marry one man, while both (sisters) are alive." He follows St. Augustine in interpreting the prohibition verse 16, as relating to the life of the two brothers.

‡ "But did not Jacob marry two sisters? Solution: he did truly. But that law had not yet been given, or he was deceived by the fraud of substitution. And it would not have been just to dismiss the former at the advent of the second."

§ "As if to say, whilst thy wife is living, thou mayest not marry her sister, because she would not be a wife, but a concubine."

In the 14th century, Nicholas de Lyra (died 1340) says:—"In Hebræo habetur, sororem uxoris tuæ non recipies ad anxiamdum; quia si una sit magis dilecta quàm alia, oritur invidia minus dilectæ," &c.; and on the words, "adhuc illâ vivente,"* he says: "Quia si prima soror sit mortua, talis invidia non oritur, et ideo alia soror tunc accipi non prohibetur." †

In the 15th century, Alphonso Tostatus, called in his own times *Stupor Mundi*, says, in his commentary on the words "Adhuc illa vivente," "Quasi dicat, quod quando vivit soror, quæ primo accepta est in uxorem, non licet accipere alteram, sed cum ipsa mortua fuerit, potest accipi alia soror." "*Whilst she is still living*"—"that is to say, that as long as the sister who was first married is alive, it is not lawful to marry the other; but when she is dead, another sister may be married."

And now, with the revival of letters, the study of the Scripture in the original languages also revived, and soon the Reformation compelled all active spirits to investigate the meaning of that book to which the Reformers so confidently appealed. A wide diversity of interpretation on other passages soon appeared; but, with regard to Leviticus xviii. 18, there was no difference. Protestant and Romanist with one mind adhered to the ancient interpretation. Thus,

In the 16th century, Cardinal Thomas Cajetan (d. 1534) on Lev. xviii. 18: "Connubium cum duabus sororibus utrâque vivente inhibetur . . . Nec prohibetur hujus modi connubium propter affinitatem (quia sorore

* In Hebrew it is, "Thy wife's sister thou shalt not take to torment, because, if one be more loved than another, envy arises in the less loved."

† "Because, if the first sister be dead, such envy does not arise, and therefore another sister is then not forbidden to be taken."

mortuâ licebat ducere alteram sororem in uxorem) sed propter pacem inter sorores.” *

Sanctes Pagninus, whose Bible appeared in 1528, the first after Jerome who endeavoured to give a correct Latin translation, and devoted twenty-five years to the work, made many alterations, more agreeable to the original text, but here gives the same sense, in a more literal translation : “ Uxorem cum sorore sua non accipies ad lacessendum, ad revelandum turpitudinem ejus super eam ipsâ vivente.” †

Luther’s translation of the Pentateuch appeared in 1523. The whole Bible, revised by himself, Melancthon, Cruciger, Justus Jonas, and Bugenhagen, was published in 1530. But however bent on reform, and opposed to Popery, they retained the translation common in the universal Church.

“ Du sollst auch deines Weibes Schwester nicht nehmen neben ihr ihre Schaam zu entblößen ihr zuwider, weil sie noch lebet ;” ‡ and in his Tract on married life (vom ehelichen Leben) he says, “ Gott hat diese Personen verboten, meines Vater’s Bruder, meines Sohnes Weib, meine Stieff-tochter, meines Stieff-sohnes, oder Stieff-tochter Kind, meines Weibes Schwester, weil mein Weib lebet. Dieser Personen kann ich keine haben, die andere mag ich haben, und darff dennoch kein Geld drumb geben,

* “ A marriage with two sisters is forbidden whilst both are alive. . . . Neither is marriage of this sort prohibited on account of affinity, because, one sister being dead, it was lawful to take the other as wife, but for the sake of peace between sisters.”

† “ A wife with her sister thou shalt not take to provoke, to uncover her shame, whilst she is still living.”

‡ “ Thou shalt not take the sister of thy wife together with her to uncover her shame, in opposition to her as long as she is alive.”

nehmlich meiner Braut oder meines Weibes Schwester nach ihrem Todt." *

Bugenhagen, in his Saxon Bible, gives the same translation as Luther: "Du schalt ock dyner Frewen Süster nicht nemen nëven ër, ëre Schemde tho blötende er tho—weddern dewyle se noch lëvet."

John Brentius, of whom Walch says, that as an expositor of Scripture he ranks next to Luther, in his commentary on Leviticus, pronounces marriage with a deceased wife's sister lawful, in words very similar to those of Fagius, given below, and the same judgment is also given in a Tract on the subject of marriage.† Martin Borrhaus, the pupil of Reuchlin and friend of Melancthon, in his commentary on Leviticus (Basil 1557), says, "Uxoris sororem, eâ vivente, non esse ducendam, ut cum eâ rem habeat. Ratio additur, ne ea res uxori molestiam ac dolorem afferat quod in conjugio Jacobi accidisse palam est." ‡

Leo de Juda, whose Bible appeared in 1543 and was held in much repute, translates Lev. xviii. 18 thus: "Uxorem ac sororem suam ne ducas ad laccessendum, ut scilicet retegas turpitudinem ejus vivente adhuc

* "God has forbidden these persons, my father's brother's wife, my son's wife, my step-daughter, my step-son's or step-daughter's child, my wife's sister, whilst my wife is living. Of these persons I can have none: the other I may have, and need pay no money for it, *i.e.*, the sister of my betrothed, or of my wife after her death." Luther's works "Jena," tom. ii., tit. vom ehelichen Leben, cited by Bucholz Responsum, § 232. Some have said that Luther afterwards changed his mind. But this is not the fact, as Bucholz proves.

† Tractatus casuum quorundum matrimonialium. Joann Brentio autore. A.D. 1532, pp. 15 and 16.

‡ "The wife's sister is not to be married whilst she is alive. The reason is added, lest that matter should cause trouble and grief to the wife, as is well known to have happened in the marriage of Jacob."

illâ.”* This Bible expresses the joint opinion of Leo de Juda, Bibliander, and Conrad Pellican, who worked together with Leo whilst he lived, and completed the task after his death, which took place in 1542.

Vatablus, who, on account of his great reputation, was appointed Professor of Hebrew, in Paris, in 1531, says, in his note † on Lev. xviii. 18, “Ne accipias mulierem aliquam pro uxore cum sorore ejus, ut affligas eam, concumbendo cum sorore ejus, præsentē sive vivente eâ uxoris sorore. Nam uxoris demortuæ sororem ducere licebat, quasi dicat, duas sorores simul non duces in uxores: uxore tamen tuâ mortuâ, sororem ejus ducere poteris.” ‡

Paulus Fagius (died 1547), in his note to his translation of the Targum of Onkelos, says,—“Etsi in lege Mosi polygamia concessa fuit tamen non licuit duabus simul sororibus jungi ne videlicet altera alteram perpetuo affligeret, quod in conjugio Jacobi patriarchæ factum est.” § Then follow the same words as in the preceding note of Vatablus, concluding with “uxore tamen tuâ mortuâ sororem ejus ducere poteris.”

* “A wife and her sister marry not, to provoke, namely to uncover her shame, whilst the former is still living.”

† Some say that these notes, published along with Leo de Juda’s translation, were taken from notes of Vatablus’s public lectures. Others ascribe them to other persons. But whoever was the author, they, and the translation to which they were appended, were so well received as to be reprinted at Paris and Salamanca, notwithstanding the prejudice against Protestants. Carpzov. *Critica Sacra*, p. 731.

‡ “Take not any woman with her sister to afflict her by lying with her sister, that sister of the wife being present or living. For it was lawful to marry the sister of the deceased wife. The sense is: Two sisters at the same time thou shalt not take for wives; but when thy wife is dead, thou wilt be at liberty to marry her sister.”

§ “Although in the law of Moses polygamy was allowed, yet it was not lawful to be joined to two sisters at the same time, lest one should perpetually afflict the other, as happened in the married state of the patriarch Jacob.”

Sebastian Munster, whose first edition appeared in 1534, has "Uxorem cum sorore ejus non accipies in æmulationem ut scilicet reveles turpitudinem ejus dum illa adhuc vivit;" * and has in his note, "In æmulationem sive tribulationem. Alludit ad matrimonium Jacob qui duas habuit viventes sorores, quarum una alteram perpetuo ob maritum æmulabatur." †

Isidore Clarius, who published his emended Vulgate in 1542, adopts both the translation and note of Munster, as just given.

In Cranmer's Bible, 1540, the translation is similar: "Thou shalt not take a woman and her sister also to vex her, that thou woldest uncover her secretes as long as she liveth." And to this translation Cranmer adhered, as may be seen in the "Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum," which expresses the joint judgment of Cranmer, Goodrick, Cox, May, Peter Martyr, and Rowland Taylor. Chap. v. is "Enumeratio personarum in Levitico prohibitarum. In Levitico dispositæ personæ citantur his nominibus, mater, noverca, soror, filia filii, filia filiæ, amita, matertera, uxor patruï, nurus, uxor fratris, filia fratris, filia uxoris, filia filii uxoris, filia filiæ uxoris, soror uxoris." (Cardwell's edit., p. 48.) In the Revision of Cranmer's Bible by Cuthbert, Bishop of Durham, and Ridley, in 1541, the same translation is retained, and a reference given in the margin to Gen. xxix., showing that they understood it of simultaneous marriage with two sisters.

In the French translation, Lyons, 1544, "Tu ne prendras point aussi la femme avec sa sœur en son vivant: pour descouvrir sa vergonge, car ce tournerait en affliction."

* "A wife with her sister thou shalt not take into rivalship, namely, to reveal her shame, whilst the former still lives."

† "Into rivalship or tribulation. He alludes to the marriage of Jacob, who had two living sisters, of whom the one was perpetually jealous of the other on account of their husband."

Castellio, in his Bible, 1550, has “Uxoris sororem, ea vivente, ne ducito, ut cum eâ rem habeas, quæ res uxori dolorem faciat.” *

Jerome ab Oleastro republished Pagninus' Bible at Lisbon in 1556 with notes. On Lev. xviii. 18, he says: “Sensus est: non addas ad uxorem tuam sororem ejus; ut scilicet uxorem angustiâ afficias,” &c. “*Dum ipsa vivit.* Concedit post mortem uxoris posse sororem ejus accipere. Noverat Dominus, qualiter Rachel angebat Liam, ideo noluit talia connubia in suo populo permittere.” †

In the Geneva Bible, 1560: “Also thou shalt not take a wife and her sister also to vex her in uncovering her shame upon her.”

In the edition of Bruccioli's Italian Bible printed by Francesco Durone, 1562: “Tu non pigliarai la moglia con la sua sorella, per che ella sia afflitta, per scoprire la sua vergogna mentra ch' ella vivera.”

In like manner the Dutch Bible, printed at Embden, 1562: “Du salt oock, dijns wijfs suster niet nemen nevens haer, hare schaemte te blooten, haer te spiijt, dewijle sy nock leeft;” and a marginal reference is given to Gen. xxix. 29.

Thus, far, then, from 280 years before Christ to 1562 years after, *i. e.*, until within two years of the close of the Council of Trent, I find almost identity of translation: all understand the word “sister” in Lev. xviii. 18 in its strict and primary sense; all understand the prohibition as relating to the simultaneous marriage with two sisters.

Now, what is to be said against this wondrous unani-

* “Thy wife's sister, whilst she is alive, marry not, to have carnal communion with her, which thing would cause grief to the wife.”

† “The sense is: To thy wife add not her sister, to afflict thy wife, &c., whilst she is alive. After the death of the wife he gives liberty to marry her sister. The Lord knew how Rachel tormented Leah; He was therefore unwilling to permit such marriages amongst his people.”

mity of men of all ages, countries, and climes—of Jews before the coming of Christ and after the coming of Christ—of Eastern Christians and Western Christians—of Romanists and Protestants? Is it to be believed that the Jews before Christ, and at the time of Christ, and ever since, have been ignorant of their own language?—that all the gigantic scholars of the age of the Reformation were unable to learn Hebrew, so as to translate Lev. xviii. 18 correctly?—or that words, so uniformly translated for seventeen centuries, and by opposing parties, are equivocal in their signification? Yet this is said and argued by some who profess to have a respect for antiquity. Let such persons, if they can, weaken this statement by producing testimony as old and varied, and scholars as competent as those who have been named. I myself can find no one who gives a different translation before the year 1575.* Then appeared, so far as I can find, for the first time, that translation found in the Bible of Junius and Tremellius, “mulierem unam ad alteram ne assumito.” Even if we allow these translators to have had competent † knowledge of the Hebrew language, yet can we prefer the judgment

* It is said by Drusius and Grotius in their Commentaries, as given in the “*Critici Sacri*,” that the Karaites interpreted verse 18 as a prohibition of polygamy; and they refer for proof to the Rabbinic book “*Psikta Zutarta*,” written by Rabbi Tobiah in 1104. But Trigland, with the best, the Venetian, edition of that book before him, says, that in the whole section there is no mention of the Karaites. Neither is it found in either of two copies which I have consulted. It is certain that some of the Karaites allow a man to take as many wives as he pleases, as is proved by Trigland by an extract from one of their most famous books, the “*Addereth Eliyahu* ;” and it is to be remembered that the Karaites, who did not exist as a sect before A.D. 751, and whose most ancient book was not written until about 400 years afterwards, cannot be received as witnesses of ancient Jewish opinion.

† Which, however, is denied by P. Simon, Carpzov, Le Long, and others.

of these two men, to the united judgment of all those who have preceded them? If, indeed, all that succeeded them had adopted their version, and in the course of the last 280 years all the great Hebrew and Rabbinical scholars had followed them in rejecting the ancient and primitive version, we might have thought that the progress made in philology had thrown some new light on these old words, and that advancing criticism, more profound study of the Hebrew Bible, and etymological research, had helped modern students to understand the Divine law better than all who had preceded. But this is not the case. Few interpreters of the Old Testament of reputation have adopted the modern version, or followed Junius and Tremellius. The most distinguished Hebrew scholars since the Council of Trent have adhered to the judgment of antiquity. Thus the Bishops who revised Cranmer's Bible in 1568 still retained the ancient version, "Thou shalt not take a wife and her sister also to vex her, that thou wouldest uncover her nakedness upon her in her lifetime." In the Spanish translation of Cassiodore de Reyna (Basil, 1569), the same sense is given:—"Item, muger con su hermana por concubina no tomaras para descubrir sus verguenças delanta ella en sua vida." And to the same purpose the Jews, in their Spanish translation, made perhaps earlier, and since corrected by Manasseh ben Israel and other competent scholars:—"Y muger con su hermana no tomes: por combleçar, por descubrir su descubertura sobre ella en su vida."

The combined Universities of Salamanca and Complutum* so approved of what is called Vatablus' Bible, that they republished it at Salamanca, 1574, altering what they considered Protestant errors. But this verse—xviii. 18—they leave as it stood:—"Uxorem ad sororem suam ne ducas, ad laccessendum ut scilicet retegas turpitudinem ejus, vivente adhuc illa," and add Vata-

* The modern Alcala de Henarez.

blus' note given above: "Uxoris demortuæ sororem ducere licebat."

Luke Oslander, whose great work appeared at Tübingen in 1578, and passed through thirteen editions in a very few years, correcting the Vulgate in *pellicatum*, says:—"Non accipies ad affligendum ad revelandum turpitudinem ejus (*i.e.*, ne affligas uxorem tuam ducendo ipsius sororem) adhuc illa priore tua uxore vivente, quia ea res inter sorores acerbissimas æmulationes excitat; id quod ex matrimonio patriarchæ Jacobi manifestum est."

Menochius, in his book, *De Republica Judæorum*, 1607, says:—"Conceditur tamen ut priore mortuâ alteram ducat;" * and, in his "Commentary on Leviticus": "*Adhuc illâ vivente*, quia mortuâ illâ poterant accipere sororem in conjugem." †

The profoundly learned, judicious, and pious authors of our own Authorized Version evidently preferred this rendering by inserting it in the text, and throwing the other into the margin.

John Lorinus, in his "Commentary to Leviticus" (Antwerp, 1620), says, on Leviticus xviii. 18:—"Interdicitur carnalis conjunctio cum sorore uxoris, dum hæc vivit, tam nomine matrimonii, in quo soror habeat minus præcipuum locum, nempe pellicis sive concubinæ, quam alio nomine, sed et ne ambas quis ducat æquo jure primariarum, vel concubinarum: denique ut nullo modo rem habeat cum ambabus sororibus simul viventibus. Quare indicatur posse sororem defunctæ uxoris in uxorem accipi." †

* "It is allowed, however, when the first is dead to marry the other."

† "*Whilst she is yet living*, because, when she was dead, they might marry the sister."

‡ "Forbidden is carnal conjunction with a wife's sister whilst she is alive, as well under the name of matrimony—in which the sister might have a less honourable place, namely, that of inferior wife or concubine—as under any other name. But it is even

The learned Jesuit, Cornelius a Lapide (died 1637), on Leviticus xviii. 18, says :—“Nec revelabis turpitudinem ejus, adhuc illâ vivente, quia illâ mortuâ potes accipere uxoris tuæ sororem in conjugem. Hoc enim lege veteri licuit, sed in novâ jam non licet.”—*Concil. Trident.*, sess. xxiv.*

The learned and judicious Protestant, Diodati, preferred the same rendering :—“Non prendere etiandio una donna insieme con la sua sorella per affliger-la, scoprendo la nudità della sua sorella che tu havresti presa oltre a lei, in vita sua.”

Another learned Romanist, Bonfrere (died 1643), speaking of the prohibition to take two sisters together, says :—“Nec hoc jam naturæ est; habuit enim Jacob duas sorores simul conjuges . . . conceditur tamen ut priore mortuâ alteram ducat.” †

So Tirinus (whose “Commentary” was published at Antwerp, 1632):—“Vetatur conjugium cum sorore uxoris adhuc viventis. Id ante hanc legem licuisse patet ex Jacobi exemplo, Gen. xxix., qui duas sorores Liam et Rachelem simul habuit. Mortuâ uxore, licebat sororem illius ducere.” ‡

forbidden for any one to marry both sisters with the equal right of superior wives, or concubines. Finally, in no way to have carnal communion with two sisters who are both living. Wherefore it is indicated that the sister of a deceased wife may be taken as a wife.”

* “Thou shalt not reveal her shame whilst the former is still alive, because, when she is dead, thou mayest take thy wife’s sister for a wife. According to the old law, this was lawful, but now, in the new, it is not lawful.” *Council of Trent*, sess. xxiv.

† “Neither is this founded in nature, for Jacob had two sisters wives at the same time. . . . it is allowed, however, when the first is dead to take the other.”

‡ “Forbidden is marriage with the sister of the wife whilst she is still living. Before this law it is clear that it was lawful, according to the example of Jacob (Gen. xxix.), who had two sisters—Leah and Rachel—at the same time. When the wife was dead, it was *lawful* to marry her sister.”

In 1649, the Faculty of Law at the University of Rinteln gave a joint and formal decision on the subject of marriage with a deceased wife's sister, which is the most complete treatise on the subject that I have seen. With regard to Leviticus xviii. 18, paragraph 224 says: —“Endlich auch dass das matrimonium cum sorore uxoris defunctæ in dem Gesetze zugelassen sey, Solches wird ex mente legis per argumentum *â sensu contrario* fest behauptet. Si enim expressé est prohibitum matrimonium cum sorore uxoris viventis, sequitur *â sensu contrario* ex mente legis, matrimonium cum sorore uxoris defunctæ non esse prohibitum, sed concessum. Nam argumentum *â sensu contrario* in jure usitatum est et validum.”*—L. qui testamento, s. mulier, ff. qui testam. fac. poss., l. cum lex ff. de legib. Vult. Marp. cons. 18, n. 8, vol. 1. Regner. Sixtin. cons. 7, n. 19; cons. 14, n. 114, vol. 2. Goedd, cons. 28, n. 201, vol. 3.

The profoundly learned Sebastian Schmidt, whose translation appeared in 1696, also gives the same version. “Mulierem etiam ad sororem ejus non accipies ad æmulandum, revelando nuditatem ejus præter illam in vita ejus.”

Le Clerc, in his commentary published about the same time, translates, “Uxorem cum ejus sorore non

* “Finally, also, that the marriage with a deceased wife's sister is allowed in the Law is unhesitatingly affirmed. For, if marriage with the sister of a living wife is expressly prohibited, it follows, *â sensu contrario*, according to the mind of the law, that marriage with the sister of a deceased wife is not prohibited, but permitted: for the argument *â sensu contrario* is in law allowed and valid.” Responsum Juris Collegii Jctorum in Academia Rintelensi elaboratum a Christophoro Joachimo Bucholtz, &c. Rinteln, 1652. This University was dissolved by the quondam King of Westphalia in 1809.

duces, ut dolorem huic crees, adeo ut nuditatem ejus reveles, hac vivente.” *

Le Maistre de Sacy, in his Bible (Paris, 1730), has—“Vous ne prendrez point la sœur de votre femme pour la rendre sa rivale, et vous ne découvrirez point dans elle du vivant de votre femme ce que la pudeur veut qui soit caché.”

Dathius (d. 1791), “Uxoris sororem ne in matrimonium ducas ad æmulationem ejus excitandam cum hac propter illam concumbens illa vivente.”

The great Calmet (d. 1757), in his Bible and commentary, has—“Vous ne prendrez point la sœur de votre femme pour la rendre sa rivale : et vous ne découvrirez point dans elle, du vivant de votre femme, ce que la pudeur veut qui soit caché ;” and then, in a note—“Ce texte exprimé de cette manière, marque qu’il n’est pas permis d’avoir pour femmes les deux sœurs en même temps, comme Jacob eut Rachel et Lea, mais seulement successivement.”

The opinion of Michaelis is well known from his general work on the laws of Moses, and his special treatise on these marriage laws. See “Commentaries on the Laws of Moses,” c. vii. And “Abhandlung von den Ehegesetzen Mosis, welche Heyrathen in die Nahe Freundschaft untersagen.” Second Edition. Göttingen. 1768. P. 227, and sqq.

J. C. F. Schultz (Ordinary Professor of Theology and Oriental Languages at Giessen), in his “Scholia” (Norimbergæ, 1783), says—צַר־ר (conf. 1 Sam. i. 6) etiam apud Arabes usurpatur de æmulatione duarum unius mariti conjugum. Moses igitur, qui diserte addit בְּחַיֶּיהָ (eâ vivente) matrimonium cum uxoris mortuæ sorore

* “A wife with her sister thou shalt not marry to cause her grief, by uncovering her nakedness whilst she is alive.”

omnino non prohibet, sed duntaxat uxore vivente cum ejus sorore matrimonium ne hæc illam ad æmulationem excitet." *

De Wette (1809). "Ein Weib zu ihrer Schwester sollst du nicht nehmen ihre Schaam zu blößen neben ihr bei ihren Leben."

Schott and Winzer,† in their new translation of the Pentateuch, published 1816, translate thus,—“Noli uxorem (aliam) ducere præter sororem ejus, ita ut hujus æmulationem excites, et nuditatem illius juxta hanc viventem retegas.” Then in a note, *i.e.*, “Noli præter tuam conjugem aliam insuper uxorem ducere quæ illius soror est.” ‡

Adam Clarke, the celebrated Wesleyan, in his commentary says, “Thou shalt not marry two sisters at the same time, as Jacob did Rachel and Leah; but there is nothing in this law that rendered it illegal to marry a sister-in-law, when her sister was dead.”

Rosenmüller.—“*Uxorem ad sororem ejus* (duas sorores), ne ducas in matrimonium scil. בְּחַיִּיהָ *in vita ejus* ut in fine versus additur, *i.e.*, uxore tuâ vivente. Non igitur prohibet Moses matrimonium cum sorore uxoris mortuæ.” §

* The Hebrew word צַרַר (compare 1 Sam. i. 6) is also used amongst the Arabs of the jealousy of the two wives of one husband. Moses therefore, who expressly adds בְּחַיִּיהָ (whilst she is living), does not by any means prohibit marriage with a deceased wife's sister, but only whilst the wife is living, forbids marriage with her sister, lest the latter should excite the former to jealousy.

† Dr. H. A. Schott, Ordinary Professor of Theology at Jena; Dr. J. F. Winzer, Ordinary Professor of Theology at Leipsic.

‡ “Marry not another wife beside her sister, so as to excite the jealousy of the latter, and uncover the nakedness of the former beside the latter, whilst she is alive. . . . Beside thy wife marry not another wife who is the sister of the former.”

§ “*A wife to her sister.* Two sisters marry not, namely, בְּחַיִּיהָ *in her life*, as is added at the end of the verse, *i.e.*, whilst thy wife is living. Moses, therefore, does not prohibit marriage with a deceased wife's sister.”

Gesenius Thesaurus in צרר. “Ne ducito uxorem ad sororem ejus, ita ut zelotypæ fiant, una alterius aemula sit.” *

Zunz, Arnheim, Fürst, Sachs, four of the greatest Hebrew scholars now living, in their Bible (Berlin, 1838): Und nimm kein Weib zu ihrer Schwester dazu als Nebenbuhlerin dass du aufdeckest ihre Schaam neben derselben bei deren Leben. † This translation exhibits the joint and deliberate opinion of the four.

Bertheau, who has devoted more study to the laws of Moses than any other living scholar, has also, “Kein Weib zu ihrer Schwester sollst du nehmen, ihre Schaam zu blößen neben ihr, so lange sie lebet.” ‡

Dr. Baumgarten, of Kiel, says:—“Da das verbot der Ehe mit der Frauen schwester durch die Rücksicht auf der ersteren Leben ausdrücklich bedingt wird (בְּחַיֶּיהָ, v. 18) so muss man mit den Rabbaniten schliessen, dass die Ehe nach dem Tode der Frau gestattet wird.” §—Vol. ii., p. 204.

Dr. Chalmers, whose opinion on any subject is deserving of attention, says, on Lev. xviii. 2—18:—“It is remarkable, that whilst there is an express interdict on the marriage of a man with his brother’s wife, there is no such prohibition against his marriage with his wife’s sister. In verse 18 the prohibition is only against marrying a wife’s sister during the life of the first wife,

* “Marry not a wife in addition to her sister, so that they should become jealous, one be the rival of the other.”

† “Take not any wife to her sister as rival, so as to uncover her shame, beside her, during her life.”

‡ “No wife to her sister shalt thou take, to uncover her shame beside her, as long as she lives.”—*Die sieben Gruppen Mosaischer Gesetze*. Göttingen, 1840, p. 199.

§ TRANSLATION. —As the prohibition of marriage with the wife’s sister is expressly limited by reference to the life of the first (בְּחַיֶּיהָ, v. 18), we must with the Rabbanites conclude, that this marriage is permitted after the death of the wife.

which of itself implies a liberty to marry the sister after her death—beside implying a connivance at polygamy.”
—*Daily Scripture Readings*, p. 225.

Professor Robinson, of Palestine fame, than whom a greater authority can hardly be named in Hebrew and Biblical literature, has considered the whole subject in the “*Bibliotheca Sacra*” for 1843. On p. 293 he says:—“Let us look now at the bearing of verse 18 upon the question. It reads as follows in the original:—

“Verse 18.—‘And a wife to her sister thou shalt not take, to vex, to uncover her nakedness, besides her, in her life-time.’

“Now, taking this verse in its obvious sense, as it here stands, nothing could be more appropriate, either to the usage of the words or the logical connexion. The words here translated *wife* and *sister* are the same which are so used and so translated in the preceding verses—viz., 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. And when the lawgiver had turned, in verse 17, to speak of the wife’s relatives, her mother’s daughter and granddaughter, with whom marriage was to be forbidden, it certainly would be exceedingly natural for him to proceed, in verse 18, to speak of the wife’s sister, with whom the probability of a marriage *could not but be tenfold greater*. So strong, indeed, is here the fitness of the obvious sense, both in respect to the words and the connexion, that leading modern commentators on the original text (Grotius, Michaelis, Rosenmüller, and others) do not hesitate to adopt it even on these grounds alone.

“If this view be admitted, this verse, as most agree, would seem to settle the question. It does not prohibit, but merely regulate, the marriage of a wife’s sister; forbidding only that it should take place during the lifetime of the former. It precludes the occurrence of cases like that of Jacob with Leah and Rachel.”

Even Professor Bush, after entering into a minute investigation of the words and phrases, feels himself

“constrained to give up the argument drawn from the Hebrew idiom, and to admit that the connexion here forbidden is marriage with a wife’s sister.” And again, on p. 196, col. i. : “If, then, polygamy is not forbidden in this passage, what is? We answer, that it was designed to discountenance the practice, which is implied in the plain and literal terms of the text—the taking simultaneously of two sisters to wife.” (Comm. in Levit. New York, 1857.)

The latest, and one of the most careful and learned commentators on Leviticus, Dr. Knobel (Leipzig, 1858), says on xviii. 18 : “Endlich soll man nicht nehmen ein Weib zu ihrer Schwester, um zu entblößen ihre Scham bei ihrem Leben, *d. i.*, nicht die Schwester seines Weibes, so lange das letztere noch lebet, zur Frau nehmen, nicht zwei Schwestern zugleich zu Weibern haben. . . . Eine nach der andern, nach dem Tode der andern zu heirathen wird nicht verboten.” *

I could add the names of other distinguished interpreters of the Old Testament, whose opinions I know, but have confined myself to those whose works I have myself inspected, omitting all to which I have not had immediate access. But these, comprising Romanists and Protestants, Lutherans and Calvinists, Orthodox and Rationalist, as well as learned Jews, men of different countries and habits of thought, are sufficient to show that many, competent to form a just judgment, have rejected the new version, and adhered to the ancient, as the obvious and correct translation of the sacred original.

Having shown that the interpretation received in the Church for more than 1,500 years, is also that adopted

* “Finally, a man shall not take a wife to her sister, to uncover her shame during her life, *i. e.*, not to marry the sister of his wife, as long as the latter is still alive, not to have two sisters as wives at once. . . . To marry one after the other, after the death of the other, is not forbidden.”

by the greatest Hebrew and Biblical scholars since the Reformation, it may seem superfluous to say anything more in defence of an interpretation so ancient and supported by such weight of authority. But you will probably say, Have you considered what has been said on the other side? I answer, Yes. In a matter of such grave importance, it is a duty to consider the objections, which induce some earnest and learned persons to reject both antiquity and authority. I now proceed, therefore, to notice those referring to the interpretation of Lev. xviii. 18, and to show that they are inconclusive, or contrary to Scripture, or both.

The first is, that as the prohibition in verse 16, to marry a brother's wife, appears by analogy and parity of reason to contain a prohibition to marry a wife's sister, it cannot be supposed that verse 18 would revert to the case already provided for, and therefore verse 18 must mean something else. So says Willett,* "It had been superfluous to provide by a new law against the marriage of the wife's sister, which is as near, if not nearer, than the brother's wife, which is before expressly forbidden." And in like manner, in the Tract already alluded to, the author says, "It is not reasonable to refer Lev. xviii. 18 to a case already provided for, viz., marriage with a wife's sister, which we have seen inferentially forbidden in Lev. xviii. 18." I answer, in the first place, that this inference is a novelty, entirely unknown to the ancient Church. St. Basil does not use it as an argument. St. Augustine was so far from knowing anything about it, that he thought that the prohibition to marry a brother's wife related only to the case of the deceased husband leaving children behind him, or that it prohibited one

* Hexapla in Leviticum. London, 1631.

brother to marry a woman whom another had divorced, whilst the latter was alive.* The idea of incest, even in this case, does not appear to have entered Augustine's mind.

I answer, secondly, that according to this method of interpretation, we might say that verse 12, which prohibits a father's sister, by parity of reason, includes a mother's sister, and therefore verse 13 cannot refer to a case already provided for: or, that in Deut. xxv. 5, commanding a man to marry his brother's widow, *brother* cannot mean *brother*, as that case has been already provided for in Lev. xviii. 16, and absolutely and totally forbidden as incestuous.

Thirdly, even were we to grant that the prohibition to marry a brother's wife includes wife's sister, still the inferential prohibition cannot be stronger than the original and expressed prohibition. But the expressed prohibition admits of an exception, namely, if the brother die without children, when a man may marry his brother's wife. The inferential prohibition may, therefore, admit of an exception too, and that exception be contained in verse 18, and therefore verse 18 is not superfluous, inasmuch as it expresses an exception not provided for by verse 16, and was given to prevent the inference drawn in modern times; and thus Willett's assertion that verse 18, if interpreted of a wife's sister, is superfluous, is not true.

* Quæst. in Lev. lxi. Quæritur utrum hoc [Lev. xviii. 16] vivo fratre an mortuo sit prohibitum? Sed rursus si fratre mortuo intellexerimus prohibitum esse ducere fratris uxorem, occurrit illud quod excitandi seminis causa, si ille sine filiis defunctus esset, jubet scriptura esse faciendum: ac per hoc collatâ istâ prohibitione cum illâ jussione, ne invicem adversentur, intelligenda est exceptio, id est, non licere cuiquam defuncti fratris ducere uxorem, si defunctus posteros dereliquit: aut etiam illud esse prohibitum, ne liceret ducere fratris uxorem, etiamsi a fratre vivo per repudium recessisset.

But, fourthly, Willett's assertion is not only untrue, it is built upon two assumptions, directly contradicting the first principles of interpretation; the first, that wherever a law occurs the first time, its meaning and extent are to be definitively settled without any respect to the context, or to the subsequent enactments or modifications of the lawgiver; and the second, that a command cannot be repeated, because it would not be "reasonable to revert to a case already provided for." They who read the Bible with moderate attention know that some commands, as those respecting the three great feasts, the paschal abstinence from leaven, the Sabbath, adultery, and murder, are repeated in various parts of the law; and also that in subsequent enactments it has pleased God to modify laws previously given. Thus, the command to eat the passover in the first month was modified (Numb. ix. 6—11), and, under certain circumstances, the celebration of the feast permitted in the second month. Thus, also, the prohibition (Lev. xvii. 3) to kill animals anywhere but at the door of the tabernacle, suitable whilst in the wilderness, was modified by Deut. xii. 15, so as to be adapted to their possession of the land. And thus the command (Numb. viii. 24) that the Levites should begin service at the age of twenty-five was modified (1 Chron. xxiii. 24—28), and the age fixed at twenty. Indeed, this absurd principle, that a law once given is incapable of change or modification, is the Rabbinic argument for the perpetuity of the whole Mosaic law. A Divine law, or the principle involved in it, may be modified by the Divine Lawgiver. Verse 16, therefore, cannot be interpreted without reference to what follows. If no modification or limitation had followed, then, on Willett's principle, the inference from the brother's wife to the wife's sister might have been adopted without limitation. But in verse 18 it has pleased God to limit the inference to the lifetime of the first wife. To make

the inference from verse 16 unlimited, it would be necessary to prove, by legitimate and independent interpretation, that verse 18 does not refer to a wife's sister, or that the words "in her lifetime" are not a limitation.

In what has been just said, the legitimacy of the inference from brother's wife to wife's sister has been conceded for the sake of argument, but, according to the principles of the Mosaic law, and of the New Testament also, this inference is invalid. The ground of the inference is supposed to be the union of man and wife into one flesh, whence it is argued that the relations of the one become the relations of the other, and in the same degree. The fallacy of this argument has already been pointed out by others, by showing how many marriages now allowed by the Church and civil law of England would thus become incestuous and unlawful. I, therefore, confine myself to Scripture, and observe that, according to the Mosaic law, the wife becomes incorporated into the family, *mishpachah*, of the husband as long as the husband lives, and after his death, so long as she remains a widow; but the husband is not incorporated into the family, *mishpachah*, of the wife. His relations become her relations, but her relations do not become his relations.

In the first place the wife loses her family name, and obtains of right that of her husband. In the next, she is so entirely reckoned as part of her husband's family, that she is entitled to all the privileges to which birth in that family would have entitled her. Thus Ruth, the Moabitess, became by her marriage a member of the tribe of Judah, and, when a widow, entitled to all the privileges of the law of the Levirate, just as much as if she had been descended from Judah himself, but her husband did not become a Moabite. The daughters of Zelophehad, or any other heiresses, had they married out of their own tribe and family, would have been

incorporated into that family and tribe, and their property would have passed into the possession of that tribe. Their husbands would not have become part of Zelophehad's family or tribe, nor competent to continue Zelophehad's name; and so universally was this principle acknowledged, that it was necessary to make a general law that heiresses should marry in their own family, that a family in Israel should not become extinct. On the same principle a priest was not allowed to mourn for his married daughter (Lev. xxi. 3); and the priest's daughter, if married to a stranger, *i. e.*, to one not of a priestly family, was forbidden to eat an offering of the holy things. (Lev. xxii. 12.) By her marriage with the stranger he had not been incorporated into the priestly family, but she had so become incorporated into the stranger's family as to lose the privileges of her priestly birth. In the same way none of the wife's relations could be a **בִּשְׂרֵף**, avenger of blood—nor were they required to redeem one of the husband's relations who had become poor—nor could a wife's sister's husband marry the widow of a man who had died without children, even though he had left no male relations to perform that office. Thus, according to the law of Moses, the wife's relations are not regarded as the husband's relations, but the wife herself is considered as having renounced her own family to be incorporated into that of her husband; and, thus, the inference from the brother's wife to the wife's sister is on Mosaic principles invalid. It is equally so, accordingly, to the analogy based on a passage in the New Testament, and confidently referred to by those who advocate the inference from the brother's wife, namely, Ephesians v. 30—32, "For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a

great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." From this it is inferred that the union between man and wife is mysterious and real as that between Christ and the Church. Now, granting this, it does not follow hence that the wife's kin become the kin of the husband. The Church united to Christ becomes one body with the Lord, and is incorporated into His family—but her kin does not become His kin. As taken from the human race, she has the whole human race, Jews, Mahommedans, and heathen, as her kin, but by virtue of her union with the Heavenly Bridegroom, these her kin do not become His kin, members of His body, His flesh, and His bones. They still remain aliens from Christ and His family, destitute of those rights and privileges to which their kinswoman, the Church, has been admitted, and are in no wise, on account of her union, reckoned as parts of His body or flesh or family; and, therefore (Ps. xlv. 10), the Bride is commanded "to forget her people and her father's house, that the King may desire her beauty." If we are to reason from this analogy—if by marriage the earthly wife's kindred stand in the same position to the earthly husband as the heavenly wife's relations to the heavenly husband—then the earthly wife's kindred remain, notwithstanding her union with a husband, as remote from kindred with the husband as they were before the marriage, and, hence, no inference can be drawn from the brother's wife to the wife's sister or her relations; and, therefore, had the legislation stopped at Lev. xviii. 14, where the last blood-relation is mentioned, an Israelite might have made an inference with regard to blood-relations' wives, as they had become part of the husband's family—but could have made none with regard to wife's blood-relations. But as the former inference might have been doubtful, and the latter improbable, the Divine Legislator did not leave

these things to inference, but specified the persons prohibited in both cases.

A second objection against the ancient interpretation of Lev. xviii. 18 is, that the inference from the words, "In her life-time," is only an inference, and therefore unsafe. Thus it is said, "It seems strange that the only indication of the lawfulness of marrying two sisters at all (which is contrary to what we should otherwise have inferred from analogy), should be found in a prohibition against marrying a second sister during the life-time of the first." We might answer in the same words: "It seems strange that the only indication of the unlawfulness of marrying two sisters should be found in a prohibition against marrying a brother's wife, and that so important a matter should be left to mere inference, especially as the prohibition against marrying a man's own sister is three times repeated." But such arguments are never worth much. We must take the Bible as we find it; and with regard to inferences, we must either lay down the general principle, that all inferences are to be rejected, on the ground that "they are not in the bond,"—or prove that the particular inference to which we object lacks *vis consequentiæ*. The former is the ground taken by St. Basil. He says: "I was asked, 'Is it written (or is it not written in Scripture) that a man may take a woman to (or after) her sister?' "I replied—and this is both a true and safe answer—that "it is not so written. And to infer and conclude from the "clause added after (the prohibition), something else about "which nothing is said, is to legislate, not to take the law "as it stands." In accordance with this principle, perhaps, St. Basil says nothing about the inference from brother's wife, in verse 16, to wife's sister. According to his own words, this would be "to legislate, and not to take the law as it stands." But his admirers here abandon his authority and disregard his reasoning. Inference is

their stronghold, and, therefore, in spite of St. Basil, they hold it fast themselves, and only doubt its legitimacy when used by those who differ from them. The truth is, that an inference legitimately drawn is always acknowledged as a legitimate method for arriving at the meaning of Scripture. By inference our Lord proved the doctrine of the Resurrection, and St. Paul the doctrine of Justification by Faith, and all reasonable expositors of Scripture have followed their example. Even they who object to this particular inference, make similar inferences themselves. They say that Lev. xviii. 18 is a prohibition of simultaneous polygamy, and from the words, "in her life-time," infer, that when the first wife is dead, it is lawful to marry another. So Willett: "The better interpretation is, by the sister to understand any other woman, so that this should be the meaning, that a man should not take one wife together with another during her life." If the inference be good with regard to second marriage after the death of the first wife, it is also good with respect to marriage with a deceased wife's sister. If the inference be rejected in the latter case, it must also be rejected in the former case, and then verse 18 will signify that any second marriage is unlawful. Indeed, the legitimacy of inference from limitations appears from its general use by all parties. Professor Bush, who calls the inference from the words "in her life-time" a gross *non-sequitur*, argues himself in the same way elsewhere. On the words of Lev. x. 9, "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle . . . lest ye die," he says: "By its being forbidden to be used on a particular occasion, it is implied that at other times it was not prohibited then." From the command to the High Priest not to marry a widow, he infers that the High Priest "was exempt from marrying the widow of a brother who died without

children." It is certain that in the Law of Moses many important things altogether depend upon inference—as, for instance, the lawfulness of marrying a widow. The only place in the law of Moses whereby this marriage is permitted is the prohibition to a High Priest to marry a widow (Lev. xxi. 13, 14), whence it is legitimately inferred that for other priests and other men such marriage is lawful. So from Lev. xxi. 7, which forbids the ordinary priests to marry a harlot or a profane person, it is inferred that other persons might do so. From the prohibition, Numb. xxxv. 32, "Ye shall take no satisfaction (*Hebrew*, ransom) for the life of a murderer," it may be inferred that there are other cases in which ransom is lawful, and this is confirmed by Ex. xxi. 30. From Ex. xxi. 29—"But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to the owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death"—it is inferred that, if the owner did keep him in, but the gored person had gone and exposed himself to the fury of the ox, then the owner was not to be put to death. And it may be said generally, when a prohibition is given with a limitation, that where the limitation ceases the prohibition ceases, especially when the limitation is with regard to time. Thus it is said in the case of the Nazarite, "All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine-tree. All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head. All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father or his mother, for his brother or for his sister, when they die." And hence it is inferred, that when the days of his separation were fulfilled, he might eat of the fruit of the vine, he might shave his head, he might mourn for his nearest relations,

and others too. From the prohibition, Lev. xxii. 28—“Whether it be cow or ewe, ye shall not kill her and her young one both in one day”—it is inferred that to kill them on different days was lawful. From Lev. xxiii. 7, 8—“In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation, ye shall do no servile work therein. . . . In the seventh day is a holy convocation, ye shall do no servile work therein”—it is inferred that on the intermediate days, excepting the seventh-day Sabbath, servile work might be done. Even in the New Testament the lawfulness of a man’s marrying a second time is left to be proved by inference from the permission given to a widow (Rom. vii.) to take a second husband. Thus, most important consequences affecting the happiness and life of the individual, as the marriage of a widow or a penitent harlot, the deliverance of an innocent man from capital punishment, the permission to the labourer, the artisan, and the tradesman to earn their bread on the intermediate days between the first and seventh of the great feasts, depend altogether on inferences from a limitation. The inference drawn from the limitation in Lev. xviii. 18, “in her lifetime,” is as old as the days of Philo, has been drawn by the great body of the Jewish nation ever since, and by a host of the most learned and thoughtful Christians, of various nations and opposing creeds, down to the present time—not only those who draw it in favour of marriage with a deceased wife’s sister, but of those who, opposing that marriage, interpret Lev. xviii. 18 of polygamy. Both assert that the words, “in her lifetime,” is a limitation, and that, when the wife is dead, a second marriage is lawful; and thus the united strength and learning of these two parties—and there are only a few individual commentators who do not belong to the one or the other—are combined in affirming the validity of this conclusion.

There are, however, some few who admit that the

textual translation of our Authorized Version is the only correct translation of the Hebrew words, but try to get rid of the inference in another way. Thus, Patrick, in his Commentary, says:—"These words, therefore, *in her lifetime*, are to be referred, not to the first words, *Neither shalt thou take*, but to the next, *to vex her*, as long as she lives." This is adopted by Professor Bush, who says:—" *In her life*. This is, as intimated above, "during the period of her life—as long as she lives. "The next verse affords a phraseology strikingly equivalent: 'Thou shalt not approach unto a woman as long as she is set apart,' &c. This is expressed in Hebrew "by the single word בְּנִדָּתָהּ, *benidath*—*in her separation*, "i.e., during the continuance of her state of separation."

According to this interpretation, verse 18 ought to stand thus: "A woman to her sister thou shalt not take to vex her in her lifetime, to uncover her nakedness." This interpretation must be rejected, first, because of its extreme novelty, it is younger still than that of Junius and Tremellius; 2dly, because it is opposed to the judgment of the overwhelming majority of commentators, ancient and modern, whichever side they take in this controversy; 3dly, because it tampers with the sacred text. It is, in fact, a confession, that if the Hebrew words are to be taken as they stand in the Hebrew Bible, they give an inconvenient sense, and, as that sense must be got rid of somehow or other, the interpreter must even reject the order in which the inspired writer placed them; 4thly, the transposition is useless. The obnoxious inference still remains, as Professor Bush himself proves, by referring to verse 19. He compares the words, "in her life-time," to the words, "in her separation." But the latter words not only admit, but require the inference, that when the cause of separation ceases, the prohibition ceases, and "approach" is lawful. By parity of reasoning, the

words, "in her life-time," require the inference also, that when the cause for not taking a wife's sister ceases, the prohibition ceases also, and the marriage is lawful.*

The next objection is one that looks formidable. It purports to be nothing less than the judgment of the Universal Church, and is thus enunciated in the title prefixed to Dr. Pusey's Evidence, "Marriage with a deceased wife's sister prohibited by Holy Scripture as understood by the Church for 1,500 years." It is urged

* In Dr. Robinson's article above referred to, he assigns his reasons for rejecting the proposed transposition of the words, "in her life-time," in the following words:—"There are, however, some who, admitting that this verse can relate only to the wife's sister, yet give the latter clause of it a different interpretation, and suppose that it forbids taking one sister to another, to vex her *all her life*, or as long as she lives. In other words, the clause, 'her life-time,' is referred to the nearer, and not to the more remote verb. It is, then, not a prohibition, but a restriction, of polygamy. And in this view it is said, 'The passage does not contain the slightest intimation that one sister may be married after the death of the other.' This interpretation was apparently first proposed by Calvin in his Commentary on this portion of Leviticus, and has been followed by Patrick, Gill, and a few other commentators. It proposes a different grammatical construction, viz., to refer the clause, *her life-time*, 'to the nearer, and not to the more remote verb.' But, if this principle be correct, then there is a still nearer verb to that, so that it would read, 'To uncover her nakedness all her life long,'—a meaning which the supporters of this view would hardly admit, but which necessarily follows from the principle. Besides, when there are here three verbs in immediate succession, by what law of grammar or syntax can this clause be made to refer to the *middle* one alone, rather than to either of the other two? The truth is, the meaning of the Hebrew is here perfectly simple and obvious; as is also the literal English version: 'And a wife to her sister thou shalt not take, to vex, to uncover her nakedness, besides her, in her life-time.' Here the first verb prohibits; the second assigns a reason; the third defines; and the words, 'in her life-time,' limit the prohibition: a wife to her sister thou shalt not take, *to be a source* of rivalry and jealousy, *so as* to do her the duty of marriage, besides the wife, in the wife's life-time."—*Bibliotheca Sacra*, 1843, pp. 296, 297.

by Dr. Hesse, who says in his Tract, that this sort of marriage would be a contravention of Scripture, "as interpreted by all Christendom for 1,500 years." The reader of the preceding pages will be ready to demur to these comprehensive assertions, and to ask, how they are to be reconciled with the facts already established, namely, that the marginal version of Lev. xviii. 18 was first introduced into the Church in the year 1575; and that the translation given in the text of our English Bible is identical with the ancient version, existing 280 years before the birth of our Blessed Lord, adopted by the Apostles by adopting the LXX, continued in all versions for more than 1,500 years, having for many centuries the Apostolic stamp, *semper, ubique, et ab omnibus*, and interpreted from the days of Philo of marriage with a deceased wife's sister? He will be prepared to ask, Where are the authorities to prove that the Church ever interpreted Lev. xviii. 16 as including a prohibition of marriage with a deceased wife's sister, or xviii. 18, as a prohibition of polygamy? I cannot find that Calvin, or Junius, or Piscator, or Ainsworth, or Willett, or Dr. Pusey, or Mr. Badeley, or any of the recent writers on this subject, have adduced even one example, from Father, or Council, or ancient writer, to show that for the first 1,500 years these verses were so interpreted. The only evidence, having even the appearance of antiquity, is that of the Karaite Jews. But that is, as has been shown, more than doubtful. But were it genuine and unequivocal, is the testimony of a small fraction of the Jewish people to be preferred to united testimony of the great body of the Jewish nation, and the Catholic Church? The fact is that Dr. Pusey has omitted the consideration and interpretation of Lev. xviii. 18 altogether, except as touched upon in St. Basil's letter, and yet this verse is the turning point of the whole controversy. His "Evidence" and the Preface are occupied

not with the interpretation of Scripture, but with the accumulation of testimony as to the practice of the Church for many ages. But even on this point the testimony is singularly and fatally defective. This learned author appeals to the judgment of the Church for the first 1,500 years, and yet does not produce one witness from the first 300 years, the three centuries that are just the most important, yea, indispensable to his argument. According to the Evidence, Question 444 asked, "When was the earliest period in the Christian Church at which notice was taken of these marriages?" The reply was, "In the Apostolic Canons, canon 19, one who had so married, or had married a niece, was for ever excluded from the clergy." Quest. 445, "What is their date?" Answer, "I can only say that it is an Ante-Nicene collection." This is a vague reply. "Ante-Nicene" takes in 325 years. How long then before the Council of Nice were these Canons collected, one year or 300 years? Some make the collection Post-Nicene. According to the judgment of Von Drey, one of the latest and most esteemed writers on this subject, the collection of the so-called Apostolical Canons is later than that of the Apostolical Constitutions, and the latter did not exist in its present form until the fourth century.* If, therefore, we admit the collection to have been made and known as early as the Council of Nice, there would still remain an interval of above 300 years without any testimony on the subject, and also the questions as to the measure of the authority which they possess as a collection, and the still more difficult question of the date and origin and authority of the 19th Canon. Moreover, the 19th Canon only says,

* See, "Guerike Kirchen-Geschichte," Vol. i., p. 252, 253; also, the Roman Catholic, "Alzog, Universal Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche," p. 123. See also "The Canons called Apostolical, with an Introduction," by the Rev. Robert C. Jenkins.

“That he who has married two sisters or a niece [or, as some translate, a cousin] cannot become a clergyman.” It contains no prohibition, but testifies to the fact that such marriages were not unusual. In point of fact, therefore, the Apostolical Canons are valueless as an authority as to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of the disputed marriage, or even as to the date of the first notice of the subject in the Christian Church. Ferdinand Mendoza, who is a very competent authority, says, on the 61st Canon of the Council of Eliberis:—“The first decree of the Church, as I think, committed to writing, in which it was enacted that matrimony is hindered by affinity, appears to be this of the Spanish bishops, the ancient law of the Romans being abrogated, according to which it was lawful to contract marriage with a deceased wife’s sister.”* This Canon is distinct and express in imposing five years’ excommunication on him who entered into a marriage of this nature. But this Council was held about 305, still leaving the most important period without any notice of the subject. It was, besides, only a small Provincial Council, and does not, therefore, express the mind of the universal Church. Thus, the assertion that, “In matter of fact, the same marriages which are forbidden in the Levitical law, as now interpreted in the English Church, have been held to be forbidden in the Christian Church *from the first*,” is left unproved. If it could be shown that at this time there were other Provincial Councils all over the Christian world, which, by making similar canons, exhibited the mind of the universal Church, such unanimity would go far to prove the Church’s original practice. But this canon of Eliberis stands absolutely alone. Besides,

* “Primum ut opinor ecclesiæ decretum literis consignatum, quo constitutum est, matrimonium affinitate impediri, hoc Hispanorum episcoporum videtur, antiquo Romanorum jure abrogato, quo licebat cum defunctæ uxoris sorore matrimonium contrahere.”

there is not one canon of either Eastern or Western, Greek or Syrian, Roman or African Council on the subject. The nearest is that of Neo-Cæsarea, in Pontus, about nine years later (314). But, strange to say, that speaks only of a woman marrying two brothers; and at that time there is no trace of the inference from brother's wife to wife's sister. But that neither of these Councils, nor both together, exhibit the practice or mind of the Catholic Church at this period is certain from the fact that both are hostile to the marriage of the clergy: the Council of Eliberis absolutely forbidding it, and that of Neo-Cæsarea degrading a clergyman who married after ordination. But when similar propositions were made at the first General Council of Nice in 325, the bishops, assembled from various parts of the empire, showed, by rejecting them, that these Councils had not spoken the mind of the universal Church. Even fifty years later, when St. Basil wrote his famous letter, and when the Emperor Constantius had already prohibited such marriages, that Father was not able to speak of the practice of the universal Church as being opposed to them. Dr. Pusey seems to think that the language of that letter is sufficient to prove "an *universal* hereditary practice to forbid the marriage with the sister of the deceased wife." * But any unprejudiced person looking at the words, as translated by Dr. Pusey at the end of his "Letter," or in the "Statement" of the Rev. W. Palmer, will interpret them simply of the custom of his own diocese. According to the former version, the words are, "First of all we allege that which is of the greatest weight in such matters, *the custom established among us*, which is equivalent to a law, inasmuch as such ordinances have been handed down to us by holy men." According to Mr. Palmer's statement, "The first argument (and it is the strongest of all in

* "Evidence," p. 11.

such questions) which we have to put forward in this matter, is that of *our custom*; a custom which has the force of a law, inasmuch as our rules have been transmitted down to us by holy men." "The custom established among us," "our custom," and still more, the Greek τὸ παρ' ἡμῶν ἔθος, speak only of that which was local. There is not the least mark of universality about them. Παρ' ἡμῶν can never signify "In the whole Church." Moreover, Basil does not even speak of it as a law of the Church, but only a custom, nor of the custom as having been handed down from the apostles, but by holy men. Had St. Basil known of any universal custom, it would have been much more to his purpose to have urged that universality, as being necessarily known to the person against whom he argued. Could he have adduced the practice of the Universal Church or the authority of the Apostles, he would hardly have confined himself to that of his own diocese and his predecessors. St. Basil's caution is to me a proof that his custom was not the practice of the Universal Church, and that he was aware of the fact.* All that is alleged after St. Basil's times down to the Council

* The interpolation of the additional curse, in Deut. xxvii. 23, according to the Vatican copy of the LXX, falls probably about the time of Basil. Tischendorf thinks that the Vatican Manuscript was written before the times of Jerome. It is of no use, therefore, in filling up the hiatus between the Apostles and the Council of Eliberis. If the curse were genuine, it could only apply to him who married a wife's sister in her lifetime, as curses only fall on the transgressors of the law. But it is manifestly an interpolation. It was unknown to St. Basil. It is not found in the Alexandrian Manuscript, written in the home of the LXX version, nor in the versions made from it. Its citation by Siricius seems to point to a Western parentage. (See "An Expostulatory Letter to the Right Rev. N. Wiseman, on the Interpolated Curse," by the Rev. E. W. Grinfield. London, 1850.)

of Trent, is nothing to the purpose. It is only going farther from the apostles and the Apostolic Church, and plunging deeper into that superstition with regard to marriage and celibacy, which prohibited to the clergy what God pronounces "honourable in all men," and imposed upon the laity a host of impediments to marriage unknown to Scripture and the early Church. From the first 300 years the advocates of the modern interpretation have nothing to show against the ancient and primitive opinion. The appeal to the first 1,500 years of the Church is therefore the unconscious exaggeration of ardent advocates. But even if it had been warranted by more varied and general testimony, the conclusion from the practice or laws of the Church to the Church's interpretation of Scripture is an unsafe one. I have no doubt that the Bishops at Eliberis and Neo-Cæsarea interpreted 1 Tim. iv. 3 and Heb. xiii. 4 correctly, but yet their practice and law were opposed to their interpretation. With regard to Lev. xviii. 18, it is certain that even in the darkest ages the ancient translation and interpretation were faithfully preserved, though the law and practice of the Church were in opposition to it. The testimony of those times, therefore, on that point is all the more valuable. Extravagant ideas of the authority of Church-canons and Papal decisions, imbibed from infancy, led even thoughtful and learned men to submit in this, as in so many other respects, image-worship for example, to what was directly opposed to the Scriptures and the interpretation received from the Fathers. The preservation of the primitive truth, under such circumstances, is the more wonderful, and the argument derived so much the stronger.

The next objection is one suggested by St. Basil. To take the person with whom he argued on his own ground of the Law, he says that Lev. xviii. 6 of itself would make

marriage with a deceased wife's sister unlawful: "*None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness*" (Lev. xviii. 6), takes in this kind of 'nearness' also. For what can be nearer to a man than his own wife, or, rather, his own flesh? For they are no longer twain, but one flesh. So, then, through the wife, her sister necessarily becomes to be near to the husband." This is also urged by Dr. Pusey thus: "The original is still more expressive; it is literally, 'None of you shall approach to the flesh' (and hence near kin, *שָׁמֵר*) 'of his flesh' (*בְּעָרְוֹ*). Since, then, the wife is 'bone of his bone,' and 'flesh of his flesh' (the very word), and again, 'And they twain shall be one flesh,' one sees not on what plea the 'flesh' or 'near kin' of his wife could be held not to be included in this prohibition." It would be easy to show that the premises here do not warrant the conclusion. But for the present, for the sake of argument, let it be conceded that the near kin of the wife become, by virtue of the conjugal union, the near kin of the husband, the question still remains, Who are the near kin here prohibited? Dr. Pusey has, like many other translators, omitted the important word "any." He says, "None of you shall approach to the flesh (and hence near kin) of his flesh." Our English version has, "None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him." Now, how is this to be interpreted? Are we to understand it as a prohibition of all near kindred without exception? Then marriage of first cousins is forbidden, and also marriage of a husband's brother with a wife's sister, or wife's brother with husband's sister, and many similar marriages, allowed by our Church. Dr. Pusey would, I presume, reply, as Calvin does, "This name does not include all female relations, for cousins-german of the father's or mother's side are permitted to intermarry; but it must be restricted to the

degrees which he proceeds to enumerate,* and is merely a brief preface, declaring that there are certain degrees of relationship which render marriages incestuous." Not all near kin, then, are forbidden by verse 6, but only those expressly or inferentially prohibited in the following verses. To know, then, who they are who are the "near kin" in verse 6, the following verses must first be consulted, and therefore verse 6 by itself proves nothing, and therefore the inference drawn by St. Basil and Dr. Pusey from the words of verse 6, independently of the following verses, has not even the merit of plausibility. Verses 7—18 are necessary in order to show what verse 6 means, and therefore, in order to prove that verse 6 prohibits marriage with a deceased wife's sister, it must first be proved that this marriage is somewhere forbidden in verses 7—18. That it is not necessarily forbidden in verse 16 I have already shown. It remains, therefore, for those who think differently to do what they have not yet attempted, to prove that the ancient interpretation of Lev. xviii. 18 is erroneous.

But, secondly, St. Basil's and Dr. Pusey's assumption that "flesh of his flesh" includes the wife's relations is unfounded. The word *sheer* (flesh, or near of kin), and the word *basar* (flesh), whether taken separately or together, are in the Bible used exclusively of blood-relations, and never of the wife's relations, unless she be descended from the same stock. To prove this, we begin with *sheer* (near-of-kin), observing that the etymology makes no difference in the argument. Instead of

* Most commentators have felt the same difficulty, and solved it in a similar manner. Thus Cajetan: "Secundum hanc legem prohiberi videtur conjugium cum quâcunque propinquâ secundum carnem, cujus contrarium semper factum est. Solutio est, quod appellatione omnis propinquæ intelliguntur duntaxat illæ personæ propinquæ, quas lex ipsa divina diffinit propinquas." See also Jerome ab Oleastro and Leonardus Marius, *in loc.*

near-akin, our English Bible has in the margin, "Remainder," and this was the sense current in the age of the Reformation, generally received until lately, and still advocated by some commentators. So Jerome ab Oleastro says:* "Hebraice est, Vir vir ad omne residuum carnis suæ, non appropinquabitis ad revelandum nuditatem ejus. Reputat Hebraismus unam cognationem unam carnem: et quemque illius cognationis, residuum illius carnis, seu reliquias carnis. A patre enim uno relinquuntur omnes ab eo descendentes, qui sunt residui et reliquiæ parentum. Et videtur esse sensus. Ad residuum carnis suæ non accedatis, i. ad partem carnis suæ non accedatis." This is the sense also given by Michaelis, and advocated recently by Professor Bush. According to this, *sheer* means those descended from one common stock, pertaining to one common flesh, in technical language, *consanguinei*. Dr. Pusey thinks the etymology, on which the sense "remainder" is founded, incorrect, and prefers translating *sheer* "flesh," and in this I agree with him, because the word "sheer" signifies *flesh* of birds or beasts just as well as of man, as Psalm lxxviii. 20, 27, "Can he give flesh, *sheer*." "He rained also flesh, *sheer*, upon them as dust." But in sense Dr Pusey does not differ much from the others, as he interprets "flesh" to mean "near-kin," which, according to common usage, signifies "blood-relations." But whichever etymology may be preferred, the real meaning is to be fixed by the use of the word in Scripture; and an examination of all the passages where it occurs will show that it signifies none but blood-relations—a patre uno

* "In Hebrew it is: Man, man, to all the remainder of his own flesh ye shall not approach to reveal her nakedness. Hebraism reckons one kindred one flesh: and every individual of that kindred, the remainder of that flesh, or the relics of flesh. By one father are left all descending from him, who are remainders and relics of the parents. And the sense appears to be: To the remainder of his own flesh ye shall not approach, that is, to a part of his own flesh ye shall not approach."

descendent. Thus, Lev. xviii. 12, it is applied to father's sister—13, of mother's sister—17, of the relationship between a woman and her daughter, or grand-daughter. In Lev. xx. 19, of the relationship between a man and his aunt, whether on the father's or mother's side. In xxi. 2, of the relationship between a priest and his mother, or father, or son or daughter, or brother or sister. In Numb. xxvii. 11, it is used of any of the same family, *mishpachah*. Upon the peculiar case of Zelophehad's daughters, the Divine Legislator founded a general law: "If a man die and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter, and if he have no daughter then ye shall give his inheritance to his brethren. And if he have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his father's brethren. And if his father have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his kinsman, flesh, *sheer*, that is, next **הקרוב** to him of his family, *mishpachah*." Here the word simply means kinsman, blood-relation, one of those *a patre uno descendentes*. These are all the passages where *sheer* occurs by itself of relations, and in these its signification is similar to that of the English word "relation," which, when used by itself in contradistinction to "relation by marriage," signifies one of the same family, descended from a common stock, without any determination as to nearness or remoteness. In the last passage especially, the word *sheer*, *kinsman*, is explained by *mishpachah*, *family*, which means the descendants of one common head, as may be seen, Numb. i. 2, and following verses. Now let us turn to the other word, **בָּשָׂר**, *basar*, which occurs oftener. All agree that it signifies flesh, or body, of man or beast, and that then secondarily it signifies, like *sheer*, **שֵׂאֵר**, *blood-relation*, those descended from one common head, family, as Gen. xxxvii. 27. Judah says of Joseph, "He is our brother, our flesh;" and Isaiah describes one feature of true piety in the words, "That thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh." In

this sense it sometimes has "bone" added to it, as Gen. xxix. 14, Laban said to Jacob, "Surely thou art my bone and my flesh." So Judges ix. 2, Abimelech said to his mother's brethren, and to all the family (*mishpachah*) of the house of his mother's father, "Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh." So in 2 Sam. v. 1, and 1 Chron. xi. 1, All the tribes of Israel said to David, "Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh." And David himself says to the elders of Judah, "Ye are my bones and my flesh;" and to Amasa, "Art thou not of my bone and my flesh?" These are all the passages in which *basar*, flesh, is used in this secondary sense, and in all these it signifies blood—or family-relationship, even distant—that relationship which existed between David and all the tribes of Israel, as being descended from Abraham, or that near relationship that existed between Joseph and Judah as being brothers, sons of the same father—but in every case blood-relationship only.

Thirdly,—From this use of the words taken separately, it would not be difficult to infer the meaning of the two taken together. But inference is unnecessary, as they actually occur together, and are explained in Lev. xxv. 47—49. There we read, "If a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: after that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him; either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any that is *nigh of kin* unto him (literally, *of the flesh of his flesh*, *sheer* of his *basar*), of his family (*mishpachah*) may redeem him." Here the two words occur together, as in Lev. xviii. 6, and are explained by *mishpachah*, family, *i. e.*, the two words, "flesh of flesh" taken together, signify, persons descended from a common stock, that is, blood-relations. In Lev. xviii. 6, therefore, they must be taken

in the same sense, that is, of the man's *mishpachah*, or family, a *patre uno descendentes*; and, therefore, that verse predicates nothing at all of the wife or her relations, near or remote; and, consequently, from these words nothing can be inferred concerning a wife's sister.

Only one objection more remains; it is thus stated: "They who use Lev. xviii. 18, believing that it gives sanction to these marriages, are bound to sanction polygamy. It is not possible for any man to draw a conclusion in favour of marriage with a wife's sister after her decease, without being open to the reply that it precisely, and to the same extent, justifies polygamy, with the exception of the case of marrying the wife's sister."

This reasoning might have been excellent before the coming of the Saviour. But Christ, the Lawgiver, is come, and has taught us that polygamy is contrary to the original purpose of the Creator, and thereby overruled the decision from the old law. He has done the same with regard to divorce; and if it could be shown that He had also modified or abrogated the old permission to marry a deceased wife's sister, the argument from Lev. xviii. 18 would be at an end. No Christian would think of appealing from the Law of Christ to the Law of Moses. But as Christ has forbidden one part of what is sanctioned by Lev. xviii. 18, and not forbidden the other part, I infer that that other is by the law of Christ allowed. To argue that because we take one part of Lev. xviii. 18, which Christ has not forbidden, we are also bound to take the other part of Lev. xviii. 18, which Christ has forbidden, is a strange argument indeed; just as conclusive as that of those who say that, if you take the prohibitions in Lev. xviii. as moral and binding, you must also take the punishments in Lev. xx., and put to death all transgressors. But this sort of argument, *a particulari ad universale*, is confessedly invalid.

Here my reconsideration of this subject ends. My original conviction was that, according to the context and the grammatical construction * of Lev. xviii. 18, supported by the most ancient version in existence, marriage with a deceased wife's sister was lawful. I have found, on farther consideration, that the sense of the Hebrew words, which I believed to be true, is that received by the Jewish nation, by the Church Universal, Eastern and Western, for more than 1,500 years; that, notwithstanding the jealousy excited by the Reformation between Romanists and Reformed, all the great Biblical scholars on both sides were, for fifty years after Luther's first efforts, unanimous in their approval of the ancient interpretation; that the greatest Hebrew scholars on both sides, since the new interpretation was introduced, have rejected and still reject it, and adhere to antiquity; that the objections made against the ancient interpretation, even conceding the principles on which the objectors argue, are inconclusive; that, therefore, there is nothing to shake, but grave reasons from antiquity and authority to confirm, the conviction expressed at the Meeting of the clergy of the Archdeaconry of London, that marriage with a deceased wife's sister is lawful according to the Word of God. To other authority I attach comparatively little weight. When God has spoken, man's wisdom is to "lay his hand upon his mouth, and proceed no farther." That in this case God has spoken clearly and unambiguously in Lev. xviii. 18, is not my solitary conviction, but that of the Church for the first 1,500 years, and that of many grave and sufficient authorities for the last three centuries. You will not, then, condemn me as presumptuous if I still continue to think that, according to the Word of God, marriage with a deceased wife's sister is lawful. I even venture to hope that your opinions may be modified by antiquity so venerable and authority so

* See Postscript.

weighty. I confess, that when I entered upon this inquiry I had not an idea that the case of those who wish a change in the present marriage-law was so strong. I had thought that the opinions of grave and learned students of the Bible were more equally divided, and that as authorities were pretty evenly balanced, they who had contracted such marriages must bear the inconveniences arising from doubtful interpretation. But I do not think so now. Confirmed by the testimony of antiquity, and the judgment of the most considerable interpreters at the Reformation, and since the Reformation, I now believe that there is no reasonable room for doubt—that there is no verse in the Bible of which the interpretation is more sure than that of Lev. xviii. 18; and I think it a case of great hardship that they should by the civil law be punished as transgressors, whose marriage, according to the Divine law, is permitted and valid; and harder still, that the children of such marriages, legitimate in the sight of the infallible Judge, should be visited with civil disabilities. We are agreed, I think, that in this sacred and most important institution of marriage, the sentence of Scripture ought to be final; and that, in determining the meaning of Scripture, the continued reception of the Church from the days of the apostles ought to have great weight. In the preceding pages you have that reception, in the Jewish Church for nearly three centuries before the coming of our Saviour, in the Christian Church for nearly 1,600 years. You have, therefore, the choice between antiquity and novelty. But, whatever your decision, you will at least grant that there is no lack of authority for believing that marriage with a deceased wife's sister is lawful.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully,

ALEX. M'CAUL.

RECTORY, LONDON BRIDGE, *Oct.* 11, 1859.

POSTSCRIPT.

IN the Letter I have confined myself to authority to prove the right interpretation of Lev. xviii. 18; but it may be well here to add briefly the reasons why the marginal translation must be rejected as incorrect, and the version in the text of our Authorized Bible received as the only correct translation of the Hebrew words.

I. The translation, "Neither shalt thou take one wife to another," is contrary to the usage of the Hebrew language. When the words, "a woman to her sister," or in the masculine form, "a man to his brother," are used idiomatically to signify "one to another," they always have a plural antecedent of the things or persons spoken of.* Here is no such antecedent; consequently, here they cannot be so translated.†

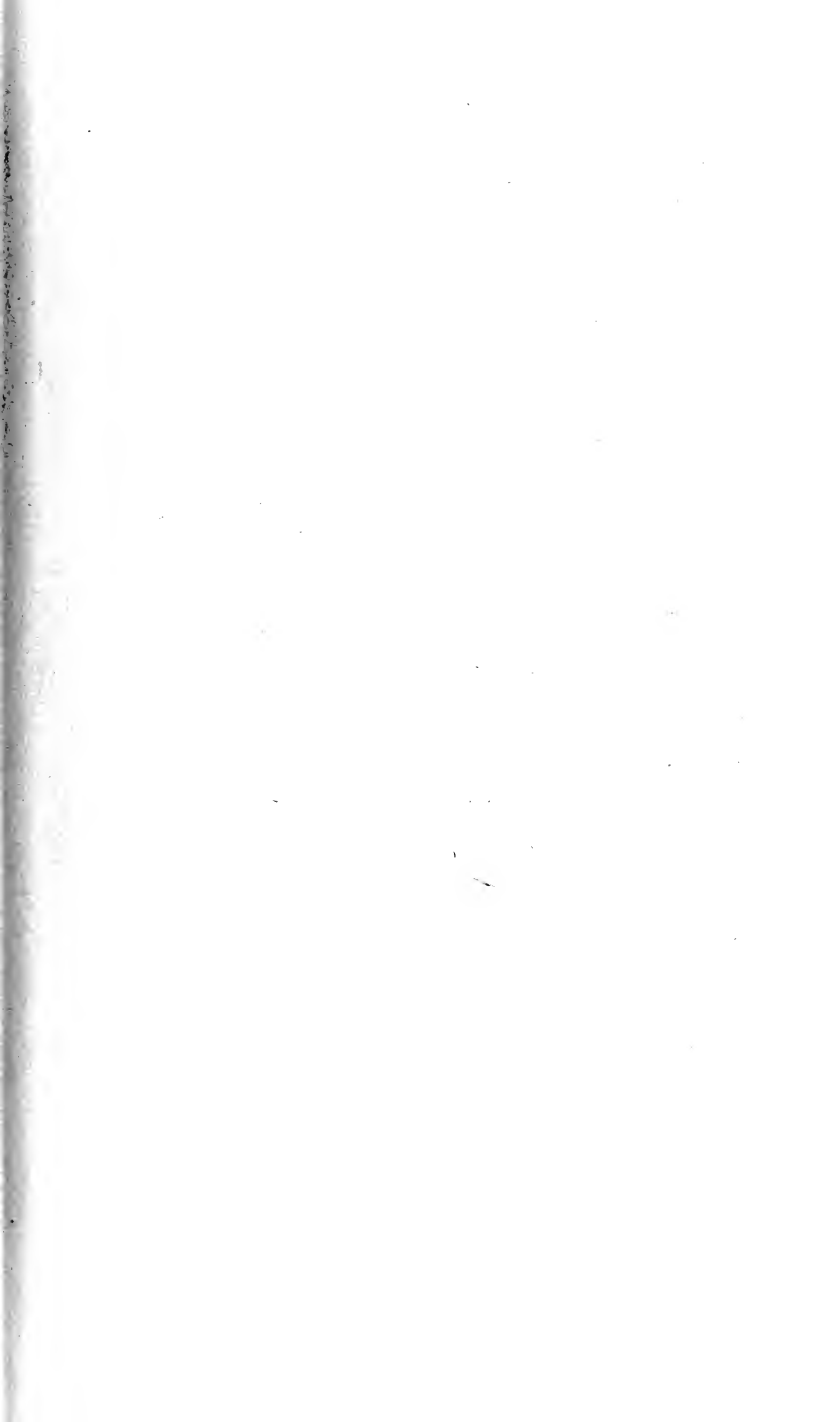
* See all the instances, both masculine and feminine, given in Bush's commentary *in loc.*

† Professor Robinson gives this reason at length, in these words:—"The phrase, 'a woman to her sister,' does indeed occur no less than eight times elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, in the general meaning, 'one to another,' but only of inanimate objects in the feminine gender—viz., of the curtains, loops, and tenons of the tabernacle.—Exod. xxvi. 3, bis, 5, 6, 17; and of the wings of the living creatures, Ezek. i. 9, 23; iii. 13. The like phrase, 'a man to his brother,' occurs in all about twenty times; mostly of men, but also in a few instances of inanimate objects or insects, as Exod. xxv. 20; Joel ii. 8. But it is to be remarked, that in every such instance, this phrase, whether masculine or feminine, has a reciprocal distributive power—that is, a number of persons or things are said to do, or be so, *one to another*. A plural nominative invariably precedes, connected with a plural verb; and then the action or relation of this verb is by this phrase marked as reciprocal and mutual among the individuals comprised in the plural nominative. Thus: 'The children of Israel said one to another.' Exod. xiv. 15, and often. So Abraham and Lot 'separated themselves one from the other.' Gen. xiii. 11; Neh. iv. 19; Isa. ix. 19. In the Hebrew: 'They shall not spare one another.' Hag. ii. 22: 'And the horses and their riders shall come down, each by the sword of the other'—*i.e.*, they shall destroy one another. So of the other examples. The only apparent exception as to form is Ezek. xxxviii. 21, 'Every man's sword shall be against his brother;' but here, too, the idea of multitude and of reciprocal and mutual action among the individuals is fully preserved. This, then, is the idiom; and to this idiom the passage in Lev. xviii. 18 has no relation. There is nothing distributive nor reciprocal implied in it. The phrase here refers only to the object of the verb; upon which object no

II. The sense obtained by the marginal translation, namely, a prohibition of polygamy, is contrary to the testimony of other plain passages of the Old Testament. The law of Moses presupposes the existence of polygamy, and by regulating the duties of the husband in such cases (Exod. xxi. 7—11; Deut. xxi. 15—17) plainly sanctions it. David's adultery is denounced by the prophet, but not his polygamy. (2 Sam. xii. 8.)

III. The translation, "Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister," &c., is correct, 1st. Because it is the literal grammatical sense of the Hebrew words. 2dly. Because it is agreeable to the context. The immediate context relates to prohibitions respecting marriage with a wife's relations. The more remote context to marriage with blood relations, and the word "sister" has been already taken, in verses 9, 11, 12, 13, in its literal and proper meaning—father's sister, mother's sister, own sister. Consistency requires that we should take it here also in the same sense. Thirdly,—The prohibition respecting wife's sister is here required to preserve the symmetry, or order, observed by Moses in these prohibitions. He speaks, 1st, of Blood-relationships, founded in parentage—mother, father's or mother's daughter, son's daughter, daughter's daughter, half sister, *ending with the transverse or collateral line*, father's sister, mother's sister; 2d, of Blood-relationships' wives, father's brother's wife, daughter-in-law,—*collateral*, Brother's wife; 3d, Wife's blood-relationships, wife's daughter or mother, wife's son's daughter, wife's daughter's daughter,—*collateral*, wife's sister. Without the wife's sister the enumeration would be incomplete.

trace of mutual or reciprocal action passes over. To bring it any degree under the idiom, it should at least read thus: 'Wives (נָשִׁים *na-shim*) one to another thou shalt not take,' and even then it would be unlike any other instance. But, further, the suffixes attached in the singular to the subsequent words (*her* nakedness, besides *her*, in *her* life-time) show decisively, that even such a solution is inadmissible; and these of themselves limit the words to two specific individuals (who have here no mutual action one upon the other), in the same literal sense as in the preceding verses, viz., *a wife to her sister.*"



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