

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### THE MARRIAGE QUESTION.

MR. EDITOR, In your paper of December 10th, there are certain remarks by the Rev. John Laing of Dundas, on my pamphlet on the marriage question. He says at the end, "If Mr. B. or some other writer will fairly meet this issue, it will do much to promote unity of sentiment among us." I should be happy to do all in my power to remove doubts and difficulties from the mind of our beloved brother with regard to this important subject, but, after all my labour, perhaps this cannot be done.

1. First of all let me notice Mr. Laing's objection to my "assuming" that a wife's sister is forbidden because a brother's widow is forbidden, while yet at the same time he "assumes" what the Scriptures nowhere assert, viz., that there is a difference between "relatives by blood" in the collateral line and "relatives by blood" in the direct line. I hold and believe that the Scriptures make no difference between them. "Let Mr. Laing *show* the *proof* and not assume it." Or let him be lawful for him to assume, my assumption is as good as his.

2. Mr. Laing does not perceive the force of my argument on page 25, with reference to a woman and her daughter and grand daughter, or a woman and her mother, being near kinswomen. I prove by verse 13 that a woman and her sister are also near kinswomen; for if my mother and her sister are near kinswomen, so are any other two sisters whatever. And as I do not believe in the distinction "assumed" between relatives by blood in the collateral line and those in the direct line, I maintain that a woman's sister is as much her *flesh* as her daughter and her mother. And when the daughter and mother of the wife are forbidden because they are "*sharrah*," flesh, or her near kinswomen; on the same ground I believe that a woman's sister is forbidden because she is the near kinswoman or flesh of the other, as stated in verse 13. Where is the authority for making a distinction between "*sharrah*" in the direct and "*sheer*" in the collateral line? If it be wickedness, "*zimmah*," to marry a woman who stands in the relation of "*sharrah*" to the wife, it must be equally wicked to marry a woman who may be called her "*sheer*," as her sister is denominated in verse 13. I refer Mr. Laing to what is stated on page 20, line 24, of my pamphlet, with regard to the principle of two sisters being one flesh, or near kinswomen.

3. Mr. Laing states in his fourth objection, "Unless we assume that the mother and the wife are 'one with the man' in the same sense, it is obvious, etc." Now every schoolboy knows that a man's mother is one flesh with him, in a sense which no other woman on earth can be, unless he enter the second time into some mother's womb and be born. According to this line of reasoning a man may marry any woman he pleases except his mother, for "unless we assume that the mother and the other woman are *one with the man* in the same sense, it is obvious that the mother is prohibited when the other is not, and that the prohibition rests on grounds which do not apply to the other." Now, no man will ever attempt to assume what has no existence, for there are no *two women* in the world that can be one with a man in the same sense, except those who are in the same degree of relationship, such as two sisters, two daughters, two aunts, or two nieces, or two wives if he has been married a second time. Each of these relatives are one with the man, and yet the relation in which they all stand to him is not *identical*. The argument, therefore, fails to the ground so far as it rests on identity of relationship. And as it remains to be proven that the Scriptures distinguish between relatives by blood in the direct line and those in the collateral line, I maintain that all the blood relations of the wife are forbidden; not only her daughter, granddaughter and mother, but also her sister, her aunt, and her niece.

4. The principle "assumed" by Mr. Laing is not well-founded when he says, "The law affects only relatives by blood of the wife in the direct line, and does not affect those in the collateral line." He might as well assert that it affects only a man's own relatives by blood in the direct line, but not those in the collateral line, so that while he is forbidden to marry his mother or daughter, at the same time he is at liberty to marry his sister or niece. Now in order to show that

the Holy Scriptures do not recognize the distinction between blood relatives in the direct and collateral lines, we find it expressly forbidden in the ninth and eleventh verses, for a man to marry his sister or half-sister, legitimate or illegitimate, because they are his near kinswomen. In verse 12 he is forbidden to marry his father's sister, and in verse 13 his mother's sister on the same ground. It is, therefore, evident that the distinction between the direct and collateral lines has no authority or sanction from the Word of God, and the burden of proof rests with those who assert that there is a distinction in the case of the blood relations of a wife.

5. In the second objection Mr. Laing asserts to the "correlative prohibition" of a woman marrying her husband's brother, and yet further on, under objection third, in his "*mutatis mutandis*" of my words, he contradicts himself, and forgets the proposition to which he assented, for he says, "There is not a single instance of a husband's relatives by blood in the collateral line being forbidden to the wife." Now in verse 16 it is expressly forbidden that a woman should be married to her husband's brother, because he is her husband's relative by blood in the collateral line. In verse 14 it is forbidden that a woman should marry the nephew of her husband; he is also her husband's blood relative in the collateral line. Mr. Laing or any other writer may explain, if he can, how that which is sin for a woman may be lawful for a man to do. If it be sin for a woman to marry her husband's blood relatives in the collateral line, how can it be lawful for a man to marry his wife's blood relatives in the same line? Mr. Laing says, "if an instance can be given I will yield the question." As I have now produced two instances, viz., verses 14 and 16, therefore, by his own admission, he is bound to yield, which I fondly hope he may do, and come over to adopt my side of the question.

6. Near the end of his article Mr. Laing says, "The law of Moses interdicts a mother's sister on the ground that she is included in the phrase 'near of kin,' but does not interdict a wife's sister on the ground that she is near of kin to the wife." Now, the real and only ground on which the law of Moses forbids any woman is that she is near of kin to the man—verse 6: "None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him." The father's and mother's sisters are prohibited, because they are near kinswomen of the father and mother, and therefore, "near of kin" to the man himself. The daughter or grand-daughter, and the mother of a wife, are forbidden on the ground that they are the wife's near kinswomen, and so "near of kin" to the man, and as we find that there is no distinction between lineal and collateral relatives by blood, the sister of a wife cannot be allowed, because being the wife's near kinswoman, she is also "near of kin" to the husband, and must be included in the phrase "near of kin."

7. Under objection one, Mr. Laing says, "The relation in which they (i.e., a brother's widow and a wife's sister) stand to a man is *analogous* but not *identical*." In opposition to this I maintain that, *mutatis mutandis*, the relation in which a brother's widow stands to a man, and a sister's husband stands to a woman, is *identical* and not *analogous*; unless it be asserted that on the one side the widow, being a female, and on the other the widower being a male, makes a difference, so that what is interdicted to the widow because she happens to be a woman, is lawful and right for the widower to do because he is a man. "God has not promulgated one law for males and another for females." The law is one and the same for both. Whatever is forbidden to the man is forbidden to the woman. The sexes are morally equivalent in the eye of God. The moral law is binding on men and women alike. But some people argue as if the law had no reference to women at all, because the commandments are all masculine in their form in Hebrew, being all addressed to the man. But the man includes the woman. Eve was as much bound to abstain from the forbidden fruit as Adam was, and yet it was to Adam that God said "Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat." We have no evidence that the woman existed at all when this command was given, for the prohibition is in the second person, singular, masculine, of the future tense of the verb.

8. The blood relatives of a man or woman within the forbidden degrees are five, two being in the direct and three in the collateral line, viz.: Father, son, mother, daughter, uncle, brother, nephew, aunt, sister,

niece. Some of these are expressly forbidden to the man, and some to the woman, and some are not mentioned at all. Of those forbidden to the man one is direct and two are collateral, so also of those forbidden to the woman, two are collateral and one is direct. But these are not the same, for the one forbidden in the direct line to the man is his superior, and of the two forbidden in the collateral line one is his superior and one his equal, while those not expressly forbidden are both his inferiors. On the other hand the one forbidden in the direct line to the woman is her inferior, and of the two forbidden in the collateral line one is her inferior and one her equal, while those not mentioned at all are both her superiors. A son is forbidden to marry his mother, but not a word is said of a daughter marrying her father. A mother cannot marry her son, but nothing is said of a man marrying his daughter. A nephew is interdicted from marrying his aunt, but nothing is said of a niece marrying her uncle. Does not this teach that in the eye of moral law man and woman are equal? Does it not also show that with reference to marriage there is no difference between blood relatives in the direct and collateral lines? How are we to decide the question if the argument from analogy be disallowed? We have no rule to guide us in the matter. Every one may act as he pleases and make a rule for himself. And if we must allow the argument from analogy in the one case, how are we to refuse it in the other? On what ground can we reject it? It seems to me that the only principle by which we are guided is that stated in the second chapter of my pamphlet, at pages 9-11. I would earnestly recommend our dear brother, Mr. Laing (and others who think as he does), to study carefully the subject of these pages and the Scripture texts on which they are founded, and by doing so I hope he may be led to entertain the same view of the subject.

DUNCAN B. BLAIR.

Barney's River, Dec. 20th, 1880.

### DECEASED WIFE'S SISTER.

MR. EDITOR,—Will you kindly give space in your columns for the following, in reply to the communication on *the marriage question* which appeared in your issue of December 10th?

Mr. Laing holds that the law (Levitical) does not by fair and necessary inference, prohibit marriage with a deceased wife's sister, etc.

Taking Leviticus xviii. 18, as it stands in our authorized version, and leaving out of view for the present the vexed question, whether the phrase translated, "a woman to her sister," should be given its literal meaning, instead of the idiomatic sense the same Hebrew words have given to them in Exodus xxvi. 3, 5, 6, 17, and other passages, viz., "one to another," I would like to ask Mr. Laing, for whose skill as a logician I have hitherto entertained the highest regard, whether he does not admit that it is a *non sequitur* that the verse in question permits the marriage of a man with his deceased wife's sister. That prince of theologians, the late Dr. Hodge, in his "Systematic Theology," vol. iii., page 416, referring to Leviticus xviii. 18, says:—"All that the passage teaches is, that if a man chooses to have two wives at the same time, which the law allowed, they must not be sisters; and the reason assigned is, that it would bring the sisters into a false relation to each other. This leaves the question of the propriety of marrying the sister of a deceased wife just where it was. This verse has no direct bearing on that subject." I am much mistaken in Mr. Laing as a logician, if he will assert that the verse either permits or prohibits marriage with a deceased wife's sister. He knows too well the consequence, to question for a moment the transference of the Levitical law of marriage to the Christian dispensation, and will doubtless admit at once that Leviticus xviii. 16, stands fast as a prohibition under the New Testament economy. Now, whatever the Rabbins may think who reject Paul's authority, or whatever difference may have existed, according to Baumgarten, from the fact that, "under the Old Testament the woman had not attained to the same degree of personality and independence as the man," I would like to know how, consistently with the principle Paul enunciated in Galatians iii. 28—"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"—Mr. Laing avoids the necessity of applying the prohibition of Leviticus xviii. 16, to the woman, in this form: "Thou shalt