

the unlawfulness of the marriage of a man with the sister of his deceased wife. But it may be alleged that these restrictions belonged to the judicial or political law of the Jews; and that, as their peculiar economy has long since passed away, it is therefore not binding upon us. To this it may be replied, that, though the political law of the Jews is not binding upon us as political institutions, yet those parts of it which are founded on the moral law, and which have regard to a state of things common to us and them,—all such parts of it are of perpetual obligation, and ought to regulate our moral relations in society. Farther, the prohibition here contended for, of marriage with the sister of a deceased wife, is part of a system of prohibitions of such a kind, that, if we reject one, we reject the authority of the whole. He therefore who contends for liberty to marry his wife's sister, so far as the law of God is concerned, may just as well contend for liberty to marry his own sister.

Be it observed, that the transgression of these very laws is specified as the cause of God's ejection of the Canaanites from their country. They are prefaced with these words: "After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do; and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do." And then we have these words following the promulgation of the laws: "Defile not yourselves in any of these things; for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you, and the land is defiled; therefore do I visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants." This clearly shows that the matters here forbidden to the Jews are equally forbidden by the unwritten law of nature as by the written law of Moses. The Canaanites sinned against a law prior to and more general than the Mosaic dispensation, and binding equally the seed of Abraham and the Gentiles. The prohibitions arise out of principles common to all mankind, and not peculiar to the Jewish family alone.

II. We now proceed to show that the illegality of marriage with the sister of a deceased wife is plainly deducible from the words of our Saviour himself.

There must have been some reason for God's forming Eve out of a rib from Adam's side. It would have been as easy for Him to form her out of the dust of the ground. But he chose to form her out of a part of the man's body, to impress upon us the closeness of the union which ought to subsist in the married state. "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," said Adam. And it is added by the sacred historian, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh." This statement is homologated by our Saviour, (Matt. xix. 5), and he draws from it this conclusion: "Therefore they are no more twain, but one flesh." Now this is not a mere figure of speech: it embodies a great truth, and announces to us, that, in point of law, the married couple are in every respect to be considered as one. From this, therefore, it follows most clearly, that a wife's relations are to be considered and treated by a man as his own. This principle is recognized in many parts of the Bible, where it is not formally enunciated; and, according to it, a man is not at liberty to marry any of his wife's relations in a nearer degree than his own.

It will be universally admitted that it is unlawful for a man to marry his own sister, or his own niece; and because his wife and he are, in God's sight, one—the two being necessary to form one perfect, self-producing being—the wife's relations become the husband's relations; and, consequently, he can no more lawfully marry his wife's sister, or his wife's niece, than he can marry his own sister, or his own niece.

There is something exceedingly beautiful and affecting in this view of the divine law. What a striking illustration does it afford us of the close and endearing nature of the marriage relation, gathering as it were from afar every