

Leviticus, which is impossible to be proved, if that table be part of God's moral law, given for the guidance of other nations beside the Jews as is there indicated, we are bound by a purer and aholier law to CHRIST, and it would be a most strange argument that what the lower and less perfect rule of life condemns as immoral, the higher and more perfect rule may allow. On this reasoning there is nothing whatever to prevent the legislative sanction being given to polygamy, man's passions being apparently the only admitted rule, and the word of God being entirely thrown aside as the true basis of sound legislation in religious matters.

I am aware that some kind of argument is attempted to be built on the 18th verse of the chapter in Leviticus, which in our translation is obscure. But this argument comes with a very bad grace from persons who repeatedly assert that they are not bound to consider the Levitical law at all, the whole being obsolete. And, however that verse be translated (the true meaning of it being, I believe, a condemnation of polygamy) it is monstrous to suppose the legislator to sanction in this verse a principle which he had before condemned in the earlier part of the chapter. The general argument is, however, sought to be set aside by an assertion that marriage is simply a civil contract, and that, therefore, the legislature has no religious obligations to deal with. Each sect, and each man, as it would seem, is to deal with the matter so as to suit his own convenience, or his conscience, if he have any. This notion of marriage being only a civil contract resembling the renting a house or the purchase of a farm, only, be it observed, much more easily broken by cheap and easy methods of divorce, is merely another mode of getting rid of our obligations to the Divine law. In these days of lawlessness each man who has a grievance,—and sinners now call their transgressions grievances and endeavour to legalize and justify them—desires an alteration of the law, not that they may sit under it, but that they may sit upon it. And when they have transgressed again, they will seek a new law to suit their new passion. Thus marriage being, as they say, only a civil contract, may be dealt with as we deal with a law of bankruptcy. Yet even in bankruptcy there must be some limit, some restraint, or otherwise all debtors might proclaim themselves absolved from payment. Property would be the only thief.

Our Church has taken the greatest pains to shew us that marriage is not merely a civil contract, but a solemn, religious obligation. It commands the clergy to begin the marriage service by telling the people that marriage was "instituted of God in the time of man's innocency, signifying to us the spiritual marriage and unity between CHRIST and His Church." How can a civil contract do this? It requires of the persons to be married a most solemn affirmation, for which they will have to answer at the "dreadful day of judgment," that they know of no lawful impediment to their marriage. Lawful, not merely legal; for the service immediately adds that "so many as are coupled together otherwise than God's word doth allow" are not joined together in lawful matrimony. And what is lawful or unlawful according to God's word, in the judgment of the Church, is distinctly told us in the table of degrees affixed to our Prayer Books, "wherein," it is said, "whosoever are related are forbidden in Scripture and our laws to marry together." Where is the civil contract here? I am aware that an attempt is made to assign this table of degrees to the authority of Archbishop