

the enlightened conscience of the humblest individual, and in any sense opposed to the liberty which God grants to men, must be an oppressive and unrighteous law, even though it may have been upon the statute book of the commonwealth for centuries.

Suppose we take it for granted that Christians during the first three centuries of the Christian era held the sentiment, and enforced it as law, that such marriages were not allowable, would that be proof positive that they were not? If it be granted that we have the Scriptures of the Old Testament in their entirety, are we not, in this century, quite as capable of judging of their true meaning as those people who lived over a thousand years ago? To argue on the negative side of this proposition is to affirm that Revelation is a waning rather than a growing light. To say, however, that the Christians of the earlier centuries undoubtedly held the prohibited degrees is, to my mind, to give expression to a mere truism. I believe they did; but did they hold among those prohibited degrees of marriage that a man was not permitted by God to marry his deceased wife's sister? I do not believe they did. There is no proof, so far, that they did. Dr. Roe is evidently not very clear in his own mind that they did. All the proof he offers us is an admission of Lord Houghton's that from a very early period in the history of the Christian Church such marriages were prohibited. But even if they did (which is not admitted), providing we have the same Scriptures which they had, we are quite capable of judging whether or not they drew correct conclusions from the teachings of those ancient and inspired writings. I do not think any man can study the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus correctly without putting himself in imagination in the midst of those Canaanitish evils which rendered the legislation contained in that chapter necessary. We must go back in our thought, and look at these laws from that standpoint.

The 24th, 25th and 27th verses show us that a terrible necessity existed. "Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you. For all these abominations have the men of the land done, and the land is defiled."

If Dr. Roe had walked in the midst of those abominations, like