

Our Contributors.

MARRIAGE AFFINITY.

MR. EDITOR,—Professor McKnight has well said that "it is important for the interests of truth and purity that the returns of Presbyteries (on the remittance marriage) be based on an intelligent and candid examination of the question"; and he has sent you a contribution for this end. Perhaps you can find room in your paper for the following contribution also:—

A great deal of the reasoning of the committee and of Professor McKnight is based on the translation of Lev. xviii. 18. I have taken some pains to investigate the literature that should guide us in judging of that translation. The phrase to which the difficulty specially attaches is *אשה אל אחותה*. It is translated in the Authorized Version, "A wife to her sister." I question the correctness of this translation. My reasons for doing so are the following.

1. There is no other passage in the whole Hebrew Bible, so far as I can ascertain, in which the identical phrase is so translated; but in every other passage in which it occurs it is rendered, "one to another," or "one toward another," or "one against another," or simply "one another." The passages besides Lev. xviii. 18 in which the phrase occurs are Exod. xxvi. 3 (in this verse it occurs twice); Exod. xxvi. 5, 17; Ezek. i. 9, 23, and Ezek. iii. 13. Eight times, therefore, the phrase occurs in the Hebrew Bible. Seven times it is translated by the English indefinite reciprocal pronoun *one—another* or *one—the other*. The phrase is an Hebrew idiom. In every place in which it occurs, save Lev. xviii. 18, it is taken as an idiom and translated as an idiom. Will any person be kind enough to show us why it should not be accepted as an idiom in Lev. xviii. 18?

2. There is a corresponding form of the expression of the masculine gender, namely, *אחיו*, followed by *אחיו* or *אחותה*. Twenty-three times this masculine form of the expression is translated as an idiom equivalent to the indefinite pronoun *one, another* or *one, the other*. In four of these places in which it might have been rendered literally with a plainer show of reason than can be made on behalf of the literal rendering in Lev. xviii. 18, it is translated idiomatically. These passages are Gen. xxxvii. 19; xlii. 21; xlii. 28, and Lev. vii. 10. I quote the last of these as a specimen "And every meat offering, mingled with oil or dry, shall all the sons of Aaron have, *one as much as another*"—*איש כאחיו*. The other nineteen passages are Gen. xxvi. 21; Exod. x. 23; xvi. 15; xxv. 20; xxxvii. 9; Lev. xxv. 14; xxv. 46; xxvi. 37; Num. xiv. 14; Deut. xxv. 11; 2 Kings vii. 6; 1 Chron. xxvi. 12; Neh. iv. 19; Job xli. 17; Jer. xiii. 14; xxv. 26; Ezek. iv. 17; xxiv. 23; xvii. 14, and Joel ii. 8.

3. In the following passages, *אחיו*, followed by its corresponding *אחותה*, is translated "one—his brother":—Neh. v. 7; Is. iii. 5, 6; ix. 19; xix. 2; xli. 6; Jer. xxiii. 35; xxxi. 34; xxxiv. 9; xxxiv. 14; xxxiv. 17; Ezek. xxxiii. 30; xxxviii. 21; Micah vii. 2; Haggai ii. 22; Zech. vii. 9, 10, and Mal. ii. 10. But any one may see by examining these passages that there was no reason for departing from the idiomatic usage, and that they all might have been translated "one—another," except perhaps Is. iii. 5, where the qualifying phrase, "Of the house of his father," makes the literal rendering necessary. But even this qualifying phrase does not make it necessary for us to hold that a son of the same parent or parents is meant, but only one of the same family or a near relative.

In five of the last list of passages, namely, Is. xix. 2; Jer. xxiii. 35; Jer. xxxi. 34; Jer. xxiv. 17, and Ezek. xxxiii. 30, a double reciprocal pronoun is used, viz., *איש*, followed by *אחיו*, and *איש*, followed by *אחותה*. Both *אחיו* and *אחותה* are literally translated in these passages. But it can be easily shown that this was done to avoid the repetition of the phrase "one—another," a repetition which would look inelegant in our English version. This was a double reciprocal pronoun which the prophets used occasionally in their animated and poetical compositions to give force and emphasis to the expression, not at all to make a distinction between brother and neighbour in their denunciatory declamations. Take one of these five passages as a specimen (Jer. xxiii. 35): "Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbour and every one to his brother, What hath the Lord answered? and what hath the Lord spoken?" Will

any one be ready to contend that in this excited and poetical language "brother" is to be taken in its primary sense? I think not. The double reciprocal pronoun is used for force and emphasis, and to show how thoroughly common and universal the perversion of the word of the Lord had become at that time. The verse would be quite as correctly rendered as follows: "Thus shall ye say, one to another and one to another, What hath the Lord answered? and what hath the Lord spoken?" But it would not sound well in English to repeat the reciprocal indefinite pronoun, and therefore our translators did not repeat it, but used a beautiful English equivalent.

Mr. Editor, I have also examined in a Hebrew translation of the New Testament sixty-nine passages in which the Hebrew reciprocal pronoun in one or other of its forms occurs. In one passage *איש* is followed by *אחותה*; in four passages the masculine form *איש*, followed by *אחיו* or *אחותה*, is used. In one passage *איש* is followed by *אחותה*; and in sixty-three passages *איש* is followed by *אחיו*. In every one of these passages the Hebrew phrases are equivalent to our indefinite pronoun *one—another*, to the Greek reciprocal *αλλήλοι*, and the Latin *in vicem* or *alter—alter*. Everywhere those Hebrew phrases are idiomatic expressions.

I find not a particle of support for the textual reading of Lev. xviii. 18, but everything in favour of the marginal reading, "One wife to another." And if this be correct, then all the argumentation used by the Committee of the Assembly and by Dr. McKnight in his article on the literal and textual rendering falls to the ground. And if we need to alter our Confession of Faith or to change our practice in discipline, reasons for so doing must be found elsewhere and not in Lev. xviii. 18. This passage does not forbid a man to marry two sisters at all, whether living or dead; but it forbids a man to marry two wives while both are living—it forbids polygamy.

I have more to say on the subject, Mr. Editor, but I have trespassed sufficiently at this time on your valuable space.

N. MCK.

Mosa.

ECCLESIASTICAL PARLIAMENTS.

BY KNOXONIAN.

We are a much governed people in this country. During January, County Councils meet and govern us for a time municipally. Then the Dominion and Provincial Parliaments meet and govern us for two or three months politically. Then Synods, Conferences, Unions, and other ecclesiastical bodies meet and govern us ecclesiastically away on into the hot season. In proportion to our population, Canadians are, perhaps, the most governed people in the world. All this government is no doubt needed. If it were not, the people would stop part of the machinery. Once in a while somebody raises his voice and proposes to abolish a council or a synod or some other governing institution, but the people don't respond. Presumably the people know just how much government they need and are willing to pay for.

Three Presbyterian Synods will soon meet for the despatch of business. By the time the members have got rested from their synodical labours and have done a little work at home, some of them will have to pack their valises again and start for the General Assembly. At first blush, it seems a nice thing to attend a meeting of Synod or Assembly, but those who have been there most frequently know that these meetings are often the most tedious, wearing and debilitating gatherings that a respectable man ever attends. Dr. Proudfoot used to deliver an admirable address to the people at induction services, in which he made an estimate of the amount of time a minister has to spend in attending Church Courts and doing other public work for the Church. One item in that estimate was "two weeks for the General Assembly and a week for rest when the Assembly meeting is over." Most men who have sat for ten days continuously in the Assembly know by experience that a week for rest is quite little enough. Even a long meeting of Presbytery often unfits members for work the following day.

For some of the causes that make an Assembly meeting tiresome and wearing there is no remedy. Hot weather, bad air, long sittings, and late hours are necessary parts of the programme. The business itself is often tedious when the novelty wears away. Attending the sittings of any kind of a body for ten

continuous days is very tiresome. Hanging around a court-house waiting for a case to come on is insufferably tedious and irksome. Attending the sittings of Parliament, except on special occasions, is not any better. The fact that the business done in the Assembly is Church business does not strengthen the nerves or aid the digestion or ward off insomnia.

But while these causes, or some of them, are inseparably connected with an Assembly meeting, there are other unpleasant drawbacks that might be remedied. What do the Commissioners chiefly complain about when they say they have not enjoyed a meeting of the Supreme Court? One standing grievance is that too much time is frittered away on mere matters of procedure. "This whole sederunt has been spent," says a little knot of Commissioners, "in discussing *how* and *when* such and such a trifling matter shall be disposed of." The Court, perhaps, spent much more time in discussing the *how* and *when* of the business than in discussing the business itself. This is a real grievance. Talking *about* business is not transacting business. It would seem very absurd if half-a-dozen men should spend an hour at the Union Station in Toronto, talking about going to Hamilton, when the train would have taken them there in fifty minutes had they gone aboard. Deliberative bodies do this very thing not unfrequently. They spend more time in getting at an item of business than would have been needed to settle the item. Is it any wonder that practical men often complain when the time of the Assembly is wasted after this fashion?

Another thing Commissioners complain of is that discussions are often continued after everybody, except those who are very anxious to speak, knows that no new light can be thrown upon them. It rarely occurs that a body of intelligent men, lay or clerical, refuse to hear a man respectfully, or even gratefully, as long as he can throw new light on the matter to be decided. Fresh ideas and fresh arguments, or even old ones put in a new light, are always willingly listened to. But who can be blamed for getting impatient when the same old familiar threadbare facts and arguments are repeated for the fiftieth time? Life is too short to listen patiently to stale arguments hashed and re-hashed until they are almost nauseating. Undoubtedly there is often some ground for this complaint. A Commissioner ought to know whether he can throw any new light on a subject or not, and if he cannot, what earthly use is there in speaking on it?

Another thing quite frequently complained of is that the business of the Assembly is largely in the hands of a few members who speak on every question, while the majority of the Commissioners take no part in the proceedings and can scarcely get a hearing. To a certain extent, this must be true of all deliberative bodies. Members who are specially connected with, and are personally responsible for, the working of any scheme must necessarily come to the front when their particular work is under review. A Cabinet minister is always supposed to look after the interests of his own department when its affairs are being discussed in Parliament. A Convener or Principal of a college must do the same thing. But while all this is true, it does not by any means follow that discussions on every question should be conducted mainly by a few men while others, equally capable, take no part in the proceedings except in voting. Silent members there will always be in every deliberative body; but it is not for the interest of the Church that the great majority should be silent, and a few do the speaking year after year. It is not for the interest of the speakers themselves that such should be the case. No man can afford to speak on every question. People soon come to look upon him as a bore. Undoubtedly it would be a great improvement if the business of the Supreme Court could be divided up more than it has been for some years.

Of late years there has been a marked improvement in the way of reducing the length of speeches. There is still room for improvement in this direction. The good work of condensation is going on, but has not yet arrived at perfection. If a member has some special business entrusted to him by a Synod, Presbytery, or other important body, he should always have reasonable time. There should always be more latitude given to a member who is discharging the duties of a trust than to one who merely rises to make a few remarks of his own accord. A member on trial should usually have all the time he wants. Better to sit for a month than have him and his friends think he has not had fair play. But, making all due allowance for