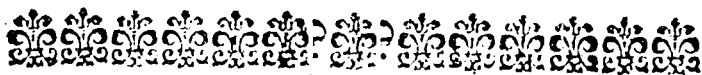


T H E
ANSWER
Of Several
MINISTERS
in and near
BOSTON,
To that Case of Conscience,
*Whether it is Lawful for a Man
to Marry his Wives own Sister ?*

Boston in N. E.
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To the READER.

THERE is no practice so evil as not to find Adversaries. It is astonishing that such a Scandal as that which is here impleaded, should have any fautors among professors of Religion in a Land of Light, when Heathen Nations have detested it, although they had no other principle but the benefit of nature to guide them. Some pretend that Death puts an end to all Relations, and that therefore a Man whose Sister is married his Sister after his Wives death, and consequently that he may lawfully marry her, but contrary to this allegation a mans Wives Mother is no more his Mother after his Wives death, and consequently he may marry his Wives Mother: Nor then is his Fathers Wife or Step-Mother any more his Mother after his Fathers death, and consequently he may have his Fathers Wife; which is an impiety not so much as named amongst the basest sort of Heathen. 1 Cor. 5. 1. Others Concede, that indeed such Marriage is Sinful, but tho' non debuit lactum valet, when once they are Married they are not to be separated they think, which is a strange and contradictory Opinion. It is as if it should be affirmed, that because men have transgressed against the light of nature, they may do so still, and live in that sin though it be to the Eternal Damnation of their Souls. Such Marriages are wickedly

To the READER.

wickedly Incestuous; and therefore to Question whether the Civil Authority may permit Persons so concerned to continue in Coniugal Communion, is, to make it a Question whether Magistrates may not indulge the most Scandalous transgressions of the Moral Law, and so bring the guilt of these Crimes upon the Government, and upon the whole Land where they are perpetrated. Most certainly, when John the Baptist said to Herod, It is not Lawful for thee to have thy Brothers Wife, Mark 6. 18. his intention was that they ought no longer to live together as Man and Wife. If Magistrates or any other shall be reproached for their Holy Zeal in this matter, they will Suffer Persecution in the very same cause for which John did. Moreover, we find in the Scripture that when some had contracted Marriages contrary to the Law of God (and so have they all done that have Married their Wives Sister) it was not thought it would be sufficient for them to confess their fault, or to inhibit the like practice in others for the future, but the guilty Persons were made to put away all such Wives. Ezra 10. 3, 11. Neh. 13. 25.

But for further Information in this point, the Reader is referred to the Answer herewith Printed, which in few words contains enough to satisfy the Consciences of them that Enquire without an Idol in their Hearts, or that are sincerely willing to be satisfied.



Concerning the Case of Conscience proposed to our Consideration, *Viz.*

WHether it be Lawful for a Man to Marry his Wives own Sister?

We Answer in the Negative; That it is utterly Unlawful, Incestuous, and an Hainous Sin in the Sight of G.d. For,

1. The Scripture sayes, *None shall approach to any that is near akin to him. Lev. 18 6.* Now the particulars instanced in that Chapter shew, that by kindred is meant not only *Consanguinity*, but *Affinity*, or such as are allyed by Marriage as well as by Blood. It is then clear, that a Mans Wives Sister is near akin to him: for she relates to him in the very first degree of Affinity, which is near kindred. It is a ruled Case amongst all Orthodox Divines and Judicious Casuists, That a Man may not Marry any of his Wives kindred nearer in Blood than he may of his own; nor may the Woman of her Husbands. A Man may as lawfully Marry his own Mother as his Wives Mother, his own Aunt as his Uncles Wife; so his own Sister as his Wives Sister. *Lev. 18 14.*

2. There is in the Scripture an express Prohibition of Marriage with such as are no nearer akin than a Mans Wives Sister is. To instance. A Man may not Marry his Brothers Wife *Lev. 18, 16. and 20. 21. Math. 14. 4.* Which Implies

that a man may not Marry his Wives Sister, who is as near akin to him as his Brothers Wife. Persons not named in the Law, it they have the same nearness with those expressly and in terms forbidden to joyn in Marriage Relation together, are comprehended in that Law. When the Law expressly forbids the Nephew to Marry the Aunt, it implies that the Uncle may not Marry the Neece, because an Uncles Wife and an Aunts Husband are equally akin. It is (as *Dr. Hall* in his Cases of Conscience has well noted) easy to observe, that all the severalties of the degrees prohibited run still upon the Male, under which the exorbitances of the other Sex are comprehended. Thus though a Mans Marrying his Wives Sister is not in so many express Words and Syllables prohibited, by clear implication and necessary Consequence it is so. It is a very weak Argument, to say, inasmuch as Marrying with the Wives Sister is not in terms forbidden in the 18 Chapter of *Leviticus*, that therefore it is lawful. A Mans Marrying with his own Daughter is not expressly forbidden in that Law: But since it is said, he may not Marry his Daughter in Law or his Sons Wife, *Verse 15.* by necessary deduction it follows, that he may not Marry his own Daughter. It is not in express terms said, that a Woman shall not Marry two Brothers: and it is certainly as lawful for a Woman to Marry two Brothers as for a Man two Sisters. Yet this is so highly against the light of Nature as well as Scripture, as that it

was of old decreed in the *Neocaesarian Council*, that whosoever should do so, should be rejected unto death.

3. The Light of Nature and Laws of Nations have Condemned this Practice as Abominable. The *Grecians*, *Romans* and the *Arbians*, who had no light of Scripture, only the Law written in their hearts by nature, did prohibit such Marriages. The *Karean Jews* (who in Opposition to the *Talmudists* adhere to the Books of *Moses*) Condemn them. So have Christian Nations done : And in our own Nation in special. The Table of the Church of England set forth by Authority, does expressly declare, that a Man may not Marry with his Wives Sister. Mr. *Reyner* (that worthy Minister of the Gospel at *Lincoln*) in his Judicious Answer to the Case before us, shews, that the Laws of the Land prohibit this Marriage ; and he refers his Reader for Information to Sir *Ed. Cooks Institute*, Part. 2. p. 683. And to the Statutes of 25 *H 8*. Chap 22. and his 28 year. Chap. 7. and his 30 year Chap. 38.

4. Learned Divines have with a great concurrence testified against such Marriage as unlawful. *Zanchy* observes, that all the Ancient Fathers Witnessed against it. So have our Protestant Divines : Particularly *Beza*, *Junius*, *Gerhard*, *Polanus*, *Bacanus*, and the *Geneva Divines* : Also, *Zepperus*, and *Voetius* : And of our own Nation, Mr. *Perkins*, Dr. *Ames*, Dr. *Hall*, Dr. *Willet*, Dr. *Hamond*. Likewise the English Annotators on *Levi*

18.16. And Mr. *Poole*, and Mr. *Clark* in their Notes on that place. Yea, the Assembly at Westminster (in which were many Eminent Persons) in their Confession of Faith, Chap. 24. Sect. 4. have these words. *Marriage ought not to be within the degrees of Consanguinity, or Affinity forbidden in the word : Nor can such Incestuous Marriages be made lawful by any Law of Man, so as these Persons may live together as Man & Wife. The man may not Marry any of his Wives kindred nearer in Blood than he may of his own ; nor the Woman of her Husbands kindred nearer in Blood than of her own.* These are the words of that Renowned Assembly. Moreover it is well known that such Marriage was Condemned as unlawful, by the Universities of Europe in the days of *K. Henry 8* : As for the Objection that it is said, *Levi 18.18. Thou shalt not take a Wife to her Sister to vex her besides the other in her life time.* By *Sister* in that place not a natural Sister in a strict sense, but any other Woman is intended : The same expression in the Original is else where translated, *One to another.* *Ezek 19.* The Hebrews are wont to give the name of Brother and Sister to all Neighbours, and more especially to all that are of the same Nation. *Gen. 19.7.* *Isa. 19.2.* *Ezek. 16.45, 48.* The Jews (as some Learned men have well observed) did sometimes take Second Wives, whilst the first was living, on purpose to vex the first Wife ; which was a very great Wickedness. The design then of that Text is to prohibit

Polygamy, but giveth no allowance to any man to Marry his Sister after his Wives Death.

Finally. That Practice is one of those Abominations, for which the Holy God punished the Heathen Nations: And it is a burning Shame, that ever it should be heard of in such a Land of Uprightness as *New-England* once was and ever ought to be. It is very sad, that a Practice which the Scripture calls *Wickedness* and *Abomination*, and which the light of Nature condemns, should find any Patrons amongst us. A great Divine has truly noted, that this is one of those iniquities which provokes the God of Heaven to send enemies upon a People, and to make their Land desolate. It after the Lord has stirred up his Servants in the Ministry to bear their Testimony against it, (and we hope there is no Minister in the Land either so ignorant, or under such a Penal and Judicial desertion of God as to justify it) men shall still go on openly to Practise a thing so vile, and that by the connivance of those who ought by Severe and Righteous Laws to inhibit it, We may fear what God will do.

INCREASE MATHER.

CHARLES MORTON.

JAMES ALLEN.

SAMUEL WILLARD.

JAMES SHERMAN.

JOHN DANFORTH.

COTTON MATHER.

NEHEMIAH WALTER.

Mrs. JUDITH HULL,

Of Boston, in N. E. Daughter of
Mr. Edmund Quincey; late Wife of
JOHN HULL Esq. deceased.

A Diligent, Constant, Fruitfull Reader
and Hearer of the Word of GOD,
Rested from her Labours, June, 22. 1695.
being the seventh day of the Week, a little
before Sun-set; just about the time She
used to begin the Sabbath.

Anno Ætatis suæ 69.

Epitaph

Great Sarah's Faith; joind with Good Hannah's Prayer;
For Hearing of the Word, glad Maries Care;
Aged Elizabeths Just Walk; To dwell
Nigh Prophets, a true Shunamitish Zeal;
An Humble Soul, Trim'd with an High Neglect
Of Gay Things, but with Ancient Glories deck't;
All these Expir'd at once! Array'd with Them,
Our HULDAH's gone to Gods Jerusalem:
Without a Figure so, with her Last Breath
Shee Triumph'd o'er that Ho'op'ernes, DEATH!
Perfect in Thoughts, Words, Deeds, She soars on high,
Performing what her Name did signifie.