THE

ANSWER

Of Several

MINISTERS

in and near

BOSTON,

To that Case of Conscience,

Whether it is Lawful for a Man to Marry his Wife's own Sister?

Boston in N. E.
Printed and Sold by Bartholomew Green.
1695.
To the READER.

There is no practice so evil as not to find Advocates. It is astonishing that such a Scandal as that which is here implanted, should have any authors among professed Friends of Religion in a Land of Light; when Heathen Patriots have detected it, although they had an elder principle but the bounds of Nature to guide them. Some pretend that Death gives an end to all Sufferings, and that therefore if Men should suffer for the sake of their Sistre after his Wife, or to be degraded in any thing, it be may lawfull, Nuns, in things relating to the Allegation aforesaid; Wives Mother is not more his Mother after his Wives death, and consequently he may marry his Wives Sister; Nay, then is his Fathers Sister his Mothers Sister after his Fathers death, and consequently he may marry his Fathers Sister, which is an impiety not so much as named among the heathen sect of Heathen. I Cor. 5:1. Others Concede, that indeed such Marriage is Sinful, but the first non-debatable Lactum Voles, 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 Conjugal Communion, is, to make it a Question whether Magistrates may not impose 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 Baptizst said to Herod, It is not Lawful for thee to have thy Brothers Wife, Mark 6:18. His intendment was that they ought no longer to live together as Man and Wife. If Magistrates or any other shall be reproached for their Duty zeal in this matter, they shall 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, but to inhibit the like practice in others for the future, but the guilty Persons were made to put away all such Wives, Ex. 20:3, 11. Neh. 13:25.

But for further Information in this point, the Reader is referred to the Answer hereunto omitted, which in few words contains enough to satisfy the Conferences of them that Enquire without an Idol in their Hearts, or that are belongingly 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, Ineptuous, and an Hainous Sin in the Sight of God. For,

1. The Scripture saith, None shall approach to any that is near akin to him. Lev. 18:6. Now the particular instance in that Chapter shew, that by kindred is meant not only Conscendueity, but Affinity, or such as are allied 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 Cautiuists, 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 Husband. 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. And 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, if they have the same nearness with those expressly and in terms forbidden to join 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 Niece, 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 several kinds 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 Daughters is not expressly forbidden in that Law; But since it is said, he may not Marry his Daughter in Law or his Sons Wives, Ver. 18; 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 Nicenean Council, that who so ever should do so, should be rejected unto death.

3. The Light of Nature and Laws of Nations have Condemned this Practice as Abominable. The Greeks, Romans and the Abians, who had no light of Scripture, only the Law written in their hearts by nature, did prohibit such Marriages. The Kanaan 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 Wife Sitter. Mr. Repper (that worthy Minister of the Gospel at Lincoln) in his Judicious Answer to the CAse before us, thews, that the Laws of the Land prohibit this Marriage; and he refers his Reader for Information to Sir Ed. Cooks Institute, Part II. p. 683. And to the Statutes of 25 H8. 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 Antient Fathers Winessed against it. So have our Protestant Divines: Particularly Beza, Junius, Gerhard, Porland, Bacon, and the Great Divines: Alli, Zyperus, and Voetius: And of our own Nation, Mr. Perkins, Dr. Ames, Dr. Hall, Dr. Willet, Dr. Hammond. Likewise the English Annotators on Lev

18.16. And Mr. Pock, 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 Men, so as these Persons may live together as Man and 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, Lev. 18.18. Thou shalt not take a Wife to her Sister, to vex her besides the other in her lifetime. By Sitter in that place not a natural Sitter in a strict sense, but any other Woman is intended: The same expression in the Original is else where translated, One to another. Ezek 19.9. The Hebrews are wont to give the name of Brother and Sitter 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 of that text is to prohibit
Pohgany; but giveth no allowance to any man to marry his sister after his wife's 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 Patron among 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 alters the Lord has raised up his Servants in the Ministry to bear their Testimony against it, (and we hope their is no Minister in the Land either so ignorant, or under such a Penal and Judicial detriment of God as to justify it,) men shall still go on openly to Practice 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 Quincy; late Wife of JOHN HULL Esq. deceased.

A Diligent, Constant, Fruitful Reader and Hearer of the Word of God, Relyed 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 sua 69.

Epitaph

Great Sarah's Faith; joined with Good Hannah's Prayer; For Hearing of the Word, glad Marier Care; Aged Elizabeth's Just Walk; To dwell Nigh Prophets, a true Shunamits' Zeal; An Humbie Soul, Trim'd with an High Neglect Of Gay Things, but with Ancient Gories deck't; All these Expire'd at once Array'd with Them, Our HULDAH's gone to Gods Jerusalem: Without a Figure fo, with her Last Breath Shee Triumph'd o'er that Hoop'ners DEATH: Perfect in Thoughts, Words, Deeds, She fears on high, Performing what her Name did signify.