

THE
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OR

EVANGELICAL INTELLIGENCER.

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BIOGRAPHY.

LIFE OF PRESIDENT DAVIES.

THE Rev. Mr. Samuel Davies, late president of the college of New-Jersey, was born on the 3d day of November, A. D. 1724, in the county of Newcastle, on Delaware. His father was a planter, who lived with great plainness and simplicity, and supported the character of an honest and pious man to his death. His mother, who was greatly distinguished for her eminent piety, some time before the conception of this favourite only son, earnestly desired such a blessing; and as she then had only born a daughter, who was nearly five years old, she had special occasion for the exercise of her faith, in waiting for the divine answer to her petition. In this situation she took example from the mother of the prophet Samuel, and "Vowed a vow unto the Lord; that if he would indeed give her a man-child, she would devote him to his service all the days of his life." 1 Sam. i. 11.

It may well be supposed, that the parents received this child as from God, and that the mother especially, who had reason to look upon him as a token of the divine favour, and an express answer to her prayers, would, with the greatest tenderness, begin the rearing of this beloved plant. As there was no school in the neighbourhood, she herself taught him to read: and, although he was then very young, he is said to have made such proficiency as surprised every person who heard of it.

He continued at home with his parents till he was about ten years old, during which time he appeared to have no remarkable impressions of a religious kind; but behaving himself as is com-

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computation, will, in fact, continue through the very extended space of three hundred and sixty-five thousand years. If we mistake not, holy scripture affords no example of such a mode of interpretation, unless it be in the very instance in question: and to say that this is the true interpretation in the instance questioned, without being able to cite a parallel, seems to us to be begging the whole question. Nor do the arguments which our author endeavours to derive collaterally from the quotations he makes, and the positions he lays down, at all convince us that his statement is correct. On such a subject, a subject which relates to the plans of a sovereign God, and which may appear to us defective only because we perceive but a part of them, we believe that nothing but clear scripture warrant, should be the ground of our conclusions.

On the whole, the discourse before us must, we think, be considered as exhibiting a specimen of truly evangelical thought and eloquent address, but yet, when critically considered, defective as a discourse founded on the text which the author selected, and its excellence somewhat abated by a few occasional blemishes.

RELIGIOUS AND MORAL DISCUSSIONS.

THE question, *Whether a man may lawfully marry his brother's widow, or wife's sister*, has been frequently referred to the consideration of the synod of New-York and Philadelphia, and to the general assembly of the presbyterian church. Much time has been spent in discussing it, and frequent decisions have been made about it; yet the case still recurs, and there are few meetings, without some reference of that kind brought forward. This circumstance is remarkable, and deserves attention. It may be owing, in some measure, to the different decisions, which have been made; but principally, I apprehend, to a common persuasion, in the minds of christians, that the law, in Lev. xviii. forbidding such connexions, is obligatory on all men.

This appears to have been the persuasion of the christian church, in almost all its branches, since the beginning, until, of late, some have been disposed to reject the authority of that law; and while this persuasion remains in the minds of christians, it will be in vain to expect to silence the question, by public decision or authority. It will still remain a troublesome case of conscience, demanding a serious and scriptural resolution.

The resolution of the case will depend on the views which we ought to have of the law above mentioned, viz. whether we should consider it, as of a *moral* nature, and binding on all men; or merely *ceremonial*, and binding only on the Jews.

In support of its general obligation, the following observations are suggested.

I. The law itself, from its general complexion, appears to carry in it sufficient evidence of this. It was given by divine authority, and stands in the sacred record, making one entire section by itself. It relates to one subject, of a general nature and of great importance; viz. the right direction and government of those propensities, which God has implanted in human nature. It contains several precepts, which are indisputably of a moral nature. Nothing appears, in the whole section, which can be said to be merely ceremonial, or so adapted to the Jewish *peculiarity*, as to confine it to that nation only. And, as if on purpose to guard against its being accounted merely ceremonial, the violations of it are called "*abominations, and abominable customs; the doings of the land of Egypt, and of the land of Canaan;*" for which they were punished, v. 3, 26, 27. Yet every one knows that *ceremonial* abominations, were not applicable to the Egyptians and Canaanites.

This being the character which is given by God himself to the breaches of this law by nations who never were subjected to any ceremonial usages, and which, (from v. 27.) may be considered as having a respect to all the precepts in the same section, is sufficient to shew that the law is not to be regarded as merely ceremonial. And notwithstanding it was delivered to the Jews, incorporated with their other laws, and made subservient to their constitution; yet this will not be sufficient to disprove its general obligation, when we consider,

1. That to them were committed the oracles of God; those scriptures, of which it is said, that they "are divinely inspired, and profitable for doctrine; for reproof; for correction; for instruction in righteousness." It may be a familiar way with some, to call the scriptures of the old testament, *Jewish scriptures*, and to consider them as no way obligatory on christians; but this notion ought to be utterly rejected. God chose and separated that people, not with a partial respect to themselves, but to be the repositories of light and instruction for the benefit of the world. That this law therefore is found among those early revelations, is not an argument against, but rather in favour of its general obligation; and especially, if it is found to contain nothing which

can restrict it peculiarly to the national and typical condition of the Jews.

2. The moral law, or that summary of it which we have in the decalogue, (Exod. xx.) was given, in like manner, to the Jews, incorporated with their other laws, and adapted to their form of government; yet this does not impair its universal obligation. We ought not to think that any system of regulations would be given by God for the government and duty of men, in any condition whatsoever, but what should contain the moral law.

3. This law of kindred does not appear to be so connected with any of the peculiar regulations of the Jews, as to impair its general obligation. Besides the laws which related to their typical character, there were other ordinances, designed to preserve them as a distinct people from the rest of the world, and which related to the distinction of tribes and families; the preservation of genealogies, and inheritances; and the rights of redemption, &c. but none of these are contained in this law: so far from this, other laws were provided for these purposes, one of which (viz. that a man should marry the widow of his brother, who had died without issue) appears to be in direct opposition to one of the precepts of this law. Whatever favourable aspect the general law of kin might have upon the Jewish constitution, which rendered it fit, that it should be revealed to them, and through them to the rest of the world, as other parts of the moral law were; yet, it does not appear that any of these objects or peculiarities mentioned, could be accomplished by this law; or that any one precept in it had a special reference to them; nay, instead of this, it might be reasonably thought that some of them might have been more effectually promoted, not by prohibiting, but by allowing marriages, in their own families, as well as in their own tribes. And therefore it may be a reasonable presumption, that one special use of this law, with respect to them, was, to guard against their taking encouragement to such liberties, from those peculiar regulations.

II. The subjects of the law are of a *general nature*; belonging, equally, to all men; viz. *Marriage; kindred; the right use and direction of those propensities which God has implanted in human nature.*

These subjects are of great importance. Express laws about them appear to be necessary; and, from the goodness of God, such might be reasonably expected. Moral duty is agreeable to reason, and the obligation may commonly be observed by intelligent and attentive minds; yet special revelation was necessary,

to teach and enforce it, with sufficient authority, on mankind. Accordingly our wise and good lawgiver has not left us to search after the knowledge of our duty, by reasoning and inquiry; but, by express precept, or fair and easy consequence, has instructed us in every thing, which relates to our government and happiness. The main subject of this law, with which the present case is concerned, is *marriage* and *kindred*. It is of this the law treats, in the first place; for it would be unreasonable to understand the sixth verse, as meaning any other kind of approach, but marriage. About this connexion, some instructions are given, in other parts of the word of God. Adam seems to have had a special revelation about it, which led him, when Eve was presented to him, to declare the law of marriage, and the relations and duties it should create, though he had yet no knowledge of them by experience. As this was a very important institution, from whence our various relations and duties should arise; as it was a law eminently conducive to the orderly continuance and happiness of the human race; and distinguishing man from other animals, which were to be propagated in the same way, by natural generation; and as it was upon a subject, wherein beyond all others, man, undirected and unrestrained, would be disposed to go wrong, and to imitate the brutes; so it is reasonable to conclude, that the wisdom and goodness of God, would not leave us destitute of express and necessary directions upon what related to that subject.

Particularly, with respect to the law of *kindred*; we think, that an express law was necessary, to ascertain the degrees in which it may be lawful, or unlawful to marry. Such a law was necessary, 1. To promote uniformity among men, in that matter, and to prevent *confusion*. It is observable that this is one design of the law under consideration. The violation of it is called *confusion*, ch. xx. 12. which may signify some derangement of that order of relations and duties, which God has established for the good of mankind; or something injurious to the health and vigour of the human constitution. What the consequences of this confusion might be, in any of these respects, we may not clearly see; but we may justly conclude, that the wisdom of God, who does nothing in vain, must know, that it would have some bad effect, with respect to the well-being of the human race; otherwise he would not have given a law to prevent it. Every law of God must be adapted to some good end, though we, who have to judge by our imperfect notions of the fitness of things, or partial experience, may not be able, in some cases, to discover it. H. de St. Pierre observes, "The majestic obscurity of the laws of nature results

from the multiplicity of her resources, and the profundity of our ignorance. The law of adaptation is the source of all our discoveries and the foundation of all our reasonings, and regulates our ideas of what is beyond our examination. We are ignorant, that there are men in the planets, but we are assured there must be eyes there, for there is light. This law awakens a sense of justice, and informs of a future world. It is an invincible proof of a God, for such infinite adaptations could never be the effect of limited wisdom." But if there is such obscurity in the laws of nature, though steady and uniform; and the great law of adaptation, or the fitnesses of things, often leaves us in the dark about them; it may be expected to be still more so in some of these laws which are to govern free agents, whose perversity and various habits are sufficient to interrupt the operation of any laws, however useful they may be to promote good order among men, or the health and strength of the human constitution. When we have divine direction, that should be our rule.

2. It will be allowed that there is such a crime as incest, and that, in some degrees, marriage would be unlawful; as in that of parents and children; brethren and sisters; which would evidently confound relations, and disturb their correspondent duties: But as kindred extends beyond these relations; the question will be, what shall determine the lawful boundary? If there is no express law, it must be left to capricious fancy, to affection or passion, or to the imperfect sense of moral obligation, which the reason of every man and woman may suggest. A principle, weak and variable, and without authority, even in the plainest cases; and much more incapable to decide, in cases where the shades of moral good and evil are not so distinctly marked.

3. The wisdom of God has appointed, that mankind should subsist, in families and relationships (in the scriptures, called *kindred* or *kin*, v. 6. and elsewhere). And it is evident, that this constitution of things greatly contributes to the good order, the education, government, improvement and happiness of men. From these relations certain obligations and duties arise, which ought to be distinctly felt and discharged. Many of these duties are inculcated in the word of God, and the neglect or violation of them is accounted an evidence of a depraved mind. It would therefore be improper, that this order of things should be disturbed, or any of these duties superceded, by confounding those relations, at least in some degrees. This renders it necessary that such degrees should be determined by adequate authority. But we know not any such authority, but God; nor any express law, except this, given by him on that subject.

3. The reference which this law has to the original law of marriage, and its evident connexion with it, points out its obligation, as resting on the same foundation; and that as the one is, so must the other be, of a general nature, relating to, and binding on all. It appears to be evidently founded upon, and explanatory of that original law. The law of marriage was declared by Adam, Gen. ii. 24. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh." The last words are, in the original, *lebasar ehad*; literally rendered, from our Saviour's words, by St. Matthew (xix. 5.) *ἓς σάρκα μίαν*, (and also in Eph. v. 31.) i. e. they shall be *in*, or come *into one flesh*. Now, what the real meaning and effect of this is, does not appear from that law. This explains it, as meaning *kin*, and shows the effect which it is to have, with respect to others. The word *basar* is the proper term for *flesh* (animal flesh), but it is used also to signify *kindred*, which is the meaning here; and and when Judah says of Joseph, Gen. xxxvii. 27, "he is our brother, our flesh." *Ahinu besarenu*. The same words are used, Neh. v. 5. when the poor Israelites complained of the extortion of their rich brethren, they say, *our flesh is the flesh of our brethren*, i. e. our kindred is the same, with our brethren, who spoil us, and therefore they should forbear to make us slaves.

Another word (*shëer*) is used here, which is synonymous with the former, but more commonly signifies kin (cognatus, propinquus). And it is observable, that in the sixth verse, which contains the substance of the law, upon that subject, both words are used, *shëer besaro*, literally *the flesh of his flesh*; to signify, *his near of kin*, or nearest kin. In the 12th, 13th and 17th verses, it is plainly seen that this is the meaning, and that it is to be applied equally to the kin, by affinity, as by consanguinity. This law makes no difference; the *shëer besaro*, (his near of kin,) applies to the one equally with the other. It may be further observed, that the two synonymous words, used in the sixth verse, amount to a reduplication, which, according to the Hebrew idiom, will signify a special nearness, or *nearest kin*; the meaning and extent of which are to be explained by the particulars of the following precepts. Hence it may be observed,

1. That it appears to be the design of God, the lawgiver, that the law of marriage shall constitute, in the married pair, *one individual and distinct kin*; and that it establishes the rule, that a man and his wife are, by virtue of that union, each equally related to each other's kin, as if they were so by blood. They are to be considered as *one*.

2. That the kin, hereby constituted, is to be of determinate limits and specific extent, as to its influence; comprehending, besides the direct ascending and descending line, the first, or nearest collateral degree on either side;* and it is to be unconfounded with any other kins, of the same kind arising within itself. Thus, besides the general kindred of the human race, all being of the same flesh and blood; this law is to constitute subordinate kins, every one of which shall be, as an individual self, peculiarly interested in, and concerned for the prosperity of all its parts; and by this constitution of things it is effected that the great ends of education and government are carried on by authorities of reasonable extent, supported by the supreme authority of God, and also under the influence of a special affection and attachment impressed by him, correspondent to the relation; and, consequently, the general order and happiness of the human race, will be more effectually promoted.

3. To prevent inordinate selfishness, and extend relationship and affection, this law requires, that the parties, who are thus to come into, or to constitute one kin, are not to be already of the *same*, but of *different kins*; so that every new kin shall be a bond or nexus between other kins; contributing to a more general benevolence, and operating, in a certain degree, against that dispersion of affection, which is the native consequence of a *confusion* of kindred, as well as tending to the extension of the human race.

Now, as this is a law given by divine authority; as it appears to be, not of a ceremonial cast, but of a general nature, and conducive to great and benevolent purposes; as it recognises, and is founded upon the original law of marriage, and illustrates that law, particularly upon the subject and extent of *kin*, created by it; and as to give it effect, the Author of nature has accompanied it with an endearing affection and attachment peculiar to the relation; may we not justly conclude, that it is of a moral nature and binding on all?

Some objections have been made to this view of the subject, which it may be necessary to consider.

[*To be continued.*]

* The first degree includes only brethren and sisters, uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces. It is commonly called the third degree, when we count up to the prepositus, and then collaterally.

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BIOGRAPHY.

REV. WILLIAM GRIMSHAW,

[*From Middleton's Biographia Evangelica.*]

THIS humble, laborious, and ardent Minister of *Christ*, WILLIAM GRIMSHAW, was born on *September* the third, in the year of our Lord 1708, at *Brindle*, six miles south of *Preston*, in *Lancashire, Eng.*; and was educated at the schools of *Blackburn* and *Heskin*, in that county. While he was a school-boy, the thoughts of death and judgment, the torments of hell, the glories of heaven, and the sufferings of *Christ*, often made some transient impressions upon him, owing probably to the religious care taken of him by his parents. In the eighteenth year of his age, he was admitted a member of *Christ's College* in *Cambridge*: And here (as is but too usually the case) bad example deplorably prevailed to seduce him from that decent manner of life and those serious reflections, which had been inculcated upon him; for, at this time, having no real change wrought upon him, and consequently *having no root in himself*, the prevalent impiety of the college carried him away so far, that, for the space of more than two years, he seemed utterly to have lost all sense of religion and seriousness; nor was there any revival of his former impressions, till on the day he was ordained deacon, in the year 1731. On this occasion, he was much affected with a sense of the importance of the ministerial office, which he was taking upon him, and the diligence which ought to be used in the discharge of it. Yet these convictions were but slight and soon carried away, like the chaff by the wind of temptation; though, for a little time, they were promoted by an acquaintance with some religious people at *Rochdale*, who used to meet

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RELIGIOUS AND MORAL DISCUSSIONS.

THE QUESTION, WHETHER A MAN MAY LAWFULLY MARRY HIS BROTHER'S WIFE, OR WIFE'S SISTER.

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WE now proceed to take notice of some objections which have been made to our view of the subject.

I. It is said, that the injunction, Deut. xxv. that a man should marry the widow of his brother, who had died without issue, implies that the law, v. 16, is not of moral obligation.

In answer to this, it may be observed,

1. That a particular exception, made by the same authority, that made the law, and for special reasons, expressly mentioned, should be no objection to, but rather a confirmation of the obligation of the law in all other cases. Such cases may appear to the imperfect views of men, as objections to the perfection of the laws of God; but they are not so in the great plan of providence. The wisdom of God could easily foresee what effect any law should have upon the order of things established by himself, and what variations it might admit of, and require, in particular cases, without any imputation of inconsistency. Infidels have made an objection like this against the evidence of miracles, as being transgressions of the law of nature.

2. The reason and obligation of divine laws depend upon the will of the supreme Lawgiver; and as dictated by infinite wisdom, must have a respect to the nature and powers of the creatures to whom they are given, and to the condition and relations, in which his sovereign will has placed them, or may, at any time, place them. Hence it is, that the laws of one order of beings may not be suitable for another; and in the same order, obligation and duty may vary, according to the different conditions in which they may be placed by the sovereign will of God. Thus the human race was made at first in one pair; and designed to grow and extend, by natural generation, in new and distinct kinds. This rendered it necessary, in the first instance, for brother and sister to marry; which was the law in that singular case; but when that necessity was removed, God appears to have ordered it otherwise, and revealed here the general law of kin, which could not in that case be admitted. And when God, for special reasons was pleased to place the family of the Jews, in their peculiar condition, it might be expected, that his laws should bear a corresponding aspect to that condition. This appears to have been the

case, as to some other parts of the moral law, and so it may be with respect to the law of *kin*; especially, in the particular instance in question, where the kin was, in a measure, extinct, through defect of issue.

Other variations may be observed in their constitution, the reasons of which must be referred to the wisdom of God, who does nothing in vain. Particularly, the Jews were prohibited from marrying with other nations. They were allowed to keep slaves, and even to abuse them, and beat them to death without punishment, as in other cases, Exod. xxi. 21. Lev. xix. 20. Our Lord also said to the Jews, that "Moses, on account of their untractable temper, permitted them to put away their wives, but that from the beginning the law was not so." And he calls the practice *adultery*, which is certainly a breach of the moral law. Matt. xix. 8.

II. It is said, that as the marriage bond constitutes the kin, so, when this is dissolved by death, the relation ceases, and its influence is no more.

1. This would set aside the law in question, which, after what has been said, is not to be conceded. 2. It limits the effect of marriage and kin, to what the judgment or fancy of men may think fit, and not to what the wisdom of God appears to have done, which is certainly most fit to establish general and useful regulations. Human reason never establishes any. 3. It is not fact, that the kin is extinguished by death. Where there are children, they are evidence of its continuance; in whom it would be unlawful to intermarry with their uncles or aunts, though the father or mother was dead. 4. It is contrary to scripture. The apostle Paul reprobates a man's having his father's wife, as a nameless fornication and excommunicates the person guilty of it. 1 Cor. 5. whereas if the kin was extinct, he would not have been on that account so "wicked a person." From the conformity of the expression, *his father's wife*, to the terms of this law, Lev. xviii. which is the only law about kin, it may be justly presumed, that the father was dead.

III. It has been thought, that the 18th verse, which forbids "the taking a wife to her sister, to vex her, in her lifetime," permits a man to marry his wife's sister, after her death.

This, however has no reference to the case of marrying two sisters. It is a prohibition of polygamy. The words rendered "a wife to her sister," is an idiomatic form of speech to signify *one to another*. The same words are used, Exod. xxvi. 3, to signify the coupling of the curtains of the tabernacle, *one to another*. Its meaning here is, *one wife to another*.

IV. The objection, *that it is inconsistent with liberty*, scarcely deserves a serious consideration; as every one knows, that liberty without law is licentiousness; and that obedience to the laws of God is always a reasonable service. In this case, the restraint is so light and partial, that it can have no weight with men who are governed by reason. As to those who are inclined to follow their passions without control, we ought not to be so much concerned for their satisfaction.

V. The 19th verse has been thought by some to be of a ceremonial cast, and an evidence that the law was designed only for the Jews. But however peculiarly that precept might be enjoined upon them, every one must know, that it forbids an indecency which ought to be avoided by all. God governs the brutes by *instinct*, which, in this respect is very remarkable. The female orgasm affects them only at particular seasons, and the males pay no attention to them at other times; which may be an intimation, that man, who, in all his conduct, is to be governed by reason, and not by appetite, should be so regulated in this. Moreover, it is a common observation, that *nature vindicates itself*; and especially in such cases, where offences are not capable of other punishment; and if the opinion of some physicians is well founded, which is not improbable, viz. that some particular disorders may affect the bodies of men from such original impurities, it would be an additional argument for the obligation of the law.

VI. It has been said, that marriage is a civil relation, and that the law of the land is the sole guide, in all things relating to it.

This is a short and easy way of getting rid of the question, and of solving cases of conscience about it. But although marriage is, in some respects, a civil relation, attended with many civil effects of great importance to the community; and it is the right of the civil government to direct in all such matters; yet it is not only of a civil, but also of a moral nature; an institution of God, which is the source of many of those relations and duties upon which the virtue and happiness of man greatly depends, and the observation or neglect of which very much affects the christian character. In all its aspects, therefore, upon the moral characters of men, it ought to be considered, as under the cognizance of the church of Christ. The kingdom of Christ does not rest on the foundation of civil government, but upon the laws of God. The laws of the land cannot be admitted as regulating the terms of church-membership, but the laws of Christ. The frequent instructions which are given in the word of God, about this relation; its nature and moral effects; its strong obligation and duties; the

causes that may dissolve it; and the heinous crime of unfaithfulness in it; besides, a plain example of an actual and solemn excommunication for irregularity in contracting it; all show the concern, which the church of Christ has in this matter. This the judicatories thereof ought to feel, and to exercise an authority corresponding thereto, and which they may and ought to do, without any interference with the rights of the civil magistrate, or taking him for their rule in such cases.

If the foregoing observations may be considered, as it is thought they are, of weight, in support of the binding obligation of the law Lev. xviii. and of the unlawfulness of the connexion mentioned; it may be sufficient, merely to mention, that even if it was a doubtful case, yet as that law has been so long and so generally considered in this light, by the christian church, and consequently has begotten a general abhorrence of such connexions in the minds of christian professors, so that they give great offence; it ought to be avoided by all on this ground agreeably to the advice of St. Paul, Rom. xiv. 1 Cor. viii. and x. chapters.



CHRISTIAN CONFIDENCE, OR TRUST IN GOD.

To say that, in respect to this or the other interest or event, we trust in God, in his providence or grace, has become a very common, even a hackneyed phrase; a phrase, almost as often repeated by the unprincipled and thoughtless, as by those whose minds and hearts have been better informed. Happy it would be, if, on every occasion, it were used in a sense more congruous with piety and truth, and accompanied with a corresponding sentiment of the heart. But, how often is it uttered as an expletive merely? or as meaning no more than a blind and wanton expectation, that the course of things will be so ordered and adjusted, as shall accord with our favourite schemes and wishes? The phrase, thus only intended, merits no other consideration, than as a trifling modish reference to the powers of the Almighty; or as a thoughtless and presumptuous hope, that his provident wisdom and goodness, in the given case, will be exerted in our favour.

Such trust or confidence in God, if so we may call it, is always, and at the best, but weak, undetermined, unsteady, and unfounded, as it is presumptuous. It is not accompanied with any proper sense of piety in the heart. It is not productive of any characteristic expressions of goodness in the life. In the Holy