

MAGNALIA CHRISTI AMERICANA;
OR,
THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY
OF
NEW-ENGLAND,

FROM ITS FIRST PLANTING, IN THE YEAR 1620, UNTO THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1698.

IN SEVEN BOOKS.

BY THE
REVEREND AND LEARNED COTTON MATHER, D.D. F.R.S.
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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME II.

WITH
AN INTRODUCTION AND OCCASIONAL NOTES,
BY THE REV. THOMAS ROBBINS, D.D.
AND
TRANSLATIONS OF THE HEBREW, GREEK, AND LATIN QUOTATIONS,
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QUESTION.—*Whether it be Lawful for a Man to Marry his Wife's Sister?*

I. A MARRIAGE between a man and his wife's own sister, is positively prohibited in that law of God, (Lev. xviii. 16,) "that a man may not marry his brother's wife." By the plainest consequence, a woman may not marry her sister's husband. The degree prohibited is exactly the same.

II. The *law* that has prohibited the marriage of a man to his wife's own sister has an authority and an obligation reaching even to the Gentiles, upon "whom the ends of the world are come." 'Tis evident that the violation of *this* law, is declared one of those *abominations* for which the ancient Canaanites were "spued out of their land." And we find the New Testament, in divers places, insisting upon those prohibitions, among which this law is one. The good order which God has by this law established in humane society, is that which the light of nature, in mankind, as *now* increased, does abundantly testify unto. The dispensation which the sovereign law-giver once gave in one instance hereunto, was extraordinary. The example of Jacob, in this matter, is to be disapproved by all that would be esteemed his children, as well as that of his polygamy.

III. 'Tis the law of our God, in Lev. xviii. 6, "none of you shall approach [in a marriage] unto any that is near of kin to him." Now, the kindred betwixt a man and his own wife's sister, is of the nearest sort: For, *Inter Virum et mulierem non contrahitur affinitas, sed ipsi sunt affinitatis causa*.* so then this affinity is not less than *in primo genere*,† and therefore unlawful. It is likewise the concurrent sense of the greatest divines (particularly asserted in the Assemblies "confession of faith;") that of what degree any one is of consanguinity to his wife, in the same degree of affinity is that person to the husband. And that an husband is forbidden to marry with the *consanguines* of his wife, by the same rule that consanguines are forbidden to marry among themselves. And this assertion may be demonstrated from the *rules* given in the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus. Wherefore, as a man may not marry his own sister, so not the sister of his wife, which is one flesh with him.

IV. The marriage in the question has been so scandalous among the whole people of God, that whosoever is guilty of it, is therein worthy to be *cut off* from the communion of the Catholic Church; yea, it hath been one of the imperial laws, *Duabus Sororibus Conjungendi, penitus Licentiam submovemus*.‡ Much less may such an iniquity be countenanced among the people of *our profession*.

QUESTION.—*Whether, and how far, the Discipline of our Lord in our Churches is to be extended to the Children therein Baptized.*

I. WE judge, that the *discipline* of our Lord Jesus Christ in our churches ought to be extended unto the children baptised in them: in as much as

* For a relationship is not contracted between the man and the woman, but they are themselves the source of relationship.

† Of the first degree.

‡ We utterly disallow the privilege of marrying two sisters.

these persons are certainly those which the Scripture calls *within*, and not *without*; and the *lambs*, as well as others in the flocks of our-Lord, are to be fed: and the practice of the purest churches has been agreeable to this principle, as well the primitive before, as the Bohemian and others since, the Reformation: reason also says, that where a *priviledge* is expected, a *discipline* is to be acknowledged.

II. Although it is a membership in the catholic church that gives right unto baptism, yet *particular* churches, as well as the pastors of those churches, owe a duty to the catholic church, part of which duty is the application of *discipline* unto those baptised persons whom the providence of God shall cast under their inspection.

III. The discipline which we count owing unto these persons is, an *instruction* in the laws of our Lord Jesus Christ, an *admonition* upon a scandalous violation of those laws, and upon incorrigibleness in evil, an open *rejection* from all ecclesiastical privileges: and although persons are most clearly *liable* to this process, when they have actually *renewed* their baptismal covenant, and *recognized* their subjection to the government of our Lord in his church, and the children of the church are to be accordingly laboured withal, that they may be brought hereunto, yet we do not think that any of the said persons, refusing or neglecting thus to do, are thereby exempted from such a care of the church to bring them unto repentance.

QUESTION.—*In what Cases is a Divorce of the Married justly to be Pursued and Obtained?*

I. To judge, determine and accomplish a divorce of any married persons, the civil magistrate is to be addressed or concerned.

II. In case any married persons be found under *natural incapacities*, and *insufficiencies*, which utterly disappoint the confessed ends of marriage, the marriage is to be declared a nullity.

III. In case any married person be found already bound in a marriage to another yet living, a divorce is to be granted unto the aggrieved party.

IV. In case any married person be convicted of such *criminal uncleannesses* as render them one *flesh* with another object than that unto which their marriage has united them, the injured party may sue and have their divorce from the offending; which is the plain sense of the sentence, passed by our Lord, Matth. xix. 9.

V. In case there be found *incest* in a marriage, a divorce is to command the separation of the married.

VI. In case it be found that a person married had, by *fornication* before marriage, been made *one* with a person related unto the person with whom they are *now* married, within the degrees made incestuous by the law of God, it is a just plea for a divorce.

VII. In case of a *malicious desertion* by a married person, who is obliged and invited to return, a divorce may be granted by lawful authority unto the forsaken. For the word of God is plain, "that a Christian is not

bound in such cases" by the marriage unto one which has thus wilfully violated the covenant; and tho' our Saviour forbids "a man's putting away his wife, except it be for fornication," yet he forbids not rulers to rescue an innocent person from the enthralling disadvantages of another that shall sinfully go away.

VIII. As for married persons long absent from each other, and not heard of by each other, the government may state what *length of time* in this case, may give such a presumption of *death* in the person abroad, as may reckon a second marriage free from scandal.

IX. A divorce being legally pursued and obtained, the innocent person that is released may proceed unto a "second marriage in the Lord:" otherwise the state of believers under the New Testament would in some of these cases be worse than what the God of heaven directed for his people under the Old.

¶ PROPOSITIONS—Concerning Ordination.

I. A solemn *separation* to the service of our Lord Jesus Christ in his church, is essential to the call of a church-officer.

II. The *election* of the church, and a compliance with, and an acceptance of that election, by a person coming under a separation, is that wherein lies the essence of his call to minister unto that particular church.

III. The *imposition of hands*, in the ordination of a church-officer, is a rite, not only lawful to be retained, but it seems by a divine institution directed and required; so that although the call of a person to church-office may not become null and void, where that rite may have been omitted, as it is in the seniors and deacons in most of the reformed churches, yet we cannot approve the omission of it. A ceremonial defect may be blameworthy.

IV. When it is enjoined, "lay hands suddenly on no man," there seems a plain *positive* in that *negative*; and it is implied "that hands are to be laid on some." Now, when, or where, but in ordination?

V. The *whole ordination* to a *ministry* seems intended in the apostle's expression of a "gift given with the laying on of hands;" yea, nothing less than the whole ministry, under that ordination, seems comprised in the apostle's expression of the "doctrine of laying on of hands:" and such a synecdoche intimates that this *rite* is no inconsiderable *part* of that whereof 'tis put for the *whole*.

VI. The church of God, in all ages, has used an "imposition of hands," as a rite many ways agreeable to the will of God; and besides the use of this rite, sometimes on *miraculous* accounts, there has still been a more constant use of it on *ecclesiastical* accounts; not *conferring* but *confessing* of qualifications, the subjects that received it; which one reason has in it many and weighty considerations.

VII. The "imposition of hands" being a rite used by the primitive