The Church, Consanguinity and Trollope

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Introduction

The Church's attitude to cousin marriage varied through the centuries and shaped public opinion. But public opinion began to differ radically from that of the Church after a single sentence by Charles Darwin (1809-82) in his 1862 book on orchid fertilization, criticising 'perpetual self-fertilization', commented 'that marriage between near relations is likewise in some way injurious'.[1] That sentence began a bitter debate about cousin marriage that lingers today, although Darwin later changed his view and omitted the comment in his 1877 edition. The Church and public opinion no longer coincided.

Although Trollope (1815-82) began writing his forty-seven novels before 1862—his first novel *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* was published in 1847—and all of his novels contained marriages, he did not include marriages between cousins until *after* Darwin's statement. Of his novels published between 1864 and 1883, the year after his death, fifteen engage, however slightly, with the issue of cousin marriage.[2] Trollope was one of many nineteenth-century writers, both before and after 1862, from Jane Austen (1775-1817) to Edith Somerville (1856-1949) and Martin Ross (1862-1915), to feature cousin marriage in his fiction but he seemed so obsessed by the subject from the mid-1860s that he returned to it again and again. Trollope was an active member of the Church and had 'multiple family connections with the Church and close contact with many churchman'.[3] He was also interested in Darwin's ideas, so interested that *The Bertrams* (1859), published in the same year as Darwin's *Origin of Species*, refers not only to the much earlier conservative theological debate over the "Tracts for the Times" by Hurrell Froude (1818-94) and John Henry Newman (1801-90), but also to the possible apostasy of his hero George Bertram, who, having contemplated unbelief, rediscovers his faith in the religious sites of Syria and the Mount of Olives, where he 'thanked God that he had brought him there to this spot'. Through his characterisation of George Bertram, Trollope brilliantly captures, in personal terms, the tensions between science and religion, which had been primarily instigated by Darwin's

work on evolution. These were so fierce in the nineteenth century that science seemed to be competing with Christianity as a kind of rival religion, except that science clearly offered Trollope no convincing argument about Creation and he spurns the notion that 'the whole story of Creation' could be 'a myth'.[4] When, three years after *The Bertrams*, Darwin, a scientist, questioned the health of future progeny in cousin marriages, Trollope became more circumspect about announcing his allegiance to either the Church or science, because of the complexity and sensitivity of the problem.

Cousin marriage had become almost an institution in nineteenth-century England. It was such a common convention that Jane Austen, a clergyman's daughter, had portrayed it as a commonplace practice against which her more spirited heroines, like Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), rebelled. Fanny Price's marriage to her clerical cousin Edmund in *Mansfield Park* (1814) has a ring of dull domesticity, when seen alongside Elizabeth Bennet's racier romance with Darcy. Cousin marriage was so entrenched in English life that Darwin's observation rocked the establishment.

The Church and Close-Kin Marriage

In order to understand the difficult issue of cousin marriage it is necessary to trace both the Church's attitude to marital relationships in general and the changing opinions of scientists to close kin marriage. In the Bible, Leviticus 18 omits cousin pairings in its outlining of prohibited consanguineous and affinal relationships. Consanguineous relationships refer to connections through blood; affinal ones relate to connections made through marriage—a sister-in-law, for instance. Included in the list of forbidden unions is any sexual relationship within the nuclear family between blood relatives and half-blood relatives as well as between those in direct line across the generations, for example grandparents and grandchildren. Nor are liaisons between children and their aunts and uncles permitted, whether or not they are aunts and uncles by blood or through marriage, 'for they are … near kin …'. The natural inference to be drawn, since the taboos referred to both blood and non-blood relationships, is that such unions, referred to as 'abominations' which 'defile' the perpetrators, upset the very fabric and equilibrium of social relations.[5] The health of potential progeny does not seem to have been the issue; it appears to be the status within the family that was implied in determining the prohibition. Since cousins belong to the same generation and share equal status within the

family, no contemplated union between them could have affected any social order or hierarchy. Thus the inference to be drawn was '[t]hat it [was] lawful for *Cousins of all Degrees to marry*'.[6]

Certainly the Old Testament has Abraham's son Isaac marrying his first cousin, once removed, and his grandson Jacob marrying his first cousin. But then it also has Abraham marrying his half-sister Sarah, and twelve patriarchs, several of whom sprang from third generation consanguineous marriages, giving rise eventually to ten million people.[7] The consanguineous marriages included Cain and Seth marrying their own sisters, Nahor marrying his niece Mileah, Lot marrying his own daughters to create the Moabites and Ammonites, and Amram marrying his aunt Jochebed.[8] All of these marriages, however, are recounted in Genesis, which was written prior to the Book of Leviticus. The important thing to remember is that in Genesis we are reading history; in Leviticus we are reading theology. By the time that events in Leviticus took place, human stock had presumably multiplied to such numbers that it was felt that laws were needed to govern the complete range of human behaviour, including reproduction, to reduce internecine tensions between generations and retain social order. The tacit sanctioning of cousin marriage in Leviticus still adhered to that end.

Less tacit, though, was the New Testament. The parents of Jesus Christ were cousins, for Joseph had married his father's brother's daughter, Mary. Joseph himself had been born as the result of a levirate marriage; a levirate marriage is one in which a brother marries the widow of his deceased brother in order to produce children—*levir* being the Latin for brother-in-law. This was considered a duty in the Ancient Mediterranean, particularly in Israel, when a brother's childless marriage had ended in his death. A surviving brother married his brother's widow out of honour to his family so that the name could continue. In Joseph's case, his father Jacob had married the widow of his deceased twin Heli, 'Jacob having raised seed to the name of his dead brother'.[9] As we can see, close kindred marriage is a multiple event in the Bible.

Since biblical times, the question of cousin marriage within Christianity has been complex. Although the Church of England permits first cousin marriage, the Roman Catholic Church in England still insists on Diocesan approval for such unions. Towards the end of the Roman Empire in 384 or 385, the

Emperor Theodosius had instigated a law banning cousin marriage unless imperial dispensation had been sought. Mindful of this law and the possibility for circumvention by extracting a sum of money in the form of a fine and thereby making a tidy profit,[10] the Roman Catholic Church took its position from Pope Gregory 1 in the late sixth century, who advised the first Archbishop of Canterbury, Augustine, that marital unions between blood relatives would be sterile. The Pope even cited Leviticus, but took the line in 18.6 forbidding a man to 'uncover the nakedness of his kindred' out of context.[11] He, therefore, had not differentiated between the complex degrees of relationship, cited by Leviticus. Had he quoted Leviticus more fully and accurately, the Pope could not have used this source to justify his advice, either in terms of the degree of the relationship or in terms of his reason for doing so.

So why did the early Church ban cousin marriage? One view is that the Church did it for profit.[12] It established itself very quickly in England as 'the largest landowner (as in most other European countries)'. The Christian Church, like any other religion, began as a sect. As it grew in numbers it needed funds. Preaching poverty as a primary principle, the Church still needed wealth and property in order, not only to prosper, but also to help the poor and needy. Charity requires a surplus of resources, so the Church required funds to be donated in order to carry out its charitable ends. It could only do this by convincing families to hand over their wealth to the Church. But the instinct of families is to draw together for survival, to pool finances and pass it on down the generations. One way of keeping wealth in the family is to marry within it. Close marriages also strengthen family bonds, which in turn facilitate the accumulation and retention of property. Families frequently encouraged their children to marry their cousins so that the property could not only remain in the family but could be accumulated. This was not in the Church's interest. By prohibiting close marriage the Church weakened family ties and helped to alienate family property to its own ends. Christianity's growth, from a small sect broken away from Judaism to a global Church, at first involved 'the denial of family ties',[13] illustrated in Matthew's Gospel in a number of verses, but not more resoundingly than in these lines—

> And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.[14]

Such lines as these were bound to cause a rift between Church and family. The early Church not only alienated family sentiment and loyalty away from 'the beliefs of their fathers and forefathers', it also continued its forced estrangement when it encouraged its followers to alienate expected wealth away from the family's descendants by disinheriting 'kin in favour of God'. The law of mortmain in England was instigated to curb the eagerness of corporations like the Church that, more and more, was seen by both families and the State as the 'dead hand' that was ready to grasp property, 'seize it and not let it go', if deceased estates were seen, or deemed, to be without lineal male heirs—the Church having engineered domestic life to such an extent that collateral (extended family) and female kin were now becoming increasingly bypassed when it came to inheritances. Not every family could bear a son to carry on a descending line and, if sideways (collateral) or female inheritors were discouraged, the Church felt itself free to take possession of the family coffers. One of its most seductive concepts was that of 'salvation through donation'. Few people could resist the thought of achieving some kind of immortalisation by bestowing earthly goods no longer needed on a Church ready to guarantee eternal peace for the soul and a holy place on which one's name could be carved—on a choir stall or reredos—for all the world to see. No son could match that kind of sanctification after his father's death. Even men who had borne sons and heirs were seduced into beggaring their children in order to become 'saints'.[15] From the individual's point of view, passing on wealth to the family was simply a duty, but passing it on to the Church was an honour that did not go unrewarded. From the Church's point of view, families competed with them for the riches of the earth. If the families gained the wealth, its use was limited to, and by, family concerns; if the Church gained the wealth it could be put to charitable use or used for the greater Glory of God. There is no doubt that the Church stood to lose by close family connections and had everything to gain by loosening its ties, but whether or not this was the reason for its strong prohibitions on close marriages is yet to be proved inconclusively. Certainly one of the results of the prohibitions on the degrees of relationship was the swelling of the coin boxes of the Church.

The Degrees of Relationship

The history of Christianity's prohibitions on the degrees of relationship is complex and convoluted. From the fourth century, when it was initiated, the older civil (Roman) method computed the degrees of relationship 'by summing

the number of ties between each relative and the common ancestor'.[16] Parents and children are in the first degree; brothers and sisters as well as grandparents and grandchildren are in the second degree; nephews and nieces as well as great-grandchildren are in the third degree, and first cousins as well as great-aunts and great-uncles are in the fourth degree. Until AD 1215, civil law prohibited marriage to the twelfth degree. Marriages made within those degrees were deemed to be incestuous. Noble families in England and France in the tenth and eleventh centuries were even prepared for their children to marry down, or marry someone from a distant land, in order to avoid risking the Church's wrath by marrying someone to whom they were related by blood, whether or not hearts were broken as a result.[17] The later canon (Germanic) law, adopted by the Church in the eleventh century, prohibited to the seventh degree, which corresponded to the civil law's twelfth degree. The Fourth Council of Lateran reduced the prohibition to the fourth degree. But the fourth degree meant different relationships in each of the systems of reckoning. Civil law allowed fourth degree relatives of first cousins to marry; canon law prohibited fourth degree relatives of second cousins to marry.[18] Canon law did not sum the number of ties between each individual, but simply counted the ties between just one of the individuals and the common ancestor. A brother and sister are thus first degree relatives, while first cousins are in the second degree. The human body, by the thirteenth century, came to represent this system, which illustrated each degree and generation on both sides of the body: the head as the 'common ascendant, the shoulder the brother and sister, the elbow first cousins' and so on.[19] Both canon and civil methods of computation have continued to be used in some form or another, which has only added to the complexity of the issues involved.

By the thirteenth century, though, the 'fourth degree of consanguinity' in civil law was deemed 'the proper point to stop at'. In other words, marriage between first cousins became lawful, since this was 'neither contrary to the law of nature, the "Levitical constitutions, the civil laws of many wise legislatures, nor the practice of most ages and countries"'.[20] Even so, the Roman Catholic Church still continued until the sixteenth century to charge fees to cousins wishing to marry, which may have prompted Protestant denominations, after the Reformation, to rely more or less on Leviticus for their marital code of relationship degrees. That way Protestants could not only mark themselves out to be different from Romanists but could also appear less materialistic. Such is

the contrariness of human nature that Roman Catholic European countries during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had more consanguineous marriages than Protestant countries.[21]

The Blurring of Consanguinity and Affinity

In the same way as the Roman Catholic Church stood to profit financially from its prohibitions on consanguineous marriages, it also enhanced its income from its prohibitions on affinal and spiritual ties. Consanguines as relatives by blood, and affines as relatives by marriage could be readily understood to hold some kind of special position in the governance of the extended family. But spiritual ties, too, were deemed by the Church to have a similar function, for they were those formed through baptisms—godmothers and godfathers. Godparents were responsible for the moral teaching and well-being of children and were thus *in loco parentis*. Parents could not marry their own children; therefore godparents could not marry their own godchildren. Spiritual ties extended to the adopting of children, on which the Church frowned for many a century. It was regarded as 'impious' if a man chose 'to marry a girl who from the beginning had been brought up as his daughter'.[22]

In the eleventh century the Roman Catholic Church's extensions to the consanguineal prohibitions had also included a range of affinal and spiritual relationships. The Church had made it difficult to 'marry anyone from whom one *could* have formerly inherited, i.e. kinsfolk'.[23] In the eleventh-century world of limited travel, whom could a young person marry if distant relatives like third cousins, siblings-in-law and godparents were out of range? On the surface, this broad expanse of forbidden territory would seem, to the modern eye, to be an intolerable situation. But human nature is always quick to spot the main chance. If it was possible to purchase a dispensation to marry a prohibited member of kith and kin, it was also possible, having donned an 'unsavoury' yoke, to jettison a partner causing grief by providing either a complicated family tree proving the partner to be consanguineal or affinal or, if people were really devious, becoming the godparent of their own children and thereby gaining freedom from a marriage that could now be declared invalid. At a time when divorce was well nigh impossible to obtain, such manipulations were not uncommon, particularly among European royalty but also among sufficient numbers of their subjects for the Church to recognise that 'there was a serious problem with these prohibitions'. When divorces

gained through citations of spiritual kin became 'so numerous', bishops were forced to stop mothers 'becoming godmothers to their [own] children', and this, in turn, led to the 1215 Lateran reduction in the number of prohibited degrees, already mentioned.[24]

Seeking an end to marriage by 'discovering' that a spouse had some kind of illicit blood or marital link did not end in 1215. The most famous of these ploys was one that led to the genesis of the Church of England. Henry VIII became a master researcher of family genealogy. His first wife, in 1509, was the Roman Catholic Princess, Catherine of Aragon. Catherine was also Henry's deceased brother's widow, so the Roman Catholic Church had had to provide him with dispensation to effect this leviratic marriage to an affinal relative. Once their two sons had died, leaving the bereaved couple with just a daughter, Mary Tudor, Henry declared the marriage invalid on the grounds that he and Catherine were relatives, thereby making Mary Tudor illegitimate. Henry had had research done on his behalf that gave him the answer he wanted: a leviratic marriage was legitimate for Jewish people 'in the land of Judaea, to preserve Families and maintain their Successions in the Land', but elsewhere 'the Law of Leviticus' *banning* leviratic marriages 'was obligatory'.[25] So Henry was again a free man. He retied the marital knot in 1533, this time to Anne Boleyn, only to gain his freedom three years later by having Anne beheaded. One year after that, Henry married Jane Seymour, who conveniently died in childbirth to return him to the single life. Three years later, Henry had a brief fling of a marriage to Anne of Cleves, divorcing her after only a couple of months' marital misery, 'on the grounds of non-consummation'.[26] In the same year, 1540, Henry wished to marry Catherine Howard, the first cousin of Anne Boleyn, who had been his second wife. He needed a change in the law to allow this, so he simply removed one of the Church's prohibitions by the Marriage Act, which enabled cousins to marry.[27] This second Catherine also proved to be a thorn in his side so he had her executed a couple of years later for being unchaste both before and after marriage. Presumably not even Henry had the gall to revoke his own law and seek freedom through the courts. Besides, execution was quicker and, no doubt, cheaper. Single again, but only for a year, Henry married Catherine Parr in 1543. His ploys, however, returned to haunt his ghost, for his Roman Catholic daughter, Mary Tudor, whom he had declared illegitimate, took the throne in 1553, affirmed herself as legitimate by gaining the Pope's dispensation for her father's leviratic marriage,[28] annulled

her parents' divorce, 'rejected any statements in previous acts of Parliament' declaring her illegitimacy, and later even repealed the 1540 Act, which was reinstated by her Protestant half-sister Elizabeth in 1550, the first year of her reign.[29]

This act of rebellion by her father in 1540, facilitating cousin marriage, had long-term and long-range reverberations, even affecting the neighbouring country of Scotland. The Roman Catholic Scottish nobleman Henry Steward, Lord Darnley, lived—and died—to regret Henry VIII's Act. It helped his cousin Mary, Queen of Scots, to marry him in 1565 and—most people strongly suspect—have him murdered, when, once he had been given the title of king, he demanded the crown not only for himself but also for his heirs, should she die childless. His strangled body in the midst of an insurrection, a mere two years after their cousinly trip to the altar, gave rise to rumours about Mary's hand in this. Without Henry VIII's 1540 Act, though, this pattern of events would not have taken place.

Not surprisingly, the marital machinations of Henry, in which the King revisited more than once the site of the prohibited degrees of relationship, caused a degree of confusion among his subjects, many of whom had taken advantage of the chaos to decide on their own code of marital choice. The newly established Church of England decided to draw up "An Admonicon", which consisted of the Table of Kindred and Afinity, and printed it in 1560. It was necessarily provisional, since the number of 'incestuous and unnatural Contracts and Marriages…were now very rife, to the great Scandal of the Nation'.[30] The Table slightly expanded those degrees referred to in Leviticus, but was not made strictly legal until 1835.[31] Cousins did not feature anywhere in the Table.

Thus, prior to Darwin's book in 1862 and with the exception of countries embracing the Orthodox Church which bans consanguinity, Christian countries had been accustomed for six long centuries to cousins joining each other within the yoke of marriage. Interestingly, though, in England the affinal relationship between a man and his deceased wife's sister remained on the list of prohibited degrees of marital links throughout the nineteenth century. Marriage to a deceased husband's brother—a levirate marriage—had long disappeared from the list of prohibitions, although it had first appeared in this list in the seventh

century.[32] But anyone desiring to marry the sister of his deceased wife had to sail over the English Channel to Europe to do so. This particularly furious nineteenth-century debate began in 1835 with Lord Lyndhurst's Act and fumed for decades. Like Henry VIII's 1540 Act, this Act had been instigated for a very personal reason. It set out to 'guarantee the legitimacy and inheritance of the son of the seventh Duke of Beaufort, who had married his deceased wife's half-sister'.[33] It actually did much more than that. Although marriages between affinal kin made before the Act were still legitimate, any such marriages contemplated afterwards were 'null and void'; under no circumstances could a man and his wife's sister ever even think of marriage.[34]

Since many an unmarried sister lived in the household of her married sister for protection and shelter—Charles Dickens's (1812-70) own household contained, at different stages,[35] two unmarried sisters of his wife Catherine—nineteenth-century family dynamics radically changed after the Lyndhurst Act. After the death of a beloved married sister, it seemed natural to many a grieving widower to turn to his deceased wife's unmarried sister, who had been living in his household, not only for her help with his orphaned children but also for intimate comfort. At a time when hundreds of women died in childbirth this situation was not an unusual one. Many, many attempts were made during the nineteenth century to overturn the prohibition of marriage with the deceased wife's sister, but the Church of England, as the Church of the State, remained implacable in the face of public pressure, and every bill brought before Parliament failed to find a through passage. It was not until the beginning of the twentieth century, in 1907, that marriage with the deceased wife's sister was legalised and, even then, there was violent opposition. The justification for retaining this prohibition for so long, as far as the Church had been concerned, was that 'man and wife were considered one flesh'.[36] If they were 'one flesh', it meant that the blood relatives of each of them were blood relatives shared by both of them. A woman's blood sister was as if she was her husband's blood sister, too. Even after the legalisation of this kind of affinal marriage the Anglican Book of Common Prayer continued until 1946 to have the deceased wife's sister on its list of prohibited degrees,[37] and it was still regarded as incestuous and grounds for divorce for a man to have an affair with a living wife's sister.[38] The English terms denoting affinity, consanguinity and spirituality reflect the Christian Church's attitude to these relationships, for they all bear either a suffix or a prefix signifying close relationships.

Godparents, grandparents and parents-in-law all bear the same kind of sign that distinguishes them from other human relationships like friends and acquaintances, for instance.[39] So, certain affinal marriages were strictly out of bounds, but cousin marriage, by the nineteenth century was regarded as normal by the Church of England and public opinion in Christian England coincided with that of the Church.

Scientific Theory, Royal Practice and Common Mythology

The nineteenth century's gradual substitution of science for Christianity gave rise to a proliferation of theories on all kinds of subjects. Scientific theories, based on enthusiastic, but often clumsy, empirical data gathering, not only in England but also globally, led to new discoveries and new inventions.

Not surprisingly, they sometimes resulted in eyebrow-raising reasoning. Theories, repeated sufficiently, have a way of being accepted as fact and the nineteenth century fell in love with facts and fact-gathering. Among the countless subjects under scrutiny was the subject of marriage. Travel to exotic lands invariably caused voyagers to observe how other human beings conducted their private lives. One of the most common theories propounded as a result of these global voyages was that marriage with close kin was the earliest kind of marriage. This seemed to be further substantiated by Biblical accounts of consanguineous marriages already mentioned. The view that early human beings 'had sexual relationships with their closest relatives' conveniently slotted into 'evolutionary theory', for it was thought that society gradually 'moved from homogeneity to heterogeneity'. People began by marrying those closest to them, their relatives, and then realised the advantages in marrying outside the tribe, which might have included material, social and political advantages, and, according to nineteenth-century evolutionary theory, even physical ones. Once the move had been made away from close kin, consanguineous marriages would be seen as 'a holdover from the earliest stages of human life', so the logical next step was to prohibit this 'primitive' kind of marriage.[40] Marrying beyond the tribe was thus seen to be more civilised.

Conversely, some of the same reasons offered against close marriages were also put forward as reasons for European royal families practising cousin marriage. Four of the five daughters of Queen Victoria, the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, married, with her active encouragement, into four distinct

European royal families as a kind of marital diplomacy. The forging of personal relations has always been seen as the key to political alliances; diplomacy is built on this premise.

Apart from Queen Victoria and some members of the aristocracy, however, most of England's population heeded Darwin's warning. Nor was he the first person to blame blood relationship on the health of progeny, for this belief seems to have persisted since Pope Gregory's statement in the sixth century about the sterility of close kin marriages, and is alive today. Every now and again there were references in different kinds of literature. Folklore in the eighth century nominated blood marriages as a cause of physical problems. In the eleventh century there was 'the persistent feeling that consanguineous unions were bound to produce monstrous offspring',[41] and Robert Burton, author of the famous *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), advised that marriages 'as are any whit allyed' were to be avoided in favour of choosing 'those that are most differing in complexion from them'.[42] Statements such as these, cited by opponents of cousin marriage in the nineteenth century helped to fan people's fears.

Science and Trollope: Mid 1850s–Mid 1870s

In fact Darwin was not even the first person in his own era to comment on marrying blood relatives. The medical profession had already begun a heated discussion, which had probably been initiated by an American clergyman and an American doctor in the mid and late 1850s.[43] A series of health problems suffered by the children of cousin marriages prompted the Revd. Brooks to conclude that such marriages were unwise, and random data convinced Dr. Bemiss that the children of cousin marriages often suffered intellectual impairment or died prematurely.[44] Across the Atlantic, two years before Darwin's discussion of orchid fertilization, The Lancet debated close kin marriage. One view claimed that children born to parents closely related by blood risked physical and intellectual impairment.[45] Another view dismissed this, citing as evidence the vigour of inbred villagers as well as the close kin marriages of the Old Testament.[46] Even though no-one could find evidence other than isolated examples or generalisations, it was obvious that there was growing alarm among the medical profession. Darwin had simply repeated these concerns. While most people did not read medical journals, the publication of *Origin of Species* (1859) had made Darwin famous,[47] so what

he said, the population was bound to hear. The news was devastating, since many people had married within their extended family, as Anthony Trollope (1815-1882) hinted in *The Small House at Allington* (1864), when he has a young doctor say to another that 'I'm not quite sure that it's a good thing for cousins to marry.'[48] Since there were several instances of cousin marriage in Trollope's extended family and the neighbouring Lincolnshire Thorold family, into which members of his kin had married three times, Trollope avoids offending readers and several of his family members,[49] because the young doctor's own marital hopes were in danger of being dashed by two cousins marrying, and his motive for speaking up could be seen as suspect.

In the 1860s Darwin widened the debate, not only beyond *The Lancet* to doctors like Gilbert Child commenting in other medical journals in England,[50] but also to doctors like M. Boudin in France,[51] and even to observers in non-medical journals. These included Dr. Child, who was determined to be heard by people outside the medical profession, and also William Adam and Arthur Mitchell.[52] The parameters of the debate also broadened. Advocates of close-kin marriage, like Adam and Child, indicated the legal factors as well as the social advantages of close family marriages; they also argued that marriages between blood relations produced healthy stock. Staunch opponents, like Mitchell in Scotland and Boudin in France, cited cases of deaf-mutism, blindness, idiocy, intemperance and scrofula (tuberculosis). Mitchell and Boudin cited specific family cases and statistics. Even supposedly neutral commentators like the anthropologists, John McLennan and Lewis Henry Morgan,[53] could not agree and were highly selective in the cases which they cited. The views of the American Morgan were thought suspect because he had married his first cousin,[54] but he later changed his mind and argued strongly against cousin marriage, following 'the birth of a son with intellectual disabilities and the death of their two daughters from scarlet fever'.[55]

In the period between 1862 and 1874, after Darwin's statement about the possible risks of marrying within the family, novelists began to be careful about the way in which they represented cousin marriages. The shift away from a common convention appeared to stun them, and they illustrated this in fictional ambiguities. Not surprisingly, novelists could not fail to think of the cousin marriages within their own families and among their contemporaries.

Included among these writers were Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-65), Anny Thackeray Ritchie (1837-1919), Eliza Lynn Linton (1822-98), Wilkie Collins (1824-89) and Trollope. Trollope's fictional ambiguities, on closer inspection, are more apparent than real, however. Conscious that he is treading on a very thin tightrope, since his extended family contained several cousin marriages, Trollope dangles a number of different cousinly permutations in front of his readers. Of his ten novels featuring the possibility of cousin marriage during the period 1862 to 1874,[56] only four cousin couples actually exchange conjugal vows at the altar: one pair are distant cousins,[57] another are second cousins,[58] another are related not by blood but by marriage through their blended family,[59] and the final pair consists of a widowed father of nine children with balding pate and a maiden lady whose cheeks have long since lost their sheen and whose potential for contributing to the already bursting nursery can only be remote.[60] The widower and the spinster seem particularly unlikely lovers. The vacillations of Margaret Mackenzie between her three suitors provide much of the comedy of Miss Mackenzie (1865). One suitor has appalling dress sense, another has an unfortunate squint and the third, her cousin, has an unfortunate mother, a large brood of children and a small bank balance. The fact that the heroine finally chooses her cousin as spouse is more indicative of the paucity of eligible men and Sir John Ball's need of her 'additional income of four hundred a year for [himself] and [his] children' than it is of a strong passionate attachment between them.[61] There is also the expectation that she will have a mother-in-law problem!

Of the remaining six cousin couples who did not tie the marital knot in Trollope's fiction of this period, lack of love stops one half,[62] and character defects in one of the cousins stop the other half, and this half involves first cousins. Alice Vavasor in *Can You Forgive Her?* (1865) and Emily Hotspur in *Sir Harry Hotspur of Humblethwaite* (1870) reject their respective first cousins, George Vavasor and George Hotspur, once the scales fall from their eyes, because they are simply too blackguardly. Just as dishonourable in The Eustace Diamonds (1873) is Lizzie Eustace, whose beauty might dazzle her first cousin Frank Greystock, but whose dishonesty prevents him from confusing lust with love. Trollope's ambivalence is therefore superficial. His fiction never once shows young cousin marriages taking place, however hard the fictional families might wish to consolidate their wealth and pedigree. Not once does Trollope so much as whisper the word health, but steers his plots

steadily away from cousins tripping down the aisle together. The vitality of the handsome tailor, Daniel Thwaite, whom Lady Anna favours over her effete cousin, contrasts strikingly with the indolence of the Earl—'a pretty popinjay, born to eat, to drink and to carry sweet perfumes'.[63] Without being explicit, Trollope hints that noble bloodlines could be improved by an injection of blood from families *without* pedigree. He clearly considered the topic too delicate to confront directly but, at the same time, he could not leave it alone. This is why he illustrated his concerns obliquely through the actions of his characters; he showed, rather than told his views.

Science and Trollope: From the Mid 1870s

In the mid to late 1870s, the debate on cousin marriage was continued among a new generation of thinkers. George Darwin (1845-1912), a noted statistician and son of Charles Darwin, identified errors in the statistical methods used by such opponents of cousin marriage as Boudin and Mitchell,[64] pointing out they had ignored environmental factors like the housing conditions of the people under survey.[65] Yet he cites Francis Galton as one of his supporters, without mentioning that he was not only the much younger cousin of George's own father but also the spouse of a cousin common to both himself and George.[66] George Darwin also regretted that no-one had succeeded in having a question in the Census Act of 1871 included to ascertain the number of cousin marriages, which made it impossible to assess the precise number of cousin marriages, as periodicals like the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Burke's Peerage*, on which researchers relied, could only record marriages between persons bearing the same surname.[67] Another supporter, Alfred Henry Huth, who had also married his cousin, argued for social justice in the case of close-kin marriages *even if* it could be proved they caused health defects, since no one suffering from an hereditary disease could legally be prevented from marrying.[68] Despite supporters among intellectuals, the medical profession would not keep quiet. *The Lancet* advocated that sufferers of medical problems would be unwise to contemplate marriage with blood relatives,[69] although The British Medical Journal acknowledged that the danger of close kindred marriages resulting in insanity had been exaggerated.[70] By the end of the 1870s both proponents and opponents seemed to use the same kinds of evidence to support their arguments. From then until the end of the nineteenth century, and into the twentieth century, different voices (Hooper, Withington, Shuttleworth, Strahan, *The Saturday Review, Knowledge*) entered the fray,[71] but rehearsed

the same arguments and counter arguments. The topic was so popular that novelists like Trollope could not have failed to hear the fears of the scientific and medical fraternity. The Church of England itself remained silent.

The very repetition of arguments made writers like Trollope very wary of featuring cousin marriages in a positive light. If he had previously appeared ambivalent, he now increasingly showed marriages and romances between cousins to be either impossible or tragic. None of the potential cousin unions in the main plots of his five novels written after 1875 exchanged wedding bands. The one cousin marriage that does go ahead in a minor plot in *Ayala's Angel* (1881) ignores warnings from relatives and friends. The expectation is that it will end in tragedy. There are several hints at the impropriety of cousins becoming emotionally entangled. Ayala, having avoided her cousin Tom, tells him that she will accept his brooch to show that they 'have parted like friends,–as cousins should do'.[72] Her uncle had long ago decided 'that marriages with cousins had better be avoided'.[73] Tellingly, though, when his brother-in-law asserts that '"[c]ousins had better be cousins, nothing more"', Sir Thomas defends his son's intentions by replying: '"Cousins do marry, you know, very often"'.[74] The fictional adults are shown to be torn between respect for what had been accepted practice and awareness of new scientific findings. The multiple cousin marriages in Trollope's own extended family made him sensitive to the subject, and he did his best to find reasons other than health issues to prevent his fictional cousins from marrying. Trollope's later fiction details far more serious character defects in cousins than his fiction of the 1860s and early 1870s. Adelaide's flirtation with her married cousin George in *Is He Popenjoy?* (1878) borders on the malicious. She positively preys on her cousin, although she does not finally seduce him into adultery. Whatever the family pressure to keep property intact in *Cousin Henry* (1879), Isabel Brodrick will not contemplate marrying her first cousin Henry Jones, whose dishonest demeanour does nothing but revolt her. And the addictive gambling of Mountjoy disgusts his first cousin Florence in *Mr. Scarborough's Family* (1883). It is probably no coincidence that, where first cousins are concerned, Trollope renders the character defects of one of the cousins too repellent for marriage.

Charles Darwin had sown a seed of concern in the first edition of his book on orchids that had proliferated well beyond his expectations and intentions. The thought of cousins marrying obviously played on Trollope's mind after the

scientist had raised the convention as a possible problem. Despite never openly expressing his viewpoint, Trollope's attitude to cousin marriage changed from defensive acceptance of the practice to a hesitant ambivalence and finally to a subtle recoiling from it by painting potential cousin suitors in the darkest of hues to make them as unattractive as possible.

Conclusion

If she had been able to look into the future health of her offsprung families, would Queen Victoria still have encouraged the marital alliances of her children? The tragic cases of haemophilia occurring in the descendants of her European dynasties were cited in many a twentieth-century school textbook as a dire warning against cousin marriage. Yet geneticists now know that haemophilia is not caused by inbreeding but by 'a sex-linked (X-linked, to be specific) recessive gene'. An X-linked gene, which is carried by females but affects males, is not the result of close marriage but the result of heredity. Haemophilia can just as easily happen in marriages involving couples who have no blood relationship. It is carried down the female line from mother to son and, indirectly, from father to carrier daughter. If a female carrier is married to a normal male, probably half of her sons will be haemophiliacs. If a haemophiliac 'marries a non-carrier woman, all of the daughters will be carriers, and none of the sons will be haemophiliacs'. Queen Victoria's descendants would have included many haemophiliacs even if her daughters had not married their cousins; her own inheritance as carrier was thought to have been passed down to her through 'a mutation in one of her parents' genes.' Her eighth child and fourth son, Leopold, inherited the disease and so did 'ten of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren'. Fortunately, the current British royal family does not carry this gene. Queen Elizabeth II is married to Prince Philip, whose Danish heritage makes him 'slightly more closely related' to his wife than her third cousin.[75] Their blood relationship does not have any bearing on the question of haemophilia. Queen Elizabeth II, like Queen Victoria, is the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, which, even when faced with with nineteenth- and twentieth-century scientific and medical arguments, never did change its position on cousin marriage.

Other religions permit, proscribe or prefer cousin unions. Such marriages are permitted in Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and the Zorasterian/Parsi religion, proscribed in the North Indian Aryan Hindu tradition and similarly in Sikhism,

and preferred in Dravidian South Indian Hinduism,[76] where it 'was associated with the purity of a family.[77] Ancient history reveals that the Persian, Egyptian and Japanese nations practised even closer degrees of consanguinity, untroubled by theological doctrine and displaying no medical problems.[78]

Would people readily marry their cousins today? Marriage between 'some type of first cousins' is allowable in 43% of societies in the modern world,[79] particularly in the Arab nations on the Asiatic and African shores of the Mediterranean, where it is encouraged.[80] In the U.S.A. cousin marriage is a criminal act in eight states and an illegal one in a further twenty-two. In the U.K. cousin marriage is frowned upon if the family has not migrated from the Middle East or the Indian subcontinent.[81]

Despite large migrations to the West of people from cultures practising cousin marriage, the impact of Darwin continues to discourage people of western origin from marrying their cousins. And yet cousin marriage in England had been considered most acceptable until part-way through the nineteenth century. Darwin's statement about cousin marriage has had profound consequences, although he later changed his mind. He had, after all, married his first cousin Emma Wedgwood, a devout member of the Church of England,[82] and produced ten healthy children, some of whom, including the already mentioned George, were remarkable for their intellectual talents. Science has also changed its mind. Modern geneticists now believe that 'it is difficult to perceive any justification for retaining laws to prohibit first-cousin marriage', for consanguinity has 'quite limited adverse effects of consanguinity at the population level', provided that proper 'genetic counselling protocols' are followed.[83] Trollope was sensible never to state his opinions openly on cousin marriage. Modern science and the Church of England are now of one accord, but public opinion has yet to be swayed.

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ENDNOTES

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