

PROTESTANT MINISTERS' ARGUMENTS FROM THE BIBLE IN FAVOR OF PATRIARCHAL MARRIAGE.

"4thly. But there is a passage (Deut. 21: 15) which is express to the point, and amounts to a demonstration of God's allowance of a plurality of wives. If a man have two wives, one beloved and another hated, and they have borne him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the first-born be hers that was hated, then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit, that which he hath, that he shall not make the son of the hated, first-born before the son of the beloved, which is, indeed, the first-born, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath; for he is the beginning of his strength, and the right of the first-born is his. On the footing of this law, the marriage of both women is equally lawful. God calls them both wives, and He cannot be mistaken; if He calls them so, they certainly were so. If the second wife bore the first son, that son was to inherit before a son born afterwards of the first wife. Here the issue is expressly deemed legitimate, and inheritable to the double portion of the first-born; which could not be, if the second marriage were not deemed as lawful and valid as the first."

"5thly. To say that a plurality of wives is sinful, is to make God the author of sin; for, not to forbid that which is evil, but even to countenance and promote it, is being so far the author of it, and accessory to it in the highest degree. And shall we dare to say, or even to think, that this is chargeable upon Him who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look on iniquity? (Hab. 1: 13.) God forbid.

"When God is upbraiding David, by the prophet Nathan, for his ingratitude to his Almighty benefactor (2 Sam. xii.) he does it in the following terms:—ver. 8.—I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives unto thy bosom, and I gave thee the house of Israel and Judah, and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given thee such and such things.

"Can we suppose God giving more wives than one into David's bosom, who already had more than one, if it was sin in David to take them? Can we imagine that God would thus transgress (as it were) His own commandment in one instance, and so severely reprove and chastise David for breaking it in another? Is it not rather plain, from the whole transaction, that David committed mortal sin in taking another living man's wife, but not in taking the widows of the deceased Saul? and thus, therefore, though the law of God condemned the first, yet it did not condemn the second?

"6thly. When David took the wife of Uriah, he was severely reprimanded by the prophet Nathan; but after Uriah's death, he takes the same woman, though he had other wives before, and no fault is found with him; nor is he charged with the least flaw or insincerity in his repentance on that account. The child which was the fruit of his intercourse with Bathsheba, during her husband Uriah's life, God struck to death with his own hand (2 Sam. 12: 15.) Solomon, born of the same woman, begotten by the same man, in a state of a plurality of wives, is acknowledged by God himself as David's lawful issue (1 Kings 5: 5.) and as such set upon his throne. The law which positively excluded bastards, or those born out of lawful wedlock, from the congregation of the Lord, even to the tenth generation, (Deut. 23: 2.) is wholly inconsistent with Solomon being employed to build God's Temple—being the mouth of the people to God in prayer—and offering sacrifices in the Temple at its dedication—unless David's marriage with Bathsheba was a lawful marriage—Solomon, the lawful issue of that marriage—consequently a plurality of wives no sin, either against the primary institution of marriage, or against the seventh commandment. But so far from Solomon being under any disqualification from the law above mentioned, he is appointed by God himself to build the Temple (1 Kings 8: 19.) His prayer is heard, and the house is hallowed (chap. 9: 3.) and filled with such glory, that the priests could not stand to minister (chap. 8: 11.) Solomon, therefore, as well as Samuel, stands as demonstrable proof, that a child born under the circumstances of a plurality of wives is no bastard—God himself being the judge, whose judgment is according to truth.

"A more striking instance of God's thoughts on the total difference between a plurality of wives and adultery, does not meet us anywhere with more force and clearness in any part of the sacred history, than in the account which is given us of David and Bathsheba, and their issue.

"When David took Bathsheba, who was another man's wife, the child which he begat by her in that situation was begotten in adultery—and the thing which David had done displeased the Lord (2 Sam. 11: 27.) And what was the consequence? We are told, 2 Sam. 12: 1, the Lord sent Nathan the prophet unto David. Nathan opened his commission with a most beautiful parable, descriptive of David's crime; this parable the prophet applies to the conviction of the delinquent, sets it home upon his conscience, brings him to repentance, and the poor penitent finds mercy—his life is spared, ver. 13. Yet God will vindicate the honor of his moral government, and that in the most awful manner—the murder of Uriah is to be visited upon David and his house. The sword shall never depart from thine house, ver. 10. The adultery with Bathsheba was to be retaliated in the most aggravated manner. Because thou hast despised me, and has taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife, thus saith the Lord, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives and give them unto thy neighbor before thine eyes; and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of the Sun: for thou didst it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the Sun. All this was shortly fulfilled in the rebellion and incest of Absalom, chap. 16, 21, 22. And this was done in the way of judgment upon David for taking and defiling the wife of Uriah, and was included in the curses threatened (Deut. 28: 30) to the despisers of God's laws.

"As to the issue of David's adulterous commerce with Bathsheba, it is written, 2 Sam. 12: 15, The Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. What a dreadful scourge this was unto David, who could not but read his crime in his punishment, the following verses declare—wherein we find David almost frantic with grief. However the child's sickness was unto death, for, ver. 18, on the seventh day the child died.

"Now, let us take a view of David's act of taking a plurality of wives, when, after Uriah's death, he added Bathsheba to his other wives (ver. 23, 24.) And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her and lay with her, and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon (that maketh peace and reconciliation or recompense); and the Lord loved him. Again we find Nathan, who had been sent on this, but with a occasion, sent also on the former, a very different message. And He (the Lord) sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet, and he called his name Jedihiah (Dilectus Domini—Beloved of the Lord,) because of the Lord, &c. because of the favor God had towards him (ver. 24.)

"Let any read onward through the whole history of Solomon, let them consider the instances of God's peculiar favor towards him already mentioned, and the many others that are to be found in the account we have of him; let them compare God's dealings with the unhappy issue of David's adultery, and this happy offspring of Bathsheba, one of his many wives, and if the allowance and approbation of the latter doth not as clearly appear as the condemnation and punishment of the former, surely all distinction and difference must be at an end, and the Scripture itself lose the force of its own evidence.

(To be continued.)

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(To be continued.)

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