

## PRESBYTERIANS AND POLY-GAMY.

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In my letters of June 5th and 19th, I showed rather fully that in the Bible history of those good old patriarchs and prophets Abraham and Jacob, there was nothing on which the assembly of Presbyterian ministers at Saratoga could justly base their resolutions denunciatory of a plurality of wives, or that it was unchristian and criminal, or contrary to the will of God. Let us search the Scriptures a little further on this important subject.

Moses was the inspired leader of the Hebrews out of their Egyptian bondage. What did the Lord say to Moses concerning the great men I have been speaking of? "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: *this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.* Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt." Ex. iii, 15, 16. Thus, at the divine call of Moses to go and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, the Lord distinctly and emphatically proclaimed himself still the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and said that was to be his name forever and his memorial to all generations. The Lord did not appear to be ashamed of the fact that two of those three worthies were polygamists. He did not exalt Isaac above Abraham his father nor Jacob his son, because Isaac was a monogamist and the other two were polygamists. No, not at all. But, on the contrary, all through the Scriptures, the Lord is called or spoken of as the God of Abraham or the God of Jacob more frequently than as the God of Isaac. The Hebrews were distinctly termed the house of Jacob, the people of Jacob, oftener than the house or the people of Isaac. Yet Jacob had more wives at the same time than his father and his grandfather both together, so far as the record plainly shows. Abraham is especially termed the father of the faithful everywhere and in all succeeding ages, yet he was a polygamist. Isaac, the monogamist, is not referred to in a depreciatory manner in the Scriptures, but Abraham and Jacob, the polygamists, are more especially named with honor or as prototypal characters. Thus of these three great characters whose God the Lord said he would be, and be forever known as such, and be memorialized as such unto all generations, two of them were polygamists. Now if these Saratoga Presbyterians would allow two out of three of their great men to be polygamists and rather honor than dishonor them for it, they would be doing as the Lord did with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that trio of prototypal men of God, whose names are never to be permitted to die, and the nature of whose family relations are to be perpetuated in bold relief to all eternity on the redeemed earth and in the holy city thereon. If the Presbyterians would do this, it is all I should ask of them in this connection, and I should never consent to vote that their third great man, if merely a monogamist, should be fined or imprisoned on that account. Without boasting, I think I may safely say my magnanimity in that respect would far exceed the magnanimity of the Presbyterians assembled in that conclave. They might allow this very well, for if they hope ever to go to Abraham's bosom, as all good Christians do, it should be remembered that they will go to a polygamist's bosom, and the society there will be founded on the polygamist order. I do not say that monogamists will be excluded, but the Presbyterians would like to say that polygamists should be excluded, yet that would exclude Abraham and Jacob, and if these worthies are to be excluded from anywhere it will be from that other place, to which the Presbyterians must of necessity go if they cannot endure the society of those patriarchal polygamists and their polygamist families.

The great man Moses, to whom God talked in the way I have been

relating, was not only the inspired leader of the Hebrews out of bondage, but the great archetypal law-giver to Israel and to the world. In the Mosaic code, plurality of wives is plainly provided for, and not with condemnation as a crime, but as an established and honorable estate. If the Lord disapproved of that form of marriage, how was it that he spoke so flatteringly of Abraham and Jacob to Moses and said he would be called their God for ever? How was it that he did not forewarn Moses not to make any statutory provision or allowance for polygamy in giving laws to the children of Israel? What a grave oversight that was. If the Saratoga Presbyterians had been there at the time, would they have overlooked that matter in talking with Moses? Not much. But the Lord never mentioned it; never said it was displeasing to him; never commanded Moses to forbid it to the children of Israel. As a consequence, Moses did not forbid plural marriage, but permitted and legally established it for the children of Israel in the Promised Land, and that order of marriage continued in Israel until their dispersion, and I believe in some lands continues among the descendants of Israel to this day. If the monogamic nations among which the Jews are at this time scattered would permit that people to have a plurality of wives, there is nothing in the Mosaic code to forbid it, but some things which would encourage it, render it necessary, and make it almost imperative, at least in certain cases.

One of the ten commandments given to the children of Israel by the Lord through Moses was, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and that crime was punishable with death. Moses also, in giving to them laws regulating plural marriage, made provision that if a man took another wife, the food, raiment, and duty of marriage of the first he should not diminish. Ex. xxi, 10. We read also of the following law given of God through Moses—"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 son be hers that was hated: Then shall it be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved first-born before the son of the hated, which is indeed the first-born: But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his." Deut. xxi, 15, 16, 17. Thus it will be seen that, in the code Mosaic, plurality of wives was a recognized institution, and instead of being severely condemned, as adultery was, it was subjected to certain regulations for the better ordering of it in wisdom and honor among the people. Those Presbyterian preachers, however, at Saratoga, denounced polygamy worse than they did adultery, showing that they were at enmity rather than in sympathy with the Bible record upon these most important matters.

There is another thing that I may mention. "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord." Deut. xxiii, 2. Thus the laws of Moses put a disqualification upon bastards, to their exclusion from the congregation of the Lord. Did Moses give any such disqualificatory law as concerning the children of polygamist marriage? I can not find any such thing. Nor could he consistently have done so, seeing that the polygamy of Abraham and Jacob was not condemned of God, but markedly blessed of him, and seeing too that Moses was giving laws to the twelve tribes of Israel, the 12 sons of a man of four wives being the honored heads of those twelve tribes. Furthermore, if this law against bastards had been intended to work against the children of polygamists, it would have cut off from the congregation of the Lord all the children of Israel, excepting those who had descended from Leah, the first wife whom Jacob took—all the descendants of his other three wives, six whole tribes, including that of Joseph, whom the Lord blessed so abundantly, and who was the temporal savior of his father's house. But such a construction could not be allowed, and plainly was never intended by Moses. Thus plurality

of wives came to be a divinely established institution in Israel, and was respected and honored evidently as much as monogamous marriage, if not more, for many of the most prominent and most honored men among the people of Israel were not confined to one wife. Now those Saratoga Presbyterian preachers consider the offspring of a second or third wife bastards, which is one more proof that those preachers are not in harmony with the word of God.

Moses received the ten commandments from the Lord twice. If the Lord had considered plurality of wives such a great sin as some people say they think it is, how easily he could have given to Moses another commandment something like this—"Thou shalt not have more than one wife." These Presbyterians would like to make that the eleventh commandment. But the Lord did not do any such thing. If he had, he need not have given through Moses any laws providing for and regulating polygamist families. But what a dreadful condemnation such a law would have been of Abraham and Jacob, whom he had so greatly blessed, and whose God he said he was forever. It would also have been a plain though indirect condemnation of the tribes of Israel, all of whom came of a polygamist family. Yet do we read of any man of Israel being cut off from the people because he had more than one wife? Do we read of any man in Israel being censured for being in that condition? Do we read of any son of a polygamist being excluded from the congregation of the Lord on that account? Not one. Solomon was the offspring of polygamy, but he and his polygamist offspring were not cut off from the congregation of the Lord in consequence.

Notwithstanding that the twelve tribes of Israel were a stiff-necked people, as Moses told them, yet they were a superior people to the Canaanites whom they supplanted, and they were chosen of the Lord to be his own people. The tribe of Levi was chosen to bear the ark of the covenant, to wear the Urim and Thummim, to minister before him and to bless in his name, instead of the firstborn in all the tribes doing those things as was originally appointed through Moses. The Lord drove out the inhabitants of the land, before the children of Israel, because of the great wickedness and abominations of the former, against the practice of which the Israelites were strictly charged. Deut. ix, 4, 5; xviii, 9-14. How the Lord chose and appointed Israel, the great things he did for them, and the great people he desired they should become, may be seen in the following quotations: "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." Deut. vii, 6. See also xiv, 2. "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldst keep all his commandments; and to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken." See xxvi, 17-19. "Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God essayed to take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him. Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire. And because he loved thy fathers,

therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt; To drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day. Know, therefore, this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: There is none else. Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, forever." See iv, 32-40.

As to this man Moses, who led the children of Israel out of Egypt to the border of the land of Canaan, the Scriptures say of him, "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. In all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land: And in all that mighty land, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel." Deut. xxxiv, 10-12. Moses says of himself, "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep, therefore, and do them: for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" See iv, 5-8.

Here we have the Lord God Almighty calling and establishing his chosen people Israel, driving out the wicked nations of the land before them, because of his promises and oaths to their fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, those men of polygamist families. Here we have Moses, that mighty man of God, with whom the Lord spoke face to face, in whose ministrations the Lord showed many signs and wonders, and through whom, as his great lawgiver, he committed his righteous statutes and judgments and laws for that and subsequent generations. We have also in consideration of the holy estate of marriage, the very foundation of families, of tribes, of communities, and of nations. Through this people all the families of the earth were to be blessed. This great and universal blessing could come to the nations only through family organization, for bastards were held not to be blessed but accursed of the Lord, even to the tenth generation, and it would be a strange kind of logic that would prove that things accursed of the Lord were a blessing to the nations.

At the establishment of the Lord's chosen people in the promised land, one would naturally think that he would start them right upon the fundamental subject of marriage. Among the many laws and statutes and judgments which he gave to his people through his servant Moses, family arrangements certainly must have place befitting their great and far-reaching importance, due consideration must be given them, and due provision be made for them. This I find to have been the case. Strict laws were given concerning matrimonial and other family matters. The Lord knew that Abraham and Jacob were polygamists, and there can be no reasonable doubt that many of their descendants were. Now at this particular period in the history of God's people, when he was about to establish them permanently in the land of promise, when he was giving them, through Moses, laws and statutes and judgments, many of them, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, of an unchangeable nature, and given for his people and their generations after them to observe and keep, if he had regarded plurality of wives as wicked, as sinful, as criminal, as an abomination before him, would he not have been likely to instruct Moses accordingly. Consequently, would not Moses have forbidden that form of marriage under the severest penalties? Polygamy was not a strange thing among the Canaanites, whose

abominations the children of Israel were forbidden to practise, but if it had been one of those abominations, would not the Lord have forbidden it specially to his people? If the Lord had looked upon plurality of wives in the light that those Saratoga Presbyterian ministers do, would he not have directed Moses to tell the people so, in terms so unambiguous, plain, direct, and emphatic that no person could possibly be mistaken concerning it, and that would not require the most specious, sophistical, and suspicious misconstruction to make a passage appear condemnatory of that order of marriage? Yet nothing of this kind occurs in the record. The Lord utters no condemnation of plural marriage. Moses gives no law against it. But he does give laws recognizing and regulating it, and by fair implication establishing it. Yet Moses told the people that the statutes the Lord gave them through him were righteous beyond those of any other nation, and he said unto them, "That which is altogether just shalt thou follow." Deut. xvi, 20. And again, "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God." See xviii, 13. Notwithstanding their stiff-neckedness and rebelliousness of disposition, Moses did consider Israel a happy, God blessed people, for on the occasion of blessing the twelve tribes at the close of his career he exclaimed, "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord!" See xxxiii, 29.

I have shown what a favored people the children of Israel were, what a great, just, honorable people they were called to be. I have shown the divine nature of their laws and statutes, given through Moses. I have shown what a great man Moses was, what a great prophet and leader and lawgiver he was, and how he was especially favored of and acquainted with the Lord. Yet this man of God, Moses, had more wives than one, for it is recorded that he married not only Zipporah, the Midianite, but also an Ethiopian woman, or Cushite. Ex. ii, 21. Numb. xii. Some persons in our day, for some special reason or other, are displeased at the marriages of their relatives or friends. Something of the kind occurred over the marriage of Moses and his Ethiopian wife. "And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman." Numb. xii, 1. The anger of the Lord was kindled against Miriam and Aaron, and he said to them: "Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and behold Miriam became leprous, white as snow." See verse 6-9. "And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. And the Lord said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again." See verses 13-15.

Some time after this the children went whoring after strange women, daughters of Moab. For these transgressions the Lord caused destruction to come upon many, and twenty-four thousand people died of the plague. One Zimri, to a Midianitish woman, named Cozbi, into the camp, "in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman." "So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel." "And the Lord spake to Moses, saying, Phin-