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Enquirers and Converts who have more than  
one Wife ?

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BY  
THE REV. J. J. LUCAS, PRESBYTERIAN MISSION,  
ALLAHABAD.

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JUN 1885

## HOW SHALL WE DEAL WITH HINDU & MUHAM- MADAN ENQUIRERS AND CONVERTS WHO HAVE MORE THAN ONE WIFE?\*

BY THE REV. J. J. LUCAS, PRESBYTERIAN MISSION, ALLAHABAD.

**T**HIS question has not received that attention from the Missionary body in India which its practical importance demands. Living as we do in a land where polygamy prevails, and has the sanction of both Hinduism and Mahomedanism, as well as the still stronger sanction of public opinion, treated neither as a sin nor a violation of social law and family life, it is strange that the Missionary bodies have not spoken out their opinion more clearly and widely than they have. That this is so, will appear from the fact, that there is not even the slightest reference to the subject in the published proceedings of the great Missionary Conferences which have been held at Allahabad, Calcutta, and Bangalore. The only Missionary body which has considered the subject, so far as I have been able to ascertain, was the Panjab Conference in 1862.†

That this question ought to be thoroughly discussed and definitely answered is evident: *first*, because of the great diversity of views and practice among Missionaries, sometimes of the same Mission, and laboring side by side; *second*, because the baptism of even one such convert commits, in a measure, the whole Missionary body to the recognition of him as a Christian; *third*, because a divided and contradictory testimony as to the teaching of the word of God on this subject, is to be deplored; and *fourth*, because this question *may* become a very practical and serious one with every Missionary at any day. In fact, just now, within the bounds of one small mission are two such converts, of whose sincerity the Missionaries have no doubt and whom they are ready to baptize, were it not that they are restrained by ecclesiastical authority. One of these Missionaries writing to me of one of the converts, a man who goes about the country proclaiming Christian truth, says:—"I am glad you have taken the matter up. I wish that it might be settled for

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\* A paper read at the Meeting of the Allahabad Missionary Conference, November 16th, 1885.

† The Calcutta Missionary Conference of May 1883, gave an evening to the discussion of this subject, as will be seen from the I. E. R., Vol. X. p. 43; and the Baptist Missionary Conference, which met in Calcutta in 1884, passed formal resolutions on it, as will be seen from I. E. R., Vol. XI. p. 374.



the whole of India. I wish I knew what to do with the case I have in hand. On the one side the General Assembly, and on the other my inclinations, and I believe, the word of God."

One of the oldest Missionaries of the C. M. S. writes:—"If I were not bound to obey the Church Missionary Society's order, I should allow such candidates for baptism to retain their wives and baptize them, if I believed them to be sincere." In some missions such converts have been baptized, retaining their wives. Only recently the members of the Madura mission decided to baptize polygamists, provided they had contracted their marriages in ignorance, and there was no equitable way of securing a separation. The *Independent*, one of the leading religious papers of the U. S. A., approved this decision. The action of the mission, however, has been disapproved by the Board in Boston. In commenting on this action of the Board, the Rev. J. P. Jones writes, in a recent number of the *Indian Witness*, that the old policy of the mission, which refused baptism to such candidates, must be reversed sooner or later.

Not long ago, a Missionary lost two or three villages by refusing to baptize a head man, the husband of two wives. Of course, such men use all their influence in favour of the mission which receives and recognizes them as Christians. In communicating to me the above fact, one of the oldest Baptist Missionaries in India writes:—"Such cases as the above have led me to wait for more light before expressing myself as positively as I have done for 37 years."

In view of the above facts, it may not be untimely for us to consider this subject, trying to find an answer to the question, whether such candidates should be baptized or not?

In the Punjab Conference, Col. Sir Herbert Edwardes read a paper on the subject of "Polygamy and Divorce," taking very decided ground, that no man with more than one wife should be baptized. On the other hand, in the same Conference, the Rev. C. E. Hadow, then Chaplain of Lahore, read a paper urging the baptism of such candidates, when convinced of their sincerity. His words are these:—"Whatever else you make an obstacle, do not make the fact of polygamy an insuperable objection to receiving a believer into the Christian Church. Regard it in the same way as you would any other misfortune or untoward circumstance, entailed by the religion in which he was educated; but do not let your first act be to teach him to ignore

the civil and moral obligations he contracted before his conversion."

A very interesting discussion ensued on the reading of these papers. Perhaps I ought not to say discussion, inasmuch as 10 of the 12 speakers gave their voice in favour of the views advocated by Mr. Hadow, and Sir Herbert Edwardes was left almost alone to defend his paper. It may be of interest to give the names of those who sided with Mr. Hadow in the discussion. They were Sir Donald McLeod; Major McLeod Innes, v. c.; R. N. Cust, Esq., c. s.; Captains Pollock and McMahon; the Rev. W. Ferguson, of the Church of Scotland; and the Rev. Messrs. Levi Janvier, C.W. Forman, Goluk Nath, and David Herron of the American Presbyterian Church. I give here an abridgment, in their own words, of the arguments these brethren urged in favor of admitting polygamous converts to the Church.

Mr. Cust said, "that more than once Missionaries had applied to him on subjects of this kind, and that his invariable reply had been, that the native Christian could not be allowed to break his contract. Both polygamy and divorce turn on the law of contracts. If a convert be allowed to repudiate his previous contract of marriage, he might be tempted to repudiate his debts also.....The proposal to put away all but the first wife will not meet the difficulty: the second wife may be the mother of his children; the third wife may be willing to become a Christian with him; they must accompany him, if willing, wherever he goes; and he cannot be called upon to put away any."

Captain McMahon said:—"It seems to me that the whole spirit of the Bible teaches us, that he who causes another to commit adultery, thereby commits adultery himself. When therefore, a man casts away the wives of his youth, on the plea, that because he has become a Christian, they are no longer his wives, and when acting on this view he drives forth from his house those whom he has bound himself to love and to cherish, he thereby causes them to commit adultery. He exposes them to temptation, which in the present state of native society, there is no likelihood of their resisting."

The Rev. Goluk Nath said:—"that in one or two cases he had baptized polygamists. The only advise he gave them was to maintain all their wives, not to cast them out upon the world."

Sir Donald McLeod said:—"We know that under the Jewish dispensation, polygamy was tolerated by the

Almighty Himself, in compassion, doubtless, to His frail, erring people ; and I cannot but think, that in the state of things we find here, it is incumbent on us to evince the same forbearance towards those who have acted in ignorance of God's laws. However painful, therefore, it may be, and necessarily would be, to the Christian convert to live with more than one wife, especially if any or all be unconverted, yet I regard it as his duty to do so," &c.

The Rev. C. W. Forman said :—" We could suppose that some convert, having more wives than one, might conscientiously refuse to put away any of them ; and he thought, that in such a case it would be an act of oppression, to insist upon his acting contrary to his conscience, or foregoing the privileges of baptism," &c.

The Rev. D. Herron said :—" I wish to mention a case. A man professing to be a Christian requested baptism. He was deemed worthy to be received into the community of the Church. He had, however, two wives. His first wife, then an old woman, never had any children. She, I believe, had urged her husband to take the second wife. He had five or six children by the second marriage. The first wife seemed to love the children as their mother did. Which of these wives, then, should be put away ? The second question we answered in the negative ; we did not require him to put away either of his wives. We took this course, because we believed it to be the one recommended by Apostolic example. We believe it to be taught inferentially by the passage in Timothy : ' A bishop must be the husband of one wife.' "

The Rev. Levi Janvier said : " There is reason to believe there were Church members in Apostolic days, with more wives than one. But the Apostolic teachings show us that such were under a kind of *ban* ; thus aiming most distinctly at an eventual restoration of the divine plan, of one wife only. Perhaps we can carry out this plan in the rising India Church."

The Rev. W. Ferguson, Church of Scotland, said : " The Bible nowhere teaches that a polygamist may not be received into the Church. Leave the matter to the convert himself. It is his conscience that is to be satisfied on the point. Tolerate it where it cannot be avoided."

Nor are these brethren, whose words I have quoted, alone or even in a minority in the Missionary body in India. I sent to more than sixty Missionaries, representatives of different missions, the following question :—" Would you under any



circumstances baptize a convert with more than one wife, allowing him to retain his wives?" and to this question came back an answer in the affirmative from the great majority. In fact, Missionaries of seven Missionary Societies answered that they would baptize such candidates, if convinced of their sincerity, allowing them to retain their wives. Some of these Missionaries have baptized such converts, while others have been deterred by the rules of their Missionary Societies. The carefully considered opinion of Missionaries of acknowledged ability and long experience is not to be set aside lightly. That I may do them no injustice in controverting their views, and that we may have clearly and fairly before us, the reasons which have led them to answer my question in the affirmative, I shall quote from some of the letters I have received, and then attempt to reply.

The Rev. J. Newton, Senior, writes:—"A candidate for baptism, having two or more wives, ought *not*, in my opinion, to be required to put any of them away: because, (1) though monogamy may be inferred from Scripture, and from nature and experience too, to be the divinely appointed order, there is no positive command for it in either the Old or New Testament, while there are examples of polygamy in the Old Testament, which God does not seem to have disapproved, which at all events He tolerated, and which did not separate those who practised it from communion with Him; (2) what is said in the New Testament about a Bishop's not being allowed to have more than one wife, that is, a man's not being eligible to that office, if he had more wives than one (and the same of a Deacon), seems to imply that converted polygamists might be admitted to membership in the Church, though they were not the persons who should be selected to fill sacred offices." Mr. Newton gives an account of three men, each having two wives, who professed to be believers: one of them was baptized with Mr. Newton's approval, and is now a member of the Church in good standing, though retaining both his wives: "one died many years ago, professedly in the faith of Christ. The other is still living apparently just outside the Kingdom: he is now an old man."

The Rev. Geo. Bowen of Bombay writes:—"If no other arrangement can be made compatibly with the best interests of all parties, I would, in view of the evidence furnished by Titus i. 6, and 1 Tim. iii. 2, that such were received to the Apostolic Church, though excluded from official positions,

baptize a party of whose piety, I had no doubt, though he had married more than one wife in heathenism."

The Rev. J. F. Ullmann writes:—"It (polygamy) was tolerated in the Apostolic Church as an evil which would gradually rectify itself. The Apostles left such a point to the persons themselves to do what they thought right under the circumstances. Young Missionaries will, for the most part, decide against baptizing such an enquirer. I thought the same way 42 years ago when I was a young and inexperienced Missionary, and I found the cold legal way of looking at the question the easiest, until I had to deal with such a case practically." Mr. Ullmann then gives an account of the baptism of an enquirer who had two wives.

The Rev. Dr. Bissell of Ahmednagar writes:—"I have often met with cases of enquirers or candidates for baptism who had two wives. In the early part of my Missionary life I should have said—did say—to such men, 'You must put away one of your wives before I can baptize you.' Afterwards I learned the difficulties which encompass the question. Both of the women were his legal wives, and there was no law of divorce. The 'putting away' would, therefore, be simply an *enforced separation*, the separated wife still being his legal wife. Then it generally appeared that the second wife was the mother of his children, while the first had none. The reason for taking a second wife is, in the majority of cases, because the first wife is barren, or her children are girls, or they have died in childhood. In view of these difficulties, I began to doubt whether I had a right to insist that a man should send away his second wife and all his children, as a condition of baptism. He must of course provide her with a separate house, and still support her and her children. Few of them have the means of doing this, or it is with them a struggle for life, even when all live together. To insist upon this nearly impossible step as a condition of baptism, becomes in effect a refusal to receive him to the Church..... I have in two instances baptized men with two wives. By baptizing them with instruction as to the nature of this relation, and what is required by the teachings of Christ, we only allow it in the Church under protest."

I think I have now stated fairly and fully all the arguments in favor of baptizing converts with more than one wife. I now turn to state the other side. I.—And, first

the Scriptures do forbid polygamy and enjoin monogamy. This is questioned by some,\* but I think the proof is ample. (1.) The creation of one man and one woman shows this. From the beginning to the present the births of male and female have been equal: so by original creation and the numerical equality of the sexes, the Creator has most emphatically made known His will, that a man should have only one wife. That this is the true interpretation of God's creating one man and one woman, our Lord clearly teaches in Mark x, 6-11. His words are—"But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. And they *twain* shall be one flesh; so then they are no more *twain* but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. And in the house His disciples asked Him again of the same matter. And He saith unto them, whosoever shall put away his wife and marrieth another, committeth adultery against her." It is to be remembered that according to these words the adultery does not consist in putting away one's wife. That would not be adultery, though it might be cruel and unjust in the extreme, but the adultery consists in taking a second wife while the first is still living. There is no escaping the conclusion from these words, that every man taking a second wife during the lifetime of the first, is guilty, in the sight of God, of adultery, unless he has put away the first for causes named in Matt. v. 32, and 1 Cor. vii. 15. If it is sin in him to take a second wife while the first is living, though she be separated from him for causes other than those mentioned in Matthew and Corinthians, is it not even a greater sin to take a second wife while the first is living with him faithful to all her marriage vows? The question now before us is not whether he has done this in ignorance, unconscious of sin; nor yet, whether having bound himself to two wives, he can justly and legally release himself from his obligations to them. The real question is, What do the Scriptures teach concerning his act? Remember that his conscience is not the standard by which we are to judge; nor his present unhappy position the standpoint from

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\* Rev. E. P. Newton of Ludiana writes: "It (polygamy) was divinely permitted during a period of three or four thousand years. Furthermore it is nowhere forbidden even in the New Testament."

The Rev. G. H. Ferris of Kolhapur writes: "There is not a single direct command in the whole Bible against polygamy. Where is the polygamist ever censured because he is a polygamist?"

which we are to view the question. The word of God furnishes the only standard, and to it we must turn for an answer. Many men, good men too, have made alliances forbidden by the word of God, without any consciousness of sin at the time. But while this will be considered when their actions are weighed, it does not alter the fact that, in the eyes of God, they are living in sin. The original law of marriage, as instituted by God, forbids a man to have more than one wife, and a woman to have more than one husband. If it is ever justifiable for a man to have two wives, it is by parity of reasoning justifiable for a woman to have two husbands; and so polyandry is as scriptural as polygamy. God has never annulled this original law of monogamy. Our Lord reiterated it, and it is not for His Church to annul or ignore it: nor is it for her to recognize as *twain* whom He does not.

Even if it be contended that this original law of marriage was ignored or set aside by the law of Moses, allowing divorce in certain cases, yet we reply, (1) that the Mosaic law nowhere recognizes, approves, or provides for polygamy: (2) that law only tolerated *divorces* on account of the hardness of the heart of man and to prevent greater evils, (this is our Lord's answer to those who would make Moses justify their violation of God's law): (3) that the Mosaic law is not binding where the laws are local or national: (4) surely the Christian Church in the 19th century should take a higher stand than the Church in the wilderness, just released from the slavery of Egypt.

I now turn to consider the passages in Timothy and Titus quoted by nearly every one who approves the admission of polygamists into the Church. The verses read—"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God? .....Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without.....Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well." 1 Tim. iii. 2-12. And so Paul writing to Titus (i. 5, 6,) gives substantially the same directions:—"Ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: if any be blameless,



the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly," &c.

It is claimed that these verses teach that there were in the Apostolic Church men who had more than one wife, and that such men were admitted to all the privileges of Church membership, save that they were debarred, by this injunction of the Apostle Paul, from holding the offices of Bishop or Presbyter and Deacon.\*

In reply to this we say, (1) This is only an *inference*. The Apostle does not say here or elsewhere, that men with two wives were members of the Church or were to be admitted. If the name of a single polygamist member of the Apostolic Church could be given, or if elsewhere there were directions as to the way such members were to be treated, then the inference from this verse would not be so hard to accept. Considered as a mere *inference*, we cannot accept it unless we are shut up to it by sound exegesis, and unless it be supported by other passages.

But (2) this interpretation is not only an inference, unsupported by other passages, but it proves far too much, and that in several ways. (1). It proves not only that polygamists were members of the Apostolic Church, but polyandrists were also; for in giving the qualifications of Deaconesses in this same Epistle to Timothy, Paul says she should have been 'the wife of one man.' If the words 'the husband of one wife' can *only* mean that there were men in the Church with two or more wives; then, by parity of reasoning, we may say that the words 'the wife of one man' mean that there were women in the Church with two or more husbands. If the one inference is legitimate, so also is the other. (2.) But again Paul says, the 'Bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, sober, not given to wine, no striker, not a brawler,' &c. If the direction that a Bishop must be the husband of one

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\* The Rev. Lal Behari Dey of the Free Church of Scotland writes to me on this point:—"I am of opinion, that when the Apostle Paul says in 1st Tim. iii. 2, that an *episcopus* or *presbyter* must be the husband of one wife, he does not refer to successive marriages, but to simultaneous polygamy. This seems to me to be the natural meaning of the words. It was also the interpretation of the earliest Fathers, and from the practice of the majority of Christian ministers in modern times, I infer that they hold this interpretation. If this interpretation be correct, it is plain that in the primitive Church there were converts, both from Judaism and heathenism, who had more than one wife. And if the Apostles admitted such candidates into the Church, who are we that we should refuse to them the water of baptism?"



wife, means that a private member may have two or more, then also, by parity of reasoning, the private member may not only have a plurality of wives, but also be a drunkard, a striker, a brawler, &c. Surely this inference proves too much. But (3) the Apostle is not in his letters to Timothy and Titus treating of marriage, polygamy or divorce, but of the qualifications of Church officers. It is not in harmony with the rules of sound exegesis to draw the inference that the Apostle sanctioned polygamy, from words spoken in reference to an entirely different subject. If he held that polygamy did *not* debar from Church privileges, we ought to find the proof of this in those passages where he is treating of marriage and the relation of husband and wife in the Church. Now it is significant, that in such passages there is not so much as a hint that there was a single polygamist in the Church, nor is there the slightest evidence that he sanctioned the admission of such. The Church at Corinth was perhaps the weakest of the Churches founded by the Apostles. The Corinthian Christians had been dug out of a horrible pit and the miry clay, and among them we might expect to find, if anywhere, polygamous Christians. In his Epistle to the Corinthian Christians, the Apostle writes minutely and at their request (I. Cor vii. 1,) concerning their diverse marriage relations, giving directions how they should act in each case. And yet, throughout this Epistle, and particularly throughout the 7th chapter, he never most distantly or indirectly alludes to polygamy. Had there been such Christians, is it reasonable to suppose he would have remained silent? Would not the evils and difficulties, and anomaly of such cases in the Christian Church, have called forth words of advise and exhortation?

In a letter from the Rev. D. Herron, he writes :—"I do not think *slavery* was abolished in the early days of Christianity in a forcible manner. I believe that both slaveholders and slaves were received into the communion of the Church by the rite of baptism. But the spirit and teaching of our religion both forbade men entering into that relation. So I think it was with *polygamy*." To this we answer :—

(1) Slavery and polygamy are two different things. The Scriptures never speak of them in the same way. Hence, to draw an inference from the way the Scriptures deal with the one, as similar to the way they deal with the other, is illogical.

(2) The Scriptures *do* recognize slave-holders as members of the Church. Paul addressed a special letter to a Christian slave-holder, sending it by the hand of the slave, in which he advises, not commands, the liberation of the slave on account of special services rendered to the Apostle by this slave.

(3) All through the Epistles slavery is recognized as existing among Christians. Some were masters and some were slaves, and instructions are given repeatedly to both master and slave. To establish an analogy between slavery and polygamy, it is necessary to adduce passages showing that the Apostles recognized polygamists as Christians, and gave them instruction concerning their duties to their respective wives, Nos. 1, 2, 3, as the case might be. The analogy fails at every point, and so the inference from it is invalid.

But to resume. Everywhere in this Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle assumes that each Christian had but one wife. That this is the case, let us quote a few verses from the 7th chapter of 1st Corinthians—a chapter in which the Apostle is treating of the subject of marriage, answering questions and resolving practical difficulties in the marriage relation referred to him by the Corinthian Christians, as the first words of the chapter show:—"Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." Verse 2:—"Let not the husband put away his wife" (not wives). Verse 11:—"If any brother hath a wife (not wives) that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away." Verse 12:—"Art thou bound to a wife (not wives) seek not to be loosed." Verse 27, &c.

In this Epistle Paul hesitates not to speak plainly against many forms of evil permitted by the Church at Corinth. We think it not an unwarrantable inference, that had any of the Corinthian Christians been polygamists he would not have failed to note and give directions concerning it. His silence throughout this Epistle justifies the conclusion that no polygamist had been admitted to the Church. Nor is the assumption, that polygamy was common among the Jews and Romans, warranted by the facts of history. In fact, polygamy was forbidden by Roman law,\* and the proof is wanting that it was common among the Jews in Christ's

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\* "Among the Homeric Greeks we have not the slightest trace of polygamy."—Gladstone's *Juventus Mundi*, p. 410.

time. Divorce was common enough both among Jews and Romans, and it is against this our Lord had to speak, and warn his disciples on more occasion than one. But divorcing a wife without sufficient cause is quite a different sin from that of polygamy. I think no one can read the teaching of our Lord and his Apostles in reference to marriage, its sacredness, its binding force between *twain*, and *only twain*, the impossibility of its being severed, save for one reason, without coming to the conclusion that their teaching on these points would be neutralized, if not nullified by their allowing polygamists to become disciples, and that too, without a word of instruction as to their reception, and how to deal with them; not a word as to the possible evils of admitting such, and so enjoining care and caution; not a word of any kind in fact, except to say that they should not be selected for the highest offices of the Church. This fact of itself ought to lead us to look for another, and more satisfactory interpretation of the passages in Timothy and Titus. And if we can find an interpretation, which the words will bear, bringing these passages into harmony with the uniform teaching of our Lord and His Apostles elsewhere, and in harmony as well with the inner spirit of the whole Gospel, we ought to accept such an interpretation. Bishops Ellicott and Wordsworth, and Dean Alford, Olshausen and Wiesinger, have found a meaning in the words which frees us from the necessity of admitting that only bishops or Presbyters were to have one wife each, while other Christians might have two or more. These foremost scholars contend that the words of the Apostle simply mean that the Bishop or Presbyter should not have been married more than once. The advice of the Apostle to Timothy and Titus, according to this interpretation, is, that in looking out proper men for these high offices, they should select men who had not been married again and again. The fact of the widower taking wife after wife indicating to the Apostle some lack of the necessary qualifications for high office in the Church. The Greek or Russian Church also puts this interpretation on these verses, requiring the Priests to be married men, but forbidding them to marry a second time. Dr. C. Hodge thus interprets the passage in Titus:—"If any is at this present time 'the husband of one wife,' it is the *present* state and character of the man that are to be taken into account. He might before have been unmarried, or even a

polygamist, but when ordained, he must, if married at all, be the husband of but one woman."

While I am not prepared to accept either of these as the true exegesis of the verses, yet I think them far nearer the truth and far less repugnant to the spirit of the Gospel than the interpretation allowing men to enter the Church, retaining a plurality of wives, without a word of protest or dissent, and stranger still, without a word of instruction or caution. The interpretation which presents fewest difficulties to my mind, and which is not out of harmony with the teaching of our Lord and the whole New Testament is this:—The Apostle is exhorting Timothy and Titus to be careful what kind of men they place over the young Churches. Mistake here, he knew, would be fatal to growth and success. The pure, blameless life of the preacher, especially his *home* life in the midst of a corrupt people, would do much to commend the Gospel he preached, and be the unanswerable argument to many a cavil. Hence, the Apostle in immediate connection with the advise that the Bishop and Presbyter should be the husband of one wife, speaks of his ruling "well his own household, having his children in subjection with all gravity, for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?" or as it reads in Titus:—"If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly," &c. In other words, the candidate for Church offices must be a man whose home life would bear close inspection. The Apostle, with his knowledge of society in the cities where the Churches were founded, knew that a man, however qualified in other respects, who before his conversion, as a Jew or a Gentile, had had a plurality of wives, or had put away one or more of them according to the lax laws prevailing, could never be an example to the flock, more especially if he had with him the children of the divorced wives; their very presence in his family would testify to the past irregularity of his life, and also naturally tend to make discord by their conflicting claims and infelicitous union in one family. Such a man, urges the Apostle, a man of many wives in the past, and as a consequence, perhaps not altogether blameless even in the eyes of the lax law and practice of the day, is not the man to rule in the Church. Seek rather the man "blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children," the man of few worldly entanglements, and whose divorced wives and

children would not bring confusion to his household and shame to the Church of which he was Bishop. Perhaps this interpretation may seem fanciful to some, but the more it is studied, the more it will, I believe, commend itself.

I. *First*.—It fits in with the meaning of 1 Tim. v. 9, where the Apostle says, that great care should be taken in enrolling widows as Deaconesses. Such widows should have “been the wife of one man.” Her former life, like that of the Bishop and Deacon, should have been blameless. He must not be a man with divorced wives, and she must not be a woman with divorced husbands.

II. *Second*.—It fits in also with Paul’s words in 1 Cor. vii. We learn from that chapter that men and women, in becoming Christians, found it difficult to live with their heathen wives and husbands. What were they to do? Leave them, said some, and no doubt, many acting on this advice, left their heathen wives and husbands and married Christians. Differences of opinion, as to what was right in such cases, led to a reference of the whole question to the Apostle Paul, as we learn from the 1st verse. His advice was this:—“Let not the wife depart from her husband: but, and if she depart, *let her remain unmarried*, or be reconciled to her husband; and let not the husband put away his wife ..... If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman who hath a husband that believeth not, and he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.” 1 Cor. vii. 10-13.

Years later, the Apostle found men and women in the Churches who had left or been left by their heathen partner, and who had contracted other marriages. Such men would, in some cases at least, have with them the children of former marriages, perhaps the heathen wives and mothers of these children living in the same city; and so writing years later to Timothy and Titus, as to the qualifications of Bishops, Deacons and Deaconesses, he says in substance ‘if the interpretation we have put on his words be correct select men and women who have not had such entanglements, men who have not put away or ~~left~~ former wives, men blameless in this matter, to use his very words ‘the husband of one wife, having faithful children, children not accused of riot or unruly.” Tit. i. 4.

III. *Third*.—Still further, this interpretation is in harmony with the teaching of our Lord in reference to the



sacredness of marriage and the sin of divorce, save for one cause.

IV. *Fourth.*—It is in harmony with the whole spirit of the Apostolic teaching as well.

V. *Fifth.*—It is in full harmony with the immediate context, which treats not of polygamy, but of the qualifications of Church officers; and while it recognizes divorced men and women as Christians, it yet shows the disapproval of such divorces by disqualifying the parties from ruling in the Church.

Thus, this interpretation stamps not only polygamy with Divine and Apostolic disapproval, but it goes further and stamps the divorces and separations, so common at that time, as contrary to the teaching of the Lord, as contrary to the special instruction of the Apostle years before to the Corinthians, and hence, as a consequence, as disqualifying for office in the Church.

I have dwelt at this length upon these verses in Timothy and Titus, because I have received so many letters from some of the ablest and oldest Missionaries, contending that they can only mean that polygamists were members of the Apostolic Church, and that we in India, likewise ought to admit such men to Church fellowship, allowing them to retain their wives, only excluding them from Church offices.

It has been assumed\* by some that the early Church and Fathers interpreted these verses as sanctioning the baptism of polygamous converts. To this we answer: (1) *First*, the early Churches, even those founded by the Apostles, fell into errors of doctrines and practice. Except in so far as they followed the teachings of Christ and his Apostles, they are not examples for us; even if it could be proved, as it cannot, that they baptized such candidates, their examples would not be binding on us, unless there be a 'Thus saith the Lord' to sustain their action. Greivous heresies and grave departures from Apostolic teaching† began to appear before the last Apostle was taken from the earth; but (2) there is no proof that such candidates were

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\* See letter of Rev. Lal Behari Dey, Footnote, page 9.

† 'The Apostolical Constitutions prohibited Priests from contracting marriage after consecration. The Council of Elvira, A. D. 305, forbade the continuance of the marriage relation to bishops, presbyters and deacons on pain of deposition,' Hodge, page 374. See also Rev. ii. 6-15. The Nicolaitans, condemned by the Apostle John, were a Gnostic, Antinomian sect, followers of Nicolas, a deacon of the Church of Jerusalem. They had a community of wives. (See Dollinger's 'First Age of Christianity,' page 218-214).

baptized and admitted to the Church of the early centuries. Until such cases are cited, it is vain to found an argument on the presumption that there were such.

In closing the argument from Scripture, we may sum up in a few words our position. God instituted marriage between one man and one woman. Christ repeated that law. The Apostles nowhere teach that the law is to be suspended in any case. No instance is given in the New Testament of its suspension under their sanction. The verses in Timothy and Titus, relied on to justify the baptism of polygamous candidates, are capable of at least two other interpretations, one at least in harmony with the teaching of Christ and his Apostles; in harmony with the whole spirit of the Gospel: while the interpretation which makes the Apostle recognize polygamous Church members, is confessedly only an inference; is unsustained by any other passage in the New Testament; and proves by far too much, *namely*, by parity of reasoning, that polyandry was also allowed, except to Deaconesses, and that Church members might not only be polygamists, but also drunkards, strikers, brawlers, and the like.

We might, we believe, safely rest our argument here; for if the claim that the Scriptures allow the baptism of polygamous converts be not sustained, and that too by the clearest evidence, the onus of proof falling on those making the claim, then we hold the baptism of such candidates to be unscriptural, indefensible, and as a consequence, fraught with evil to the whole Church.

It is to be remembered in all this discussion, that those who baptize such candidates are bound to justify their action by evidence from Scripture, which is clear and unquestioned. That the one solitary text, *viz.*, the Bishop must be the husband of one wife, does not amount to such evidence we have tried to show.

We now turn to consider other reasons, worthy of careful consideration we think, why such candidates should not be baptized.

I. And, first, because the testimony of the Church against polygamy will thus be neutralized.

From the beginning of her history, the Church has stood as the witness for monogamy. She has raised her voice everywhere against every attempt to impair the sacredness and indissolubility of the marriage between one man and one woman. Nor has her testimony been in vain.

She has entered country after country, and by her teaching and example and discipline, created public opinion against polygamy; she has taught the people to regard it as a shameful sin. More than this, she has impressed her convictions upon the State, and engraven them on the statute book, so that the law of every Christian land pronounces bigamy a crime and prosecutes the offender. We claim that this public opinion and these laws against bigamy and polygamy are the results of her teaching. But strange to say, this same Church, entering a non-Christian country, is asked to lower her standard, and to qualify her dissent, by admitting bigamists and polygamists to her membership. In other lands, chiefly through her teaching and uncompromising attitude, bigamy has been stigmatized, not merely as a sin against God, but as a crime against woman to be severely punished by the State. Now, the Church is asked by the bigamist and polygamist to condone his sin, and to shield him from reproach by giving him her name. Shall she do so? We answer again and again, No. We answer No in the name of her historical record, which bears the name of no polygamist so far as the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles show. We answer No in the name of her Master, Who has entrusted to her His words to keep, and given her His name to adorn. She must be true to Him: else she cannot be true to herself, true to souls, or a true witness before the world. We have come to India not only to hold up Christ as the Saviour of sinners, but also, in His name and as His representatives, to witness against every form of sin. Polygamy is a sin, it degrades woman, destroys the marriage bond, and defiles the family life. Christ affirmed\* this. The Church has again and again affirmed it. Now let her admit polygamists, few or many, the principle is the same, to her membership, and what is the result? There can be but one result. Henceforth her testimony on this subject is contradictory:—With the mouth she condemns, with the hand she receives. How can she speak one way and act another. A Missionary in North-India who, a few years ago, baptized a Muhammedan gentleman, allowing him to retain his two wives, writes to me on this point:—"Of course he (the baptized polygamist) would know, and all the world would know, that we do not approve of a man's

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\* Mark x : 6-12.

marrying more than one wife." But how would the world know our disapproval of such marriages when they saw polygamists in our Churches in good and regular standing, perhaps the wealthiest and most reputable members too, the headman of the village perhaps. It would be hard to convince them, under such circumstances, that we really thought it to be a sin and a shame for a man to have two wives. I venture to say that the voice of the Church, harbouring such a man, would be practically hushed on this subject. Nor is this a mere surmise. Recently I put to a Missionary, who has in his congregation a baptized polygamist, both of whose wives live with him, a man in a good worldly position, the following question :—" Could you from the pulpit preach against polygamy as a sin without giving offence ?" and received this reply :—" Under the circumstances, I should not preach against polygamy from the pulpit ; or if I did, I should be guarded in my language, letting it be understood that there might be exceptional cases, and why." And so, " under the circumstances," the voice of every Missionary in India would be silenced in the Church, and his witness, inside or outside the Church, would be worthless, because contradicted by the presence of the bigamist among his members, perhaps the best known and most prominent among them. No, the Church ought not thus to barter her liberty to protest uncompromisingly and consistently everywhere against this sin. Alas, that here and there, her standard has been lowered.

The current of the age in Christian lands is setting strongly in a direction, which threatens to sweep before it, the teaching of the Scriptures as to the sacredness and indissolubility of marriage. Divorce is allowed on the most trivial grounds, and in one Christian country, at least, polygamy has been taught by a large sect as in harmony with the will of God. It is for the Church, the guardian of the truth, to set up a bulwark to stem this flood and turn it back. She will be sadly crippled in her efforts, if her Missionaries, in the very face of those who claim a *divine* sanction for polygamy, compromise in this matter. She will indeed be wounded in the house of her friends, if her enemies can point to Church after Church in non-Christian lands, yielding the principle, she has so long preached, by admitting bigamists and polygamists to membership. Hence, we earnestly urge that such candidates be not, under any circumstances, baptized.

II. But again, we would not receive such candidates, because we thereby put temptation to take two wives in the way of weak men, who may be, or may become sincere enquirers; knowing that this will not be a bar to their baptism. One fact is worth many theories, so let me give a case. A young man was interested in the truth at one of our Mission stations years ago. He had then only one wife, and no children. Years passed, and he took a second wife, who was at the time he asked for baptism, the mother of his children. The Missionary baptized this man, both of his wives living with him, and both very much attached to him, though not willing to be baptized. Now, it is hard to read the deep hidden springs of action. Even in analysing our own motives, we may be mistaken, some little hidden one moving us more than we are aware, after more than we are ready to confess even to ourselves. And yet that we are unconsciously, or half consciously, thus moved, there can be no doubt. Now, it is not for me to enter this man's heart and weigh the various motives which controlled him in the years which intervened between his first knowledge of the truth and his final request for baptism, and yet, as spiritual physicians, we are to remember that it is not impossible, perhaps not improbable, that the question of his taking a second wife, for reasons known to himself, may have been before his mind, when first he began to study the Scriptures, and learning, that after becoming a Christian, there would be no hope of his being able to take a second wife, he concluded to do so before presenting himself as a candidate for baptism. The human heart is desperately wicked and deceitful above all things, and in dealing with diseased souls we cannot wisely forget this. Hence, I contend that the admission of even a very few polygamists, will place a very subtle, and not always easily detected temptation in the way of some enquirers, leading them now and then to defer application for baptism until they have secured another wife, younger, healthier, or more congenial than the first. We are not to forget that we are dealing with a people who have breathed a tainted moral air all their lives, and who have not been trained from youth to regard polygamy as a great and shameful sin, but on the contrary have been taught to regard it as a right. Such men will find no difficulty in agreeing with some Missionaries\* that

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\* In the life of Bishop Wilson of Calcutta, pp. 364, it is stated that a number of Missionaries of different religious denominations met in conference and resolved, "that if a Hindoo, having many wives, became a Christian, it was proper that he should retain them all."



there is no passage in the Bible forbidding polygamy, and the interpretation of the verses in 1 Timothy and Titus, we have been criticizing, will be a never-failing opiate for an accusing conscience. We believe that the refusal to baptize such men will be a blessing to their souls: it will arouse them to a sense of their sin, the very thing they are slow to recognize, and which they certainly will not recognize, if we admit them to Church membership, allowing them to retain their wives. Such has been the case. Some years ago a well-known Maulvi of Ghazipur applied for baptism, but was refused, because he had two wives. Recently he saw his duty and presented himself with only one wife. The Missionary who baptized him, writes to me:—"He himself believes now that we were right in not admitting him to our Church as long as he retained his wives."

III. But third, we believe polygamists should not be admitted to the Church, because we thereby constitute two classes of Christians. Of course, so long as the number of such polygamous members was small, this evil would be minimized. Still the evil would exist, and with it the danger that, at some future time, such members, backed by wealth and family influence, might make serious confusion in the Church, perhaps engendering such contention, bitterness and heart-burning, that a schism might be the result. Thus, we would reap as we had sown. Nor is this danger a mere imaginary one, perhaps also not a very distant one. In a recent number of the *Indian Methodist Watchman* is the following among the editorials:—"A native Christian writes us to say that, some time not long past, a body of native Christians debated and decided that a heathen man at conversion should leave all but his real wife. But if that wife be barren, he might, under Gen. xvi, marry another. Our opinion is asked. We say emphatically, No."

In view of such facts ought we not to resist the beginnings. Some Christians, perhaps Missionaries, in every Christian community, would refuse to recognize the polygamous converts, though baptized and received regularly into the Church, and this non-recognition by ~~men~~ a few who thought a principle at stake, might lead to very serious controversy and wide-spread discussion. The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water, therefore, says the wise man, "leave off contention before it is meddled with." I think this advise not inapplicable to the question under discussion. 'Obsta principiis.' The student of Church History knows that bitter controversies, resulting sometimes in

serious schism, have sprung from less serious questions than this. In this country, as yet the masses of the people have not been touched, but it is easily conceivable that among an ignorant people, unaccustomed to Christian thought and morality, especially in reference to monogamy and the sacredness of marriage, when they turn to Christianity in large numbers, it would not be difficult for teachers of the scripturalness of polygamy, except for the clergy, to find a large following; and as a result, we might be saddened by the sight of a large community called by the name of Christ, and yet allowing and practising polygamy. This may appear now an imaginary fear, but Church History warns us to beware of the slightest departure from true doctrine and pure morality. Even in the Apostolic Church a sect called the 'Nicolaitan' sprang up, whose teachings and lives the Apostle John denounces as hateful. They taught, among other things, according to Dollinger, that Christians might have a community of wives without sin. (Dollinger, pp. 214.) And so again we say 'Resist the beginnings.'

IV. Once more, while the sincere convert may think it a hardship to be kept out of Church fellowship on account of an alliance which he contracted in ignorance of its sinfulness, and from which he cannot now free himself, yet we are not to consider his feelings and wishes, or even spiritual welfare, solely. The Church is one. Whatever hurts one part of it, hurts every part. The whole Church, by the admission of even one polygamist, suffers in name, in purity, in power to testify, in consistency of record, in fitness to discipline those within her pale who plead the presence of bigamists as a justification of their taking another wife. Hence we say, far better that *one* suffer than many be injured, perhaps led into sin. Better that *one* stand without than that his presence within should be misinterpreted by the world as an unspoken acknowledgment on the part of the Church, that bigamy is not such a gross and grievous sin as she has ever affirmed. Better that a very few be denied the privileges and blessings of God's house than that their entrance should bring dissension and danger of contamination to many within. Hence we are, in considering this question, to remember that it is not wise to sacrifice the larger interests of the whole Church, and the good of a great company of believers, for the sake of a few converts, however sincere they may seem to be. We are to remember

also that mere baptism is not essential to salvation: and that by denying the convert baptism, because of unhappy alliances in the past, which he cannot now rid himself of, and yet which he cannot bring with him into the Church, we are not thereby excluding him from the grace of Christ or the hope of salvation. None of us believe that God has shut up his grace and salvation in any rite or sacrament, however solemn, and however necessary, even to the growth of the soul in grace and in the knowledge of God.

I have now tried to show why it is neither scriptural nor expedient to baptize men with more than one wife.

It now remains for me, in conclusion, to consider the various ways of dealing with such cases. Bishop Wilson decided that the convert "must be the husband of one wife only, and that wife the first married."

Sir Herbert Edwardes says, that the Missionary must say to the convert, "Put away all but the first, true wife; and then come and be baptized." He also says, 'His first is his true wife. The rest are *no wives*.'

The C. M. S. takes the same view of the case.

I cannot accept this as right or required by Scripture.

1. First, because this advise, if followed, inflicts wrong, often cruel wrong, on the second wife. She may be, usually is, the mother, and this decision separates her, not only from her husband to whom she has been a true and faithful wife, but robs her of her children. I need hardly dwell on this sad, hopeless position, into which she is forced by this decision. It drives her from her home and children with a stigma on her name, which she has done nothing to deserve. This, to my mind, is a sufficient answer to such advise. Far better that the man remain many years, his whole life, if need be, without the pale of the *visible* Church, than enter it over the crushed heart and ruined life of an innocent and faithful wife, the mother too of his children.

2. But second, do the Scriptures teach that the *first* is the only true wife? Remember it is not fair to compare marriages, contracted in Christian countries, with those contracted where polygamy is legal, and not only legal, but recognized as proper and right under certain circumstances. According to Muhammedan law the two wives have equal rights. To the question, 'Is a native convert, with a plurality of wives, in the eye of the law, married to those wives?' Sir J. Colville, when Advocate-General, gave his opinion in the affirmative, and declared that if such convert

were to re-marry, he would be liable to indictment for bigamy.

I do not understand that the Scriptures teach *which* of the two wives is the true one. All that they teach in such a case is, I think, that it is not God's will that a man should have more than *one* wife. From which of the two he should separate, both wedded according to the law of the land and the light he once walked in, and both faithful, is an open question to be settled in each case by varying circumstances. Such a question is to be settled surely by other considerations than by merely counting the number of days between his marriages. In fact, according to law, he might have married the two the same day. Then which of them would be the true wife? Rachel was as truly Jacob's wife as Leah, though Leah was the first by a few days. So often in this country, the first marriage was not the free choice of the man, but he was bound when a child, and the element of choice and consent, so necessary to constitute marriage in Christian lands, is often entirely wanting, except so far as cohabitation may be regarded as implying consent.

More than this: it is not to be forgotten that when the Muhammadan took his first wife, he entered into no contract with her *not* to take a second, as is the case in Christian marriages; but she knew that he might take a second, a third, and even a fourth lawfully. She married him with this knowledge of his right, giving her consent to it. Hence, he has broken no covenant or contract with her in taking a second wife. Hence, the first wife has no paramount claim over the second, certainly not in the eye of the law, and in many cases, not when weighed in the scale of right and justice. Hence also, the difference between the marriage in Christian and Muhammadan countries, a difference so great, that there can be no fair comparison. Dr. C. Hodge takes this same view of the question. He says:—"If marriage among the heathen were what it is in Christian countries, there would be no room for doubt on this subject. Then the first contract would be the only binding one, and all the rest null and void. The relation of a heathen polygamist to his numerous wives is so different from the conjugal relation as contemplated in Scripture, as to render it at least doubtful, whether the husband's obligation is exclusively or pre-eminently, to the woman first chosen." In view of these facts we do not think the Missionary is

justified in advising, in all cases, the candidate to put away all but the woman to whom he was first married. Let each case be considered on its own merits and in all its bearings.

In this view I am sustained in the main by Rev. E. M. Wherry, who writes to me:—"I was inclined to favour baptizing such converts, allowing them to retain their wives, but now could not do so. I should now encourage them to believe and ask for grace and strength to put away all wives but one, though with the understanding that the wives should be supported by him until they could marry. I would let him retain the mother of his children whether she was Number 2 or Number 1. If he could not put the wives away, I would say, wait."

I now close this paper by quoting from letters of Missionaries in the field, written in reply to my question, as to the best way to deal with such cases. The Rev. E. W. Parker of the American Methodist Episcopal Mission, Moradabad, writes:—"I have had and have known of enquirers who had more than one wife. I have always told the man that he must live quite separately from all his wives but one, and that he must arrange in some way for their comfortable support. In every case thus far, I have found the women ready to separate, leaving one with the man, when the case was clearly explained by a Christian woman, and when they found they were to have a comfortable support. Hence, after a few days, the parties would settle the matter among themselves. I have had but few cases, but my opinion is, that in 9 cases out of 10, the woman will be found willing to be separated from the husband if assured of a home and support. The trouble, if any, will be with the man."

The Rev. J. H. Messmore writes in the *Indian Witness* of a recent date:—"A few weeks ago I wrote a letter to the *Indian Witness*, urging that it was possible for a polygamist non-Christian to be out and out converted to God, and yet fail to see it his duty to give up polygamy..... But what shall we do with those converts (polygamous) to whom baptism is denied?.....I would therefore say, that while refusing baptism and formal admission into the visible Church of Christ to these converts, we should in some manner recognize their Christian discipleship and their faith in Christ. We should, with the single exception of granting them baptism and Church membership, treat them as Christian brethren; let them know we have con-



fidence in their Christian sincerity, and love them as brethren, but that while they remain polygamists, the broader interests of Christ's family on earth require them to worship in the outer court. I would have this *outer court* established in some regular way, and admission into it fixed by some *appropriate ceremony*. I would make a line of demarcation between this outer court and the Church, as clear as possible, and yet neither so high nor so broad as to prevent the fullest brotherly Christian intercourse from both sides. Such an arrangement as this is practicable. It will add new emphasis to the privileges of membership in the visible Church of Christ..... I offer this solution of the problem as a '*tertium quid*,' which on the one hand preserves the purity of the Church, and on the other hand receives and cares for the polygamous convert until he is ready and able to comply with the conditions of Church membership. In a few cases the polygamist will remain in the outer court to the end of his days. But in the vast majority of cases, increased knowledge and providential events, combined, will lead the parties concerned, to remove the obstacle to their full profession of the Christian faith."

To this proposal of Mr. Messmore to have an "outer court" of the Church into which polygamous converts are to be admitted "by some appropriate ceremony," there are, to my mind, insuperable objections and difficulties.

(1) First, who has authorized us to institute new ceremonies, however appropriate, for the recognition of Christian converts? This would be a grave and serious departure for Missionaries to institute new ceremonies unauthorized by Scripture. Then too, what "ceremony?" We wish Mr. Messmore had given us a hint as to the kind of ceremony he had in mind. With all his ingenuity and fertility of resources, we venture he would find himself at a loss to invent any such ceremony.

(2) This is a compromise, and as such, like most compromises where a principle is involved, is sure to lead to error. It is a compromise by which we weaken our testimony against polygamy as a sin to be repented of. We recognize these men as Christians, and yet we proclaim them to be living in sin, unrecognized and unacknowledged perhaps. This surely is a serious compromise of the truth.

(3) It will lead the polygamous convert to rest satisfied with his condition. He is recognized and treated as a Christian; he has been received publicly by a new cere-

mony. What lacks he? he and others may well ask; why should he change, or strive to change, his family relations, now that he has been recognized and received into the 'outer court'?

(4) Then too, there is the danger of weak Christians, lapsing in the face of such recognition of polygamy, as consistent with Christian character and life, though not with Church membership.

(5) This proposal, it seems to me, exalts the sacraments unwisely, if not unscripturally. It makes them, so to speak, the consummation of the Christian life, whereas they are for its very beginning. It says to the polygamist: you can live a Christian life without these. These are only for those advanced in knowledge and holiness. When you become a better man, your family life free from stain, then you can be baptized. Now you are a Christian, imperfect in knowledge and living in sin, but when you have outgrown the ignorance and grossness of the lower Christian life you are now leading, for which we have improvised a new rite, and which we now administer, you will be fit for baptism. Thus, the Christian life is divided, baptism being for the advanced stage. Whereas the Scriptures represent no such difference.

I now quote from the opinion of Rev. J. C. Bose in answer to my question on this subject:—"I would baptize him only on condition that he retains his first wife, who is his real wife, and leaves the subsequent ones. I would wait and not baptize him till he makes a proper settlement for his latter wives. This is an important step, otherwise the man may give his consent before baptism and afterward he may change his mind .....One may ask: suppose the second wife has a number of children, and the first wife, has none, then, is he to leave the mother of his children and keep the first wife? *Reply.* The children are all his legitimate offspring. He should bring them all with him into the Church, and if the mother, who is the second wife, is willing to come with him and embrace the Christian religion, he should bring her also, but he should not look upon her as his wife. He should keep her in a separate house, and should try to get her married to some one else. It will be better to have her married to a person living in a distant place. One may ask: Suppose his first wife refuses to join him, and the second is willing to do so, what then? *Reply.* He should try his best to persuade his first wife

the real wife, to join him, but if she persists in her refusal then he should act according to the 'Native Christian Marriage Dissolution Act of 1866,' and when he gets a divorce from her, he should get married to the woman who was his second wife in his Hindu state, with Christian rite of course. Till this marriage, the man and the second wife should remain apart."

I have not space for further quotations.

To sum up then, the advice I would give to a sincere convert who has more than ~~two wives~~, I would say to him, we cannot baptize you or admit you to Church privileges and fellowship, because you have contracted alliances, in your ignorance perhaps, which are condemned by the Word of God, and which you cannot maintain as a member of Christ's Church. We do not ask you to put away either wife; so long as they are faithful to their marriage vows, you are, under legal and moral obligation, to support and protect them; yea more, to shield them from evil, so far as you can, and to do nothing to bring unjustly upon them a stain or stigma. We cannot advise you to take a step which would be unjust and cruel, and your first outward step towards Christ must not be marred by a cruel wrong and flagrant injustice. If, however, either of them wishes to leave you, returning to her Hindu or Muhammadan friends and relatives, or prefers to support herself by her own exertion without your aid, then try, with her consent and that of her friends, to obtain a legal divorce from her. This will not be difficult when both parties are agreed. Then come with your one wife, and we will admit you. I would not certainly advise him to drive one of his wives to seek for such a separation from him. That would be cruel and unjust to her. But in the present state of society in India, we believe, arrangements satisfactory to all parties concerned might be made, not hastily it is true, but in the course of years.

In the meanwhile, let the man be urged to maintain his Christian profession and wait on the Lord for deliverance from the bonds contracted in the times of his ignorance. Let him be encouraged to believe that Christ will accept him just as he is, if he is sincere and ready to do what is right and honorable and Christ like. To such, the door of the Church will not long be closed. The porter will open it in due time and in the right way, and in the end it will be found that the discipline, long continued perhaps, was not without its lessons and blessings.

I agree most heartily with Mr. Bose in deprecating the hasty baptism of such converts. There is no need of such haste. Their salvation is not at stake. Nothing good is gained by haste. Much, very much may be lost. And so I deprecate any hasty and cruel sundering of ties, perhaps of long years, without every regard and consideration for the rights, good name and feeling of the wife who elects to be separated. We may be sure that if God's Spirit is calling the man to an open confession of Christ, in due time His providence will respond, and the way will be so clear, that there can be little doubt as to what is right and best. Until the man is free from the legal and moral obligation to more than one wife, which he took upon himself before conversion, he should not be baptized, nor should he be encouraged to violate those obligations, but to strive to bring about a state of things by which he may, without loss or suffering or injustice to any one, be freed from the obligations to one of his wives; which of those wives it shall be, must be determined in each case by varying circumstances, into which it were profitless to enter here.

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