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THE  
CHURCHMAN

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FEBRUARY, 1887.

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ART. I.—ON THE TREATMENT OF POLYGAMY IN  
CHRISTIAN MISSIONS.

THE great importance of this subject needs no explanation, and it is likely, before very long, to be thoroughly discussed. It seems desirable, in the meantime, that those who have thought about it, and arrived at definite conclusions in their own minds, should make those conclusions known, with the grounds on which they rest. In doing so, it seems best that each man should write quite straightforwardly, expressing his own opinion for what it is worth, without feigning hesitation for fear of seeming disrespectful to those whose opinions may differ from his own, and who may have a greater claim to be heard than he can pretend to.

For my own part, I cannot pretend either to practical experience in the Mission field or to Patristic learning. Nevertheless, guided by what I read in the Bible, I have long thought that the practical rules for dealing with the difficulty which, on the whole—for there is great variation—seem most in favour are not what they ought to be; and a renewed examination of the question some time back has made that conviction deeper than ever.

I shall use the term "Polygamy" in its more usual, if less correct, signification to denote the condition in which a man has two or more wives at the same time, and accordingly as not including a possible condition in which a woman might have two or more husbands at once. This latter condition is one which is unknown in Scripture, and any approach to which is always spoken of with abhorrence; and though, according to the testimony of Dr. Cust, it exists in two isolated places in India, it appears to be very rare even among the heathen. As there are no two opinions about this, it may be dismissed from consideration. In contradistinction to Polygamy, it will be

convenient to have a word to express the state of things which prevails in Christian countries, and the word "Monogamy" may serve the purpose, though as thus used it does not exclude a fresh marriage after the death of a first consort.

Now, that Monogamy is the normal and intended condition of mankind is admitted on all hands. The well-known physical fact of the near equality in the number of the two sexes in any large population which is not disturbed by the emigration or immigration of a preponderance of one sex shows this; and that it was the intended condition may legitimately be inferred from the Biblical account of the creation of man.

But though this be so, it by no means follows that man, especially uninstructed man, is responsible for failing to make the discovery. We must inquire whether there is a natural law, written in the heart, which a man violates in contracting a Polygamous marriage; or if not, what is the positive enactment which he breaks through in so doing.

As to the first question, we cannot ourselves be fair judges. Brought up as we are from childhood under the idea of marriage in the form which it assumes in all settled Christian communities, it is well nigh impossible for us to say whether the repugnance with which we should view a Polygamous marriage is the result of education only, or has a foundation in natural conscience independently of education. We must appeal to the testimony of those who live under a totally different state of things. Now, in countries where Polygamy is practised, there is no discredit attached to it. It is stated in Livingstone's journal that in speaking to some native Africans, they said to him that everything that he had taught them to be wrong they had known already was wrong, except only the having more wives than one.

But, it may be said, these are debased specimens of humanity; the natural conscience was obscured, and in some respects failed to give light at all. It is of course true that the natural conscience may be blunted, though rather through wilful sin than through ignorance. Let us turn then to a more favoured race, to the chosen people of God and their ancestors. Now it is notorious that many of the most eminent saints under the old dispensation were Polygamists, and there is no rebuke to them for it. Their biographies, it is true, reveal to us some family troubles referable to Polygamy. But that is a different thing. If Polygamy had been opposed to natural conscience, we can hardly suppose that they would have escaped without at least some hint of disapproval.

But the case is even stronger than this. When the Lord sent Nathan unto David to reprove him for his great sin, the prophet, speaking in the name of the Lord, said, "I gave thee

thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah ; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things." Surely, in the face of this, we can hardly maintain that Polygamy is sinful *per se* without making God the author of sin. If it be right to dissolve Polygamous marriages by divorce, it must be justified on other grounds than this. Doubtless a Polygamous marriage may be contracted from unworthy motives ; but so may a Monogamous marriage. Many a marriage in our own country is entered into for the sake of money or position in society contrary to affection ; but though such unions often lead to lifelong unhappiness, the unworthiness of the motive for contracting the marriage is not held to justify divorce.

Failing the existence of a law written on the heart which forbids Polygamy, we must have recourse to positive enactments. Now, as regards the law of Moses, it is notorious that Polygamy was recognised and regulated. After the captivity, it appears to have fallen into disuse ; at least we do not hear of it. But we are not to conclude from that that the nation had so improved in morality that Polygamy had come to be regarded with abhorrence. On the contrary, the Polygamy of earlier times was replaced by something far worse, namely, easy divorce and re-marriage. It is this divorce that Malachi so sternly reprobates, saying, "The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously." And again, "The Lord God of Israel saith that He hateth putting away."

We come now to the time of our Lord. Polygamy, though lawful according to the Jewish code, seems hardly, if at all, to have been practised. Herod, indeed, was a Polygamist ; and it may be noticed that when he was reproved by the Baptist, it was not for his Polygamy, but because he had taken his brother's wife. But a king could do what an ordinary person could not so readily do. If a Jew wished for a second wife, he could have no possible conscientious objection to it, for it was freely allowed by his law. But that would involve keeping up a second establishment, which he did not want. If he preferred some other woman to his wife, might he not make a substitution ? The law of Moses allowed of divorce, not indeed absolutely, but subject to a condition of doubtful meaning. Licentiousness and other unworthy motives would always plead for facility of divorce, and one of the Jewish schools was very lax indeed, allowing almost anything to be a justification for, or at least excuse for, divorce. Still, a Jew who meditated divorce for anything but the one cause which was an undoubted justification must have had misgivings of conscience

as to its lawfulness; nor can we doubt but that he must have had some strivings of his better nature to stifle, which pleaded for the wife of his youth against whom he had conceived the thought of dealing treacherously by sending her away. Perhaps he helped to calm his conscience by the thought that she would find some one else who would marry her. Such was the state of things which our Lord, in the Sermon on the Mount, met with the startling declaration that the re-marriage of which the divorcer thought so lightly involved the terrible sin of adultery, for which the divorcing husband was responsible as having caused it.

We come now to what is probably the most important passage of all: our Lord's answer to the question put to him by the Pharisees, and his subsequent conversation with the disciples in private concerning the same matter. The act which our Lord here describes, when he says, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery," is a compound act; and when we endeavour to resolve it into its constituent parts, and inquire what it was that constituted the adultery, we enter on the field of interpretation. If I mistake not, we are apt to view the whole passage through spectacles highly coloured by familiarity with the state of things which prevails in Christian countries; to a certain extent, even, by the nomenclature employed in our own country in Acts of Parliament and courts of law.<sup>1</sup> To view the passage fairly, we must in

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<sup>1</sup> According to English usage of the word "adultery," if a married man had intercourse with a woman, even though unmarried, other than his wife, he would be said to commit adultery. It is important to remember, lest we should misinterpret our Lord's answer to the Pharisees, that a Jew at the time of our Lord would not think of applying the term—of course the corresponding term in the language he used—to such a case; the word with him would essentially involve the idea of some element of Polyandry. According to the Mosaic Law, the punishment of adultery was death; but the punishment of seduction, unless there were special circumstances to aggravate the offence, was an obligation to marry the woman seduced—of which more presently—and that, whether the man was married or not. Of course two offences so differently treated would never be confounded under a common designation; and accordingly it would never enter into the heads of the Pharisees addressed to suppose that the one element in the compound act of the divorcing husband, which is described as committing adultery, consisted in his marrying a second woman. Their own consciences would point out clearly enough the real meaning; and the expression itself would be quite of a piece with the Sermon on the Mount, where the sinfulness of various sins which men think lightly of is insisted on by showing what they lead to in their full-blown development. So here the divorce which leads to adultery is declared to involve the guilt of adultery itself.

The advance in morality made by Christianity tends to obliterate in our minds the broad distinction which is made in the Old Testament between

imagination divest ourselves of this knowledge, place ourselves in the position of those addressed, whether the Pharisees or the disciples, and seek thereby to arrive at the true purport of the reply. This is most important, because if we give a wrong interpretation to the passage, we may on that wrong interpretation base wrong rules of conduct.

Now the Pharisees could have no misgivings as to the lawfulness of taking a second wife without divorcing a first. They were free to do so by Jewish law, and had the example of some of the most eminent saints among their ancestors. But that was not what they wanted. They wanted to be free to make a change, not to keep up a double establishment; but here they felt that they were treading on doubtful ground. Was divorce lawful? That was the question so keenly debated among them. It was regarding divorce, not Polygamy, that the conscience was ill at ease. The lawfulness, or otherwise, of divorce formed accordingly the subject of their question. In his reply, our Lord first refers them to their own law. When they mentioned the permission, qualified though it was, which Moses gave, he declares that that was a concession made on account of the hardness of their hearts; that from the beginning it was not so. He refers to the original institution of marriage as based upon the constitution of our nature, and involving a unity so close that it is said, "They twain shall be one flesh." This unity is therefore the work of God, and not of man, and therefore the severance of the unity is unlawful. The union, He declares, which takes place when a man marries the divorced woman constitutes adultery; and the husband, who by his unlawful act of divorce brought it about, is declared to be guilty of adultery himself. Thus the conscience of the hearers, which was ready to palliate the divorce which facilitated a fresh marriage, was roused by the declaration that he who thus acted was in the sight of God guilty of adultery, that sin so heinous, even in their own eyes, inasmuch as by their law it was punishable with death.

Some, I believe, interpret the words "And they twain shall be one flesh . . . What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," to refer to a divine sanction to, of the nature of a divine blessing upon, entrance into the state of

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the connection of a man with two women, and the connection of a woman with two men. It thus tends, if I mistake not, to lead to a misinterpretation of our Lord's reply, against which we must be on our guard, lest, in order to secure what, after all, can only be a base counterfeit of true Christian Monogamy, we should be led by our counsels to perpetrate the forbidden divorce, leading, as it naturally does, to some form of the hateful Polyandry.

marriage; and as it is allowed by both parties in the controversy that it was in accordance with the divine intention that a man should be married to only one woman, it is said that this divine blessing cannot be supposed to be given to a second marriage, contracted while the first wife is still alive, and therefore the prohibition, "let not man put asunder," cannot be held to apply to marriage with more than one woman.

But St. Paul applies the very same words, "They twain shall be one flesh," to the result of fornication, and thereon bases his most solemn exhortation against it (1 Cor. vi. 15, 16). Now fornication can have nothing in common with lawful marriage, save only that which is material, the natural mental effect of which is an intimacy that in lawful marriage becomes a foundation of mutual love. We may infer, therefore, that the "joining together" refers to that lawful intimacy. But, if a man have two wives, whom he has lawfully married according to his light, there is the same means of unity with both, though the man's affection cannot be so strong when it has to be divided between two, and though, while the conjugal affection of each woman is undivided, there is a liability to jealousy between the two. As our Lord represents the unity as based on the constitution of our nature, it seems to me that He indicates that the severance of that unity partakes of the character of an unnatural offence.

About Polygamy no question was asked, and nothing is said. It is true that the singular number is used—"shall be joined unto his wife." This may not unreasonably be held to imply that single marriage was the normal and intended condition. But there is nothing new in it; the quotation is from Genesis, and yet in spite of it Polygamy was lawful to the Jews. There is not the slightest hint that any change was then being made in the law as to Polygamy. With regard to divorce, on the contrary, here, as in the Sermon on the Mount, a change is made in the most marked and pointed manner: "Moses suffered you . . . I say unto you . . ." The qualified permission of divorce granted by Moses is withdrawn, and marriage is restored to its primal and natural condition of indissolubility. For one cause only is divorce permitted: a wife might forfeit her marriage rights through her own unfaithfulness. Polygamy was lawful to those addressed at the time when the words were spoken—that is, lawful according to Jewish law—lawful, therefore, *in foro conscientiae*, even though their Pagan Roman rulers might not accord to more than one woman the civil status of a wife; and yet there is not the slightest hint that any exception was made on this account to the general prohibition of divorce. It seems strange that in the very breath in which our Lord so pointedly

makes a change in the law, with a view to restoring marriage to its natural indissolubility, He could be supposed to be silently throwing open the floodgates of divorce more widely in one respect than they had been opened by the laxest of the Jews; for they never alleged Polygamy as a justification of divorce, nor could they with their law in their hands.

The subsequent conversation with the disciples in private proves that they understood our Lord to have been speaking of divorce, and at the same time reveals incidentally, in a very striking manner, the extreme laxity of the Jewish mind at the time of our Lord on that subject. After having heard the law as laid down by Him on the subject of divorce, they remarked, "If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." So novel to them was the idea which to us is so familiar that a man joins himself for life to the woman he marries, that their first feeling was, If a man by marrying binds himself so tightly, it would be better to keep out of it altogether, and lead a life of celibacy.

Considering the circumstances under which the words were spoken, I fail to see *any justification whatsoever* for exempting Polygamous marriages lawfully entered into from the operation of the words, "Let not man put asunder."

But it will be said, perhaps, Do you mean to maintain that Christians may become Polygamists? By no means; but that is a different thing altogether. I have said already that I regard Monogamy as the normal, the intended condition of man; but this condition is to be attained in God's own time and in God's own manner; not by the rough-and-ready means of man's devising, who, rightly impressed with the desirableness of the end, is impatient of seeing it fulfilled; not by doing evil that good may come. When those words were spoken by our Lord, the kingdom of heaven was "at hand," but not yet established. In the pre-Christian state He did not lay down the law of Monogamy, and we are not to insist on it; but He did lay down the law of indissolubility, and we are not to break through it. It was left to His Church after it should be fully established, after the Apostles should have been "endued with power from on high," to exalt the marriage state to its intended dignity, by adding the condition of singleness to the previously existing and paramount condition of indissolubility. What is thus enacted by the unanimous consent of the universal Church becomes binding on the individual *in foro conscientia*, according as it is said, "Whatever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven."

But the statutes which a chartered society is empowered to frame, and which it is its duty to frame with a view to carrying out the objects of its institution, must not contravene the



provisions of the charter; and similarly the Church's law of Monogamy must not be so interpreted as to override her Lord's peremptory prohibition of divorce. Nor has it been by any general consent. While all Christians are agreed (for we can hardly include Mormons in the Catholic Church) that a Christian man must not contract a double marriage, there is no such agreement as to the treatment of converted Polygamists. The missionaries of different denominations and of different societies follow different rules or no rule, and prelates of our own Church differ from one another in theory and practice.

But it will be said, perhaps, that only arises from the degeneracy of modern times; in early times it was not so. But where is the proof? I cannot pretend to be acquainted myself with the writings of the Fathers; but if proof were to be found, one would suppose it would have been brought forward by the learned men who have written on the subject. There is plenty to show that it was not thought right for a Christian to engage in a double marriage. But that is altogether beside the question; at least, unless it can be shown from the context, or presumed from the fact of the writer's living in a country where Polygamy was common, that he meant to imply that a converted Polygamist must put away his wives save one. Without this, the presumption would be that the writer had not in his head at all such an out-of-the-way problem as that of the treatment of a converted Polygamist.

On one assumption only would quotations which go to show that a Christian must not engage in a double marriage bear on the treatment of a converted Polygamist—the assumption, namely, that the reason why it is unlawful for a Christian so to act is, that Polygamy is unlawful *in itself*; and therefore living in a state of Polygamy involves living in a state of sin. But to assume this is simply to beg the question; besides, I do not see how such a proposition can be maintained unless we are prepared in the first instance to throw overboard the authority of the Old Testament.

There is a tradition that the Apostle Thomas preached the gospel in India. If this were so, then if we had had an account of his mission, we might have expected to find in it something to the point. But the early Christian writers lived—mostly, at any rate—in countries where Polygamy was not practised. Hence we could not reasonably expect to find in their writings much, if anything, that would throw light on the treatment of converted Polygamists in the early Church. Indeed, it may be questioned whether the portion of Church history contained in the New Testament does not bear on the question more than all the writings of the Fathers. For here

we have some sort of approach—not a very close one, it is true—to the desiderated account of the Indian mission of St. Thomas. We have an account of the dealings of the Apostles with the Jews while the temple was yet standing, and the Jewish worship carried on. These Jews had a code of laws of their own, civil and religious blended in one, in which Polygamy was freely allowed. There would be nothing to lead a Jew to think he was doing wrong if he took two wives; and familiar as he would be with Malachi's denunciation of divorce, if he were led to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, and to seek for Christian baptism, it would never enter his head to suppose, unless he had been expressly taught, that as a condition of being baptized he must put away one of his wives. To suppose that he ought to keep them would be an error, if error it were, into which he would be exceedingly likely to fall. Accordingly, the utter silence of the New Testament as to any such requirement is not wholly without significance.

This one principle seems to pervade the whole of the Bible, Old and New Testaments alike—that the conjugal affections of a woman are not to be divided between two men. In the original institution of marriage, it is said, "They twain shall be one flesh," which our Lord Himself interprets as declaring the indissoluble character of the relationship. The principle was, to a certain extent, departed from by the concession which Moses made on account of the hardness of their hearts. Yet even this concession was hedged in by a remarkable provision. The divorced woman was at liberty to marry again; but if she chose to do so, then under no circumstances whatever, not even if her second husband were to die, could she ever again become the wife of her first husband (Deut. xxiv. 1-4). While adultery under the Mosaic law was punished with death, in case of the seduction of an unmarried woman who was not betrothed, it was enacted that the seducer should be bound to marry her, no exception being made to meet the case in which he might have a wife already, and it was said, "He may not put her away all his days" (Deut. xxii. 28, 29). Malachi sternly reprobates the practice of divorce as it occurred in his days. Our Lord declares divorce to be unlawful, unnatural, deeply sinful, and pronounces the re-marriage of a divorced woman to involve adultery on both sides. St. Paul says, yet not as resting on his own authority, but that of the Lord: "Let not the wife depart from her husband." Circumstances might occur which made a departure necessary; but in that case she was directed to remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband; and in like manner he says, "Let not the husband put away his wife."

I have alluded to the provision by which the concession of divorce made by Moses was hedged in. The object of this appears to have been to wean the wife's affections from her first husband, so as not to interfere with loyalty towards her second. Contrast this provision for morality which is made even by the law of Moses, imperfect as our Lord declared it to be as regards the marriage relation, with the state which ensues on the divorce which some would recommend. Here, we will suppose, is a heathen man, lawfully married, according to the custom of his country, to a couple of heathen wives. The husband is attached to each wife, and each wife to her husband. Presently the husband comes under Christian teaching, is led to accept Christianity, and wishes to be admitted into the Christian Church. He is told that he must put away one of his wives. Such a proceeding is sorely against the wish of both parties, and probably he thinks it strange that a condition which appears to him so unjust should be required; but his teachers must know better than he. He long resists, but at last succumbs to the pressure put upon him when he is taught that he must wrong his wife to save his soul, and divorces one. The divorced wife, thus cast adrift, marries some one else. Still, her affections go forth towards her first husband, who loved her, and from whom she has been so ruthlessly torn. So that by this action of divorce which the Lord has forbidden, followed as it naturally would be followed by a marriage which He has pronounced adulterous, a state of things is brought about far worse than that the thought of the possibility of which caused the prophet Jeremiah to exclaim, "Shall not that land be greatly polluted?" (Jer. iii. 1).

If we consider the state of society, a reason will be seen why the constancy of a woman's affections should be so important. It is round the mother more especially that the rising family cluster. She is the chief bond of union. Granted that the family relations of a Polygamist do not come up to those in the house of a Christian Monogamist, still they are good as far as they go; and He Who said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not," has provided by His command, "Let not man put asunder," that these native households, imperfect though they be, shall not be thrown into utter confusion by a system of divorce.

What then is to be done if a converted Polygamist seeks admission into the Church by baptism? According to the principles here advocated, the course is plain. We have our Lord's command to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them. If a man accepts and is instructed in the Christian religion, repents of his former sins, and desires to lead a new life, nothing is to prevent his entrance into the covenant of

grace. If, as is here maintained, a Polygamist cannot, without committing sin, free himself from the state of Polygamy into which, as a heathen, he lawfully entered, of course he must be baptized as a Polygamist. With regard to marriage, as to all other things, he is to do his duty in that state of life in which he finds himself or may be called to. In regard to marriage in particular, he is (1) to obey the law of Christ by remaining faithful to the marriage bond, surrendering the liberty of divorce which possibly the customs or laws of his tribe may have allowed him; (2) to obey the law of the Church by surrendering the liberty of marrying any more, so long at least as any of his existing wives is left. Thus, as St. Paul says, "Let every man wherein he is called therein abide with God." He is not, indeed, to keep his heathen wives against their will (1 Cor. vii. 15). If they depart, he may let them depart; he is not responsible for the result, as it was none of his doing.

But while the Sacraments which we hold to be "generally necessary to salvation" may not lawfully be withheld from Polygamists and the wives of Polygamists merely on the ground of their Polygamy, there is a scriptural provision by which the temporary and transitional character of such a state of things in a Christian Church is to be marked. The man is excluded by his Polygamy<sup>1</sup> from even the lowest order

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<sup>1</sup> Those who suppose that the requirement that a bishop or deacon must be the husband of one wife, excludes from the ministry men who marry a second time, even after the death of a first wife, will of course allow that, *a fortiori*, Polygamists are excluded. Whether the requirement did really refer to digamy, is a question rather for a theologian than for a layman to discuss. Nevertheless, I am tempted to remark that the evidence attempted to be deduced from the writings of Tertullian, that such was the primitive interpretation, seems to me rather to point in the opposite direction. For, according to his own showing, Tertullian is at variance with the practice, or at least a very general practice, of the Church in his days. His words imply that the cases in which a priest or deacon was deposed for digamy were rather rare than otherwise. Now it is, of course, possible that Tertullian may have been right, and the Church in general wrong. But is it not, to say the very least, as likely that the Church was right, and the heretical Father wrong? Timothy and Titus, of course, knew quite well what St. Paul meant, whatever that was. Now, considering the commonness of divorce in those days, and the facilities which Roman law afforded for it, it is very likely that there were in the Christian Church men who had contracted a second marriage after the divorce of a first wife. This is the very thing which our Lord so emphatically condemns. It is quite natural, therefore, that a man on whom so terrible a stain rested, even though perhaps his first wife might now be dead, should be held unfit for the ministry. It is quite natural, too, that St. Paul may have taken it as a thing which went without saying that a second marriage contracted after the death, not divorce, of a first wife, and in which accordingly there was nothing discreditable, did not exclude a man; that it never would

of the Christian ministry, and it would be in full accordance with the spirit of St. Paul's injunction to exclude him from Church offices in general.

If a heathen Polygamist, married, say, to a couple of wives, be converted, he is, as I have contended, forbidden by the express command of Christ Himself to put either of them away. Nor may he live permanently apart from one without putting her away so as to leave her free to go and marry another man; for St. Paul enjoins that such living apart shall be only by mutual consent, and temporary, for the purpose of special devotion; and the wife being by hypothesis a heathen, such considerations would not influence her. But suppose that one of the wives embraces Christianity, then she is amenable to Christian influences. Are the husband and the converted wife to be exhorted to live permanently apart, the heathen wife not being amenable to such exhortation? The absurdity of the conclusion—that the Christian husband must live with one wife because she is a heathen, and must live apart from the other because she is a Christian—would be enough to lead us to reject it, even without appealing to the authority of St. Paul. But it is a very grave consideration that it involves a condition of enforced celibacy which Scripture does not recognise, and exposes thereby the woman to temptation. If it be said the grace of God is sufficient to support her under it, the answer is plain; it is presumption to expect to be supported by the grace of God in a position of temptation which is only incurred by violation of His laws. Besides, such a requirement would be liable to have an evil influence on others, as confusing the barrier between right and wrong, and by making right appear wrong tending to make wrong appear right, or at least easily excusable. To require the man and the Christian wife to live permanently apart would be virtually to teach the converts that there is something wrong *in itself* in a man's living with two wives, no matter how he came to have them; and if another con-

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have entered into the head of Timothy or Titus to suppose that he meant that. This common-sense interpretation may have been handed down by tradition in the practice of the Church. Accordingly there were in Tertullian's days many ministers who had married a second time, to whom no objection was made by the orthodox; but here and there one was discovered to have married after divorcing a first wife, and when the discovery was made he was deposed. But Tertullian's Montanism blinded him to the distinction between the two kinds of digamy, and he speaks accordingly of the many who remained "insulting the Apostle;" whereas in reality the fault lay in his own heresy. Of course what is here thrown out is only a conjecture; but it is a conjecture which seems to me to make all things fall so naturally into their places, that it appears to present a probable solution of the difficulty.

verted Polygamist was seen living with two heathen wives whom he had lawfully married before conversion, the other converts would naturally be led to think that a more or less sinful indulgence was permitted to him; and if to him, why should it not be also to them? They might thus be led to think lightly of engaging in Polygamy themselves. But let it be boldly stated that whether Polygamy is lawful or unlawful depends on how it came about, and the case will be changed altogether. Then the retention of his wives by a converted Polygamist will be looked on, not as a sinful indulgence winked at, but as a righteous execution of a contract lawfully entered into in a condition of ignorance—a contract of which Christ Himself has forbidden the repudiation; and the retention will then afford no justification to a man already become a Christian for entering into a state of Polygamy, knowing that it was forbidden by the law of the Church of Christ into which he has been baptized; so that to do so would be wilfully and therefore sinfully to choose a condition which he had been taught was not in accordance with the will of God.

But though mere Polygamy does not justify the converted wife of a Polygamist for refusing to continue to live with her husband, whether he be converted or not, cases might arise which would make such a step necessary. Suppose, for example, that a converted wife could not live with her heathen husband without joining in idolatrous or other unlawful rites; in that case she would have to leave him for conscience' sake. But when she thus leaves him of her own accord, she is not at liberty to marry another man. Her husband is her husband still, and she must "remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband." If for a time she is living in a state of virtual celibacy, it is a state to which she has been called, and in which, therefore, she may lean on the grace of God to support her under temptations to which she may be exposed. It may be that in time her husband's eyes will be opened as her own have been, and he may be led to accept Christianity. In that case, as the cause which alone justified the separation has been removed, it is her duty to go back, and their unity will be deeper than ever, as they are now one "both in the flesh and in the Lord."

G. G. STOKES.

CAMBRIDGE, *December*, 1886.

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