
“Only in the Lord”;
or,
Scripture Marriage

My very dear ----,

After the encouragement which your letter, received last night, gives, I lose not another day in writing. The reasons which have kept me hitherto from doing so are various; but the reason which weighed heaviest with me was a fear of making you unhappy, without being of any use. But now you give me liberty to say what I think, and as I think much on it, I fear my letter will not be very short. It was truth you spoke when you said, I should not have encouraged it, had I known all the circumstances. I was indeed astonished at your reasoning, and much more at ---s, but not the least astonished at the engagement of your affections, for this, I often told you, I expected but I am not going to laugh at you. No, dear ----, I feel most sincerely for you. It is the fashion to laugh and ridicule *love*; but when disappointed, I do think it among the most painful of the Lord’s dispensations to sinners, to be the means of crushing one who loves you for the happiness or misery of one dear to you to hang upon your yes or no, and have to pronounce no, and thus leave impression of ingratitude and unkindness; to know there is *one* in this wilderness whose every thought is yours, miserable on your account, and yet not able even to attempt to administer comfort -- it is very painful, especially when to this is added a long *never*. I am a very hard-hearted creature; but there are some cases in which I can in some degree understand the command, “Weep with those who weep,” and your case borders too much on my own

not to sympathize with you -- I mean when I speak of your giving it up; therefore do not think what I may say unkind. I am not ignorant what it is to give up an object tenderly beloved, but I can only say I am not ignorant of the peace which follows when the lacerated soul is at length able to surrender itself, with a subdued and unruffled heart, into the arms of everlasting love, saving, “Undertake for me.” This I say, believing what you have declared; for few have much affection. But however painful the struggle, it is short and light compared with what you, in the other case, will be entailing on yourself and him. Is it happiness to disappoint the high expectations he has built upon in his union with you? or do you expect to be more amiable than the Lord Jesus, and think you will succeed in walking consistently, and yet pleasing the world? or is the carnal mind to be expected to endure it better? Do not be angry at my speaking of him as an unbeliever; for if not now a believer, it is presumption in you to build upon his seeming anxiety on the “one thing needful.” If the Bible is true, there is a rooted enemy within, and though he may admire the religion of Jesus at a distance, he cannot love to come in contact with it in every turn of life, to have it the subject of conversation, the end to which every thought, word, and action tends. I say not only this from seeing it around, but the word of God has said it; and truly I can say from what I see, dear ----, *love-conversions are not to be trusted*. I do not say it is hypocrisy in Mr. ----, or in many others I could name, but love for the individual really deceives them into love of what is dear to that individual. It was not hypocrisy, I say, in ---- to admire ---- because she did not join in the dance, which, joined with his being so well inclined, induced her to see no harm in following the desires of her own heart. Has he helped her on? When such uneven weights are put into the scale of the affections, one must ascend just in proportion as the other descends. It was not hypocrisy in another in my eye to drive with his now wife’s relations constantly to town, on purpose to talk of those subjects, to come to this house, and show such

anxiety as to sit up nights with dear ----, enquiring into the truth. Alas! you could hardly now distinguish if she is a Christian or not, after holding out against the reproach of it for many years. I could mention one who spoke at all the Dublin meetings, so zealous was he for the truth; yet when the prize was obtained he opposed and put a stop to her visiting the poor, or having schools -- put an extinguisher over the Lord’s bright light. I could mention another, whose prayers deceived even the very elect, now contending for balls, plays, reading novels. Passing over many others, I could come nearer home; and remember letters full of the one subject by one who never meant to deceive or could bend to deceive in his life, the glory of whose character is and was openness to an extreme. It was not hypocrisy; he really admired and joined in it, and continued long to join in every way religious society, church going, reading with and arguing with his wife, even attending the catechizing the poor; and though his kindness, and love, and affection are as devoted as ever, is it happiness not to be able to speak of your Beloved, who occupies, or should occupy, your every thought, without exciting the strongest expressions of disapprobation? Is it happiness to have no communion with one always with you -- he despising your pursuits, or your not relishing his? Is it happiness, while rejoicing in the glorious promises yourself, to feel your very joy your greatest grief, in being reminded that he who is dearer to you than your own soul has no part or lot in the matter, fearful every time he goes out, knowing he is without God, and consequently without hope in such a world? Is this a highly-colored picture? Alas! no. How far short of what most endure! How often is it persecution! how often separation from every means of grace, every exertion, a drawing and quartering of affection -- duties spiritual drawing one way, duties earthly the other, till from necessarily opposing the will of Him who expects to be obeyed, the affections of the idol loosen, and all the etc. etc. miseries ensue. If this were to be from an enemy you might bear it; but how will you from your companion, your guide,

your own familiar friend, with whom you hoped to have taken sweet counsel? Is it fair of you, knowing this, thus to deceive and ruin the happiness of Mr. --? Is it not better to cut it in a vein that can be healed? You will say, “Oh, you do not know Mr. -- or you would not so speak; he could not deceive, he is so natural!” I believe it, and remember I said it was not hypocrisy. From what I have heard I believe he is thoroughly amiable, and, I dare say, *well inclined*. But if you have waited for an earthly father’s consent, why not for a heavenly Father’s? Why not until his good inclination end in conversion, till his seeking end in belief? Because you are sure it is God’s *intention* to bring him to Himself, and that by your means?

Really, my dear ----, what has become of your reasoning faculties? Have you been let into God’s counsels? and even if you have, are you to disobey His will in order to bring them to pass? Do you remember whose work conversion is? and does He require you to do evil that He may do good? Were you to have given yourself to Mr. ---- before you knew the Lord, and then expect that He would hear your prayer for him, it would be expecting abounding grace; but is it less than presumption, with open eyes to unite yourself to him now, and then expect that, since you have not fitted yourself to God, He will fit Himself to you? I should fear you were leaving yourself without an argument to plead with Him. Would it be excusable to run away with Mr. ----, and marry him at Gretna Green, because you feel so certain your father intends to give his consent?

But perhaps you will say, “The Lord has not forbidden it.” I have again considered 1 Cor. 7. I am still of opinion that it is exactly in point. Keep in mind there is no middle state. Read Rom. 8, and see that those who are in the flesh are not in the Spirit; those in the Spirit are not in the flesh. If the evidences given of those in the Spirit, to whom alone the promises belong, are not seen in him, he is in the flesh, and he is to be considered by the Christian in the same light as in infidel, as to “*evil communications corrupting good manners*.” Surely

if the Israelites are so repeatedly urged not to mingle with the heathen lest they learn their works, and are so often chastened for this sin, are we in no danger in taking such as guide, companion, counselor, the repository of our every care, joy and sorrow, the one we vow to obey? Believe me, a man will not learn from his wife. Why are the Lord's people kept so separate -- a peculiar people -- throughout the Bible? And what was the effect of their intermarriages? Did Solomon (1 Kings 11:4), with all his wisdom, lead his ungodly wives the good way? or did they lead him the bad? Is human nature changed? Why did David so repeatedly say he would not know, or even have to dwell in his house -- one that is not the Lord's, that he looks upon such as his enemy, and even that his companions shall be those who fear the Lord? Is not still the path of the just a shining light? Is the way of the ungodly less darkness? Have light and darkness more communion than they had? Why does Paul bid us to marry only in the Lord? (1 Cor. 7:39). Is it that you shall have more advantages than at home? The Lord has settled the one, and can glorify Himself in you, who are His property, bought, paid for. He has forbid the other. I do not expect you in the least to mind what I say, and I fear all this will be seen some day by Mr. ---- ; but I have said nothing against him, except that he is not now one of God's children, which I gather from yourself. I deny not but some day he may turn out a brilliant light but whether or not, I must think it the greatest presumption for you, in his present state, to marry him. As for his being afflicted, do you mean to say that none are afflicted except the Lord's children? I wish I could think the same, and that all I have seen under stripe upon stripe, or even those who have been at the time softened by it, consequently must be safe. Alas! alas ! no.

When I found writing was useless I prayed often; but your reasoning on this also is strange You determine, if you can, to walk into the fire yet you tell me to pray that you may not be burned. Would you think it reasonable for me were I to yield myself to the dissipations of the world, and tell you to pray

that I should not be led into temptation? As to God making it out by His providences I have answered to ----. If I were asked what I saw in His providences I should be inclined to answer, "He is emphatically asking, 'Lovest thou Me more than these?'"

You answer in words --

"Give what Thou canst, without Thee I am poor;
With Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away."

But you as plainly deny it in action. He says, "If you love Me keep My commandments." It is painful to flesh and blood to cut off a right hand, to pluck out a right eye; yet it is expected, and those are not worthy of Him who are not willing to give up all, "take up their cross and follow Him." Abraham's was a painful trial of faith when called to offer up his Isaac. Would it have proved his love if he had said, "I cannot do that but if the Lord takes him from me I shall be resigned?" The trial of your faith must be more precious than gold, must be tried in fire, and will prove itself by giving up the idol; not in being resigned should it be denied by your Father; not by determining, if you can, to do evil that good may come. As to saying you have consented, that I consider as the world's snare. You made a promise you had no right to make, and therefore you have no right to keep. The Lord says, " Give *Me* thine heart." Mr. ---- says, "Give *me* thine heart." The Lord says, "If you give Me all -- time, talents, everything, without the heart, they will be nothing." Mr. ---- says the same. You answer, "I will give it to both." But stop and remember who it is says, "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Remember who says, He will not divide the heart with Belial (2 Cor. 6:15). Choose then whom you will serve. Oh, may you be able to answer in action, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Oh, well He knew our frame, who appointed that our heaven should consist of love! It is a dangerous feeling to be trifled with; there is something so sweet in loving and being loved. All in Christ Jesus shall drink together of the draft of everlasting love, when at length we reach that ocean

of love without bottom or shore, when He shall Himself show us, in the map of time, the line of love which has traced out our every step through this dark, howling wilderness. There we shall wonder at ourselves for ever hesitating, whether He that spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us, will not with Him give us all good things (Rom. 8:32).

"Above the rest this note shall swell,
My Jesus hath done all things well."

Hoping and praying for your eternal good, whatever may happen, that the evil as well as the good may work for it,

I am, dear ----, as ever

Your very sincerely affectionate,

T.A.P.

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