

Marriage With The World

“Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. What part hath he that believeth with an infidel? Come out ... be separate ... and I will receive you.”

It is essential that the expressed mind of God on this matter be realized in full—not just that it is wrong, but how wrong, dangerous and undesirable it is. The Scriptures use every possible means to impress us and enlighten us on this matter.

Since the birth of Cain and Abel, there have always been two separate classes of people in the world—the children of God, and the children of the flesh. Between these two classes enmity exists, by God’s appointment (Gen. 3:15).

Throughout the Bible there is constantly emphasized the wide and irreconcilable gulf between the things of God and the things of the world. We are repeatedly told it is utterly impossible to successfully mix them. What could be more emphatic than (2 Cor.6:14)—

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. What part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever? Ye are the Temple of the living God. COME OUT—BE SEPARATE—TOUCH NOT—and I will receive you, and be your Father.”

“Know ye not that the friendship of the world is ENMITY with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the ENEMY OF GOD” (James 4:4, see context to v.10).

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is NOT IN HIM” (I John 2:15).

“Pure religion and undefiled before God is .. to KEEP UNSPOTTED from the world” (James 1:27).

“Your bodies are members of Christ—the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Shall we make the members of Christ the members of an harlot? (either literal or spiritual—see Rev. 17) Glorify God in your body” (1 Cor. 6:15-20).

“She is at liberty to be married to whom she will—ONLY IN THE LORD” (1 Cor. 7:39).

“Can a man take fire into his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?” (Prov. 6:27).

“Be ye holy” (1 Peter 1:16).

“God hath called us to holiness (separateness)” (1 Th. 4:7).

“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of FOOLS shall be destroyed” (Prov. 13:20).

The same word is used for ‘companion’ here as applied to a wife, in Mal. 2:14. The Bible definition of a “fool” is clear from this—*“A fool hath no delight in understanding”* (Prov. 18:2). *“The fool walketh in darkness”* (Eccl. 2:14).

In God’s estimation, all who reject His Truth and eternal life are fools in the fullest sense of the word. *“An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright is an abomination to the wicked”* (Prov. 29:27).

Therefore, no truly “just” and godly man could desire the lifelong companionship of the “unjust” (unjustified, alien from the covenant). Such would be an “abomination” to him. To desire it proves he is not “just” in God’s sight.

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3).

“As in the days before the flood”—“marrying and giving in marriage” (with the ‘daughters of men’) —“so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man” (Matt. 24:38)—“Shall he find faith on the earth?” (Lk. 18:8).

“If ye live after the flesh, YE SHALL DIE” (Rom. 8:13). “Be not conformed to this world” (Rom 12:2).

“Ye are the Temple of God ... If any man defile the Temple of God, HIM SHALL GOD DESTROY” (1 Cor. 3:16).

“The world—dead in trespasses and sins—children of wrath—Gentiles—without Christ—aliens—strangers—no hope—without God—foreigners” (Eph. 2:1,3,11,12,19).

“Wives, submit to husbands, AS TO THE LORD.” (Apply that to alien marriage!) “Husband is head of wife, as Christ is Head of church. Husbands, love wives, EVEN AS CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH, and gave himself for it, that it might be HOLY and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself” (Eph. 5:22-6).

Consider the intense intimacy portrayed here! All this is destroyed and grotesquely caricatured by alien marriage—an evil corruption of a beautiful divine figure

“Be not deceived; GOD IS NOT MOCKED: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption” (Gal. 6:7-8)

Deacon’s wives MUST be faithful (1 Tim. 3:11). Alien marriage destroys a man’s qualifications for this work.

“Lay aside EVERY weight” (Heb. 12:1).

“Give DILIGENCE to make your calling and election sure.” “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Ph. 2:12).

“Always ABOUND in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

No one who truly respected these commands and had his whole heart set on pleasing God could possibly join himself (or herself) for life with one of the world. They would shudder at the thought of such a galling and hybrid existence.

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From the very beginning, there has been a sharp scriptural distinction between the children of God and the children of the world. God’s whole purpose of redemption right from the Garden of Eden depends upon the former maintaining a faithful and holy separation from the latter.

Union between them, in defiance of this eternal ordinance and purpose, has brought untold misery and punishment and evil. It has—time and time again—sidetracked the called-out people of God into the dead-end of failure. A brief summary of the record shows the fatal effects of this sin:

THE BEGINNING: Woman to be a HELP meet (SUITABLE) for man—cleave together—one flesh (Gen. 2:20).

EDEN: Perpetual enmity appointed between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—the children of God and people of the world—as the plan of redemption and

sanctification is begun (Gen. 3:15).

FLOOD: “*Sons of God took them wives of the daughters of men.*” Result: “*Wickedness of man great*”—“*All flesh corrupted God’s way on the earth.*” All destroyed in the Flood (Gen. 6:2).

PATRIARCHS: The enlightened, intelligent, God-pleasing faithfulness of Abraham and Isaac, strongly opposing and condemning alien marriages for their sons (Gen. 24:3; 28:1).

ESAU: The displeasing (“grief of mind”) alien marriages of Esau, who despised God’s blessing. Rejected as a “profane person”—“*no place of repentance*” (Gen. 26:34; 27:46).

SINAI: God’s solemn charge to Israel as He constituted them His holy nation, and they enter the covenant: no alien marriages. They promised, “*We will obey.*” God a jealous God (Exod. 34:12-16).

THE LAW: Not yoke ox (clean) and ass (unclean) together (Dt. 22:10). “*Doth God take care for oxen, or saith He it altogether for OUR sakes?*” (1 Cor. 9:9-10)—that is, as a LESSON and WARNING.

BAAL-PEOR: The command violated. The dreadful consequences—24,000 perish. Phinehas, by slaying an Israelite and his alien wife, turns away God’s terrible wrath from Israel, and receives an everlasting covenant of peace for his zeal (Num. 24).

MOSES: As he dies, pleads, “*Take no alien wives.*” A holy people, separated for a joyful and glorious destiny in God’s love. The inevitable evils of disobedience (Deut. 7:3-8).

JOSHUA: At his death, warns of the judicial calamities to follow alien marriages—traps, snares, scourges. “*If you violate the covenant, you will be cast out*” (Josh. 23:11-13).

JUDGES: Israel soon turned aside to evil and married with the alien. God brought on them cruel oppressions until they repented and cried to Him for forgiveness (Jdg. 3:6-8).

SOLOMON: Breaks the covenant—takes alien wives They turn away his heart. God is very angry. Because of this sin, He will rend the kingdom from him (1 Kings 11:1-11).

AHAB: His alien wife leads him to ungodliness and evil. She “*stirred him up*” to “*work wickedness in the sight of the Lord.*” His whole house destroyed (1 Kings 16:31-33).

JEHORAM: Did evil before God “*because he had the daughter of Jezebel to wife.*” He is destroyed together with the house of Jezebel by Jehu, the type of Christ (2 Chr. 21:6).

EZRA: Two chapters worthy of deep study. The evils and corruptions of alien marriage. The “*fierce wrath of God*” against Israel for this “*trespass unto the heavens*” (Ezra 9 and 10).

NEHEMIAH: Casts out one who had “*defiled the priest-hood and the covenant*” by alien marriage. “*Thus I cleansed them from strangers*” (Neh. 13:23-29).

PART 2

Extracts from the “Christadelphian,” 1874-1911, showing
the faithful and uncompromising stand of the past
against this evil. Numbers are year and page.

In marrying an unbeliever, a believer takes a yoke round the neck which is liable to sink the wearer at last to death—1874:281.

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There can be *no doubt* about the duty of believers to restrict their matrimonial alliances to believers. And there can be *no doubt* that *sin* is committed where this rule is transgressed—1875:517.

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Surely there ought not be much question as to the sinfulness of matrimonial alliance between the two people—the saints and the world. Reason alone ought to be sufficient to prevent a people styled “*The People of God, an holy nation*” from forming any connection with the world.

The “sons of God” taking them wives of the “daughters of men” soon brought about a state of things so offensive to God that He destroyed them in the flood (Gen. 6:2-7).

The story of how Phinehas turned away the wrath of God from the children of Israel, thereby obtaining a “covenant of peace” and an “everlasting priesthood” (Num. 25), shows the *deadly nature of this sin*. The sin of Zimri consisted in unlawfully taking an idolatrous woman—a woman forbidden him for divine reasons. And, therefore, he committed fornication. If the conjugal relation between the people of God and the alien was so offensive then, IS IT LESS SO NOW?

If this reference by Paul (1 Cor. 10:8) to the case of Zimri and his erring brethren means anything at all, does it not mean that for a brother or sister of Christ to marry an alien is to “*commit fornication*” or, as Paul puts it in another place, to “*defile the Temple of God?*”

A son of God cannot do other than *grievously sin* against Christ if he marry an alien—1878:400.

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It is evident that marriage with the alien may cause departure from the Truth, and may end in forfeiture of eternal glory. It will certainly cause much trouble to the parties concerned—1878:468.

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“*Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers.*” Marriage is a yoke that cannot be removed. It is for life. Therefore, of all yokings with the world, marriage with the alien is the most disastrous—1887:13.

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How could a believer take the world into the closest of friendship in husband and wife, without being disobedient, and without being polluted?

“*He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but the companion of fools shall fall.*”

An unbelieving man or woman is one *not cleansed from sin* by the obedience of the Truth, and is therefore—scripturally speaking—part of the “*unclean thing*” we are commanded to “*touch not.*”

How could a man or woman be holy in making themselves one with a person in a state of unholiness? It is indeed MORAL SUICIDE for a man to do such a thing—1891:262.

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God’s estimate of alien marriages was that they were the most potential of all influences in drawing away the heart from Himself. The faithful among Israel reciprocated God’s mind.

Ezra manifested deep grief, and confessed before God the enormity of the sin. Separation from the world cannot exist where alien unions are indulged in.

We are not dutiful to Christ, or jealous for his cause, in joining ourselves to an alien.

“A prudent man foreseeth the evil, but the simple pass on and are punished.”

Let a brother who contemplates *giving his children an unbeliever for a mother* think of the mother’s influence in forming the mind of the child. Let him remember that from early morning until late at night they will be entirely in her hands—1892:6.

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Is not such a step little short of *madness*? If misery be the outcome of such a marriage, is there room for marvel? *God’s* estimate of the drawbacks associated with an alien wife is strikingly shown in the fact that the possession of such disqualified a man—in the apostolic days—from holding the office of a bishop or elder. God required that both his wife and children should be “faithful” (1 Tim. 3:11; Tit. 1:6).

Bible history furnishes abundant illustrations of the evil results of these forbidden unions. The only attitude that God will approve and recognize is coming out and keeping separate. Fidelity in this matter makes alien marriages *utterly impossible*.

The plea has been urged by some who have been about to marry out of the Truth that they do so with the object of bringing about the obedience of their wife or husband. Such a plea shows a total misapprehension of duty. *It is not permitted to do evil that good may come.*

Those who go contrary to the definite command to marry only in the Lord show by that very act that *spiritually they are weak*, and that they are the *last* persons who should expose themselves to the temptations involved in association with an unbelieving partner—1892:47.

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“Shall I take the members of Christ and make them the members of those who constitute the Mother of Harlots or her daughters?” The only permissible answer is, “God forbid.” Can one who is a friend of God become “one flesh” with an enemy of God, and still retain God’s friendship? James answers—

“Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

In what way can friendship with an enemy of God be more positively manifested than by becoming—through the marriage tie—“one flesh”?

To unite the believer’s body with one who has not been bought with Christ’s blood is to *defile* it. What is the extent of the defilement arising out of a marriage between one in Christ and one out of Christ? Is it confined to the married believer? No, for he is a member of the One Body. Who does he also defile?—

“Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, DEFILETH THE TABERNACLE OF THE LORD.

“That soul shall be CUT OFF FROM ISRAEL. Because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean. His uncleanness is yet upon him” (Num. 19:13).

To marry one out of Christ (“*dead in trespasses and sins*”), therefore, produces the same consequences as the touching of a dead body under the Mosaic Law. That is, a brother defiles himself and—if not purified—he defiles the antitypical Tabernacle or Temple of God.

Marriage with the Gentiles was explicitly forbidden to Israel. The *defiling effects* of such an act on *the whole nation* was fully recognized by Ezra and Nehemiah. When Ezra heard that “*the holy seed had mingled themselves with the people of those lands,*” he rent his garments, plucked off his hair, and “*sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.*”

How can God dwell in a believer who *contaminates* himself by becoming “one flesh” with an unbeliever?—1893:264.

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Question: “Is it wrong to marry one who believes *part* of the Truth, but not *all*?”

Answer by bro. Roberts: Mankind are divisible into two classes—those who have been justified, and those who have not. In this respect, there is *no third class*, and no room for one. A justified one has been separated from *all* the unjustified, and it is his duty to maintain that separation—1893:297.

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Sister Harnill met and married a Mr. Lowe who, unfortunately, was not a brother, and by so doing placed herself *out of fellowship* with the brethren of Christ—1896:117.

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Believers are regarded not only with a loving, but with a *jealous* eye by God, Who is a jealous God. He not only demands their heart and service and praise, but He objects to their giving these to any other.

If there is a relation in life to which these considerations apply with more force than others, it is to marriage. For in marriage a man gives himself to the perpetual companionship of the woman he marries, and undertakes a perpetual duty of friendship, and subjects himself to her perpetual influence.

If this woman is a worldling, *he has violated every principle of the calling to which the Gospel has called him, in making himself one with the world in the person of his wife.* He has put his will under mortgage to an enemy of God.

And look at his children. It is his duty to bring them up in subjection to divine principles: how *can* he if their mother is in opposition to those principles? He has sacrificed his power to perform his duty by marrying an unbeliever.

A man must have a poor sense of the obligations associated with the Truth who cannot see that such a marriage is a violation of every principle of loyalty to Christ.

Bible history is one long illustration of the evil effects of disobedience in this matter. Marriage with the alien is *forbidden*. Disobedience has always been *disastrous*. We sympathize utterly with the brethren who refuse to be compromised in the corruption that appears to be setting in—R.R.—1897:532.

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The very nature of things—even apart from express commandment—would lead a man to require, in the closest partner of his life, unity of mind with regard to the most important concern of life. John forbid the brethren’s houses to the holders of false doctrine. To receive such a one—not only to casual hospitality—but to your table and your bosom, is to go against the doctrine of the apostles, commonsense, and the commandments of God—1897:385.

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Marriage with the unbeliever ... like *a gangrene this evil is eating the spirituality out of many ecclesias*. It is a “root of bitterness” that springs up again and again after the offending brother or sister has returned to fellowship. We are often exhorted to “*present our bodies a living sacrifice,*” but what can such language mean to those who are hankering after “strange flesh” while *professing* subjection to the law of God?—1898:81.

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Flesh and blood is the same in every generation, and the *evil* of alien marriage will never be eradicated. Those who put *God* first will not transgress to their own hurt—1905:548.

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It is a subject upon which no *faithful* man or woman will temporize, for they know the history of alien marriages as recorded in the Scriptures from the beginning. The history of the Truth abundantly bears out the history of Israel.

Nine-tenths of the alien marriages among the brethren are productive of *manifest* evil. And the other tenth does not make wrong right if the evil results are not so manifest.

Elpis Israel, pages 107-8: “They saw that the daughters of men were fair, and they took them wives of all they chose.” This was *a fatal step*. The sons of God corrupted themselves in marrying the daughters of Cain. This practice has ever been fruitful of apostasy—1906:221.

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Marriage with unbelievers . . . the small minority which makes a kind of half-hearted defense of such alliances is always found to consist of those whose understanding of and zeal for the Truth is of a low order.

Another and *very serious evil* which is being manifested to an increasing and very distressing extent, is the cultivation of friendly associations with aliens of the other sex, with marriage as its ultimate object. Those who do this defend it on the ground that they are not intending to marry out of the Truth. “Oh, I shouldn’t think of being engaged to, or marrying, so-and-so unless he (or she) was immersed!” The obedience to the Truth is not the first object in these cases, but the marriage.

The Truth is used as a bait and degraded. It is an abomination to make the blood boil, that the Gospel of the grace of God should be used in order to entice a stranger into the association of the brethren where he or she becomes marriageable!—1911:308.

—Bro. G. V. Growcott, *The Berean Christadelphian*, Nov and Dec 1986, and Aug and Sept 1995. The order of the two parts was reversed in the two printings.