

Anthony Trollope: Dialogue Example

"You are very punctual, Mr. Crawley," said the bishop. Mr. Crawley simply bowed his head, still keeping his hands beneath his cloak. **"Will you not take a chair nearer to the fire?"** Mr. Crawley had not seated himself, but had placed himself in front of a chair at the extreme end of the room,—resolved that he would not use it unless he were duly asked.

"Thank you, my lord," he said, **"I am warm with walking, and, if you please, will avoid the fire."**

"You have not walked, Mr. Crawley?"

"Yes, my lord. I have been walking."

"Not from Hogglestock!"

Now this was a matter which Mr. Crawley certainly did not mean to discuss with the bishop. It might be well for the bishop to demand his presence in the palace, but it could be no part of the bishop's duty to inquire how he got there. **"That, my lord, is a matter of no moment. I am glad at any rate that I have been enabled to obey your lordship's order in coming hither on this morning."**

Hitherto Mrs. Proudie had not said a word. She stood back in the room, near the fire,—more backward a good deal than she was accustomed to do when clergymen made their ordinary visits. ... It might probably be necessary to keep Mr. Crawley at a distance, and therefore she had remained in the background. But Mr. Crawley seemed to be disposed to keep himself in the background, and therefore she could speak. **"I hope your wife and children are well, Mr. Crawley,"** she said.

"Thank you, madam, my children are well, and Mrs. Crawley suffers no special ailment at present."

"That is much to be thankful for, Mr. Crawley." Whether he were or were not thankful for such mercies as these was no business of the bishop or of the bishop's wife. That was between him and his God. So he would not even bow to this civility, but sat with his head erect, and with a great frown on his heavy brow.

Then the bishop rose from his chair to speak, intending to take up a position on the rug. But as he did so Mr. Crawley, who had seated himself on an intimation that he was expected to sit down, rose also, and the bishop found that he would thus lose his expected vantage. **"Will you not be seated, Mr. Crawley?"** said the bishop. Mr. Crawley smiled, but stood his ground. Then the bishop returned to his arm-chair, and Mr. Crawley also sat down again. **"Mr. Crawley,"** began the bishop, **"this matter which came the other day before the magistrates at Silverbridge has been a most unfortunate affair. It has given me, I can assure you, the most sincere pain."**

Mr. Crawley had made up his mind how far the bishop should be allowed to go without a rebuke. ... And, moreover, the more rope he gave the bishop, the more likely the bishop would be to entangle himself. It certainly was Mr. Crawley's wish that the bishop should entangle himself. He, therefore, replied very meekly, **"It has been most unfortunate, my lord."**

"I have felt for Mrs. Crawley very deeply," said Mrs. Proudie. Mr. Crawley had now made up his mind that as long as it was possible he would ignore the presence of Mrs. Proudie altogether; and, therefore, he made no sign that he had heard the latter remark.

"It has been most unfortunate," continued the bishop. **"I have never before had a clergyman in my diocese placed in so distressing a position."**

"That is a matter of opinion, my lord," said Mr. Crawley, who at that moment thought of a crisis which had come in the life of another clergyman in the diocese of Barchester, with the circumstances of which he had by chance been made acquainted.

"Exactly," said the bishop. **"And I am expressing my opinion."** Mr. Crawley, who understood fighting, did not think that the time had yet come for striking a blow, so he simply bowed again. **"A most unfortunate position, Mr. Crawley,"** continued the bishop. **"Far be it from me to express an opinion upon the matter, which will have to come before a jury of your countrymen. It is enough for me to know that the magistrates assembled at Silverbridge, gentlemen to whom no doubt you must be known, as most of them live in your neighbourhood, have heard evidence upon the subject—"**

"Most convincing evidence," said Mrs. Proudie, interrupting her husband. Mr. Crawley's black brow became a little blacker as he heard the word, but still he ignored the woman. He not only did not speak, but did not turn his eye upon her.

"They have heard the evidence on the subject," continued the bishop, **"and they have thought it proper to refer the decision as to your innocence or your guilt to a jury of your countrymen."**

"And they were right," said Mr. Crawley.

"Very possibly. I don't deny it. Probably," said the bishop, whose eloquence was somewhat disturbed by Mr. Crawley's ready acquiescence.

"Of course they were right," said Mrs. Proudie.

"At any rate it is so," said the bishop. **"You are in the position of a man amenable to the criminal laws of the land."**

"There are no criminal laws, my lord," said Mr. Crawley; **"but to such laws as there are we are all amenable,—your lordship and I alike."**

"But you are so in a very particular way. I do not wish to remind you what might be your condition now, but for the interposition of private friends."

"I should be in the condition of a man not guilty before the law;—guiltless, as far as the law goes,—but kept in durance, not for faults of his own, but because otherwise his presence at the assizes might not be ensured. In such a position a man's reputation is made to hang for awhile on the trust which some friends or neighbours may have in it. I do not say that the test is a good one."

"You would have been put in prison, Mr. Crawley, because the magistrates were of opinion that you had taken Mr. Soames's cheque," said Mrs. Proudie. On this occasion he did look at her. He turned one glance upon her from under his eyebrows, but he did not speak.

"With all that I have nothing to do," said the bishop.

"Nothing whatever, my lord," said Mr. Crawley.

"But, bishop, I think that you have," said Mrs. Proudie. **"The judgement formed by the magistrates as to the conduct of one of your clergymen makes it imperative upon you to act in the matter."**

"Yes, my dear, yes; I am coming to that. What Mrs. Proudie says is perfectly true. I have been constrained most unwillingly to take action in this matter. It is undoubtedly the fact that you must at the next assizes surrender yourself at the court-house yonder, to be tried for this offence against the laws."

"That is true. If I be alive, my lord, and have strength sufficient, I shall be there."

"You must be there," said Mrs. Proudie. **"The police will look to that, Mr. Crawley."** She was becoming very angry in that the man would not answer her a word. On this occasion again he did not even look at her.

"Yes; you will be there," said the bishop. **"Now that is, to say the least of it, an unseemly position for a neficed clergyman."**

"You said before, my lord, that it was an unfortunate position, and the word, methinks, was better chosen."

"It is very unseemly, very unseemly indeed," said Mrs. Proudie; **"nothing could possibly be more unseemly. The bishop might very properly have used a much stronger word."**

"Under these circumstances," continued the bishop, **"looking to the welfare of your parish, to the welfare of the diocese, and allow me to say, Mr. Crawley, to the welfare of yourself also—"**

"And especially to the souls of the people," said Mrs. Proudie.

The bishop shook his head. It is hard to be impressively eloquent when one is interrupted at every best turned period, even by a supporting voice. **"Yes;—and looking of course to the religious interests of your people, Mr. Crawley, I came to the conclusion that it would be expedient that you should cease your ministrations for awhile."** The bishop paused, and Mr. Crawley bowed his head. **"I, therefore, sent over to you a gentleman with whom I am well acquainted, Mr. Thumble, with a letter from myself, in which I endeavoured to impress upon you, without the use of any severe language, what my convictions were."**

"Severe words are often the best mercy," said Mrs. Proudie. Mr. Crawley had raised his hand, with his finger out, preparatory to answering the bishop. But as Mrs. Proudie had spoken he dropped his finger and was silent.

"Mr. Thumble brought me back your written reply," continued the bishop, **"by which I was grieved to find that you were not willing to submit yourself to my counsel in the matter."**

"I was most unwilling, my lord. Submission to authority is at times a duty;—and at times opposition to authority is a duty also."

"Opposition to just authority cannot be a duty, Mr. Crawley."

"Opposition to usurped authority is an imperative duty," said Mr. Crawley.

"And who is to be the judge?" demanded Mrs. Proudie. Then there was silence for a while; when, as Mr. Crawley made no reply, the lady repeated her question. **"Will you be pleased to answer my question, sir? Who, in such a case, is to be the judge?"** But Mr. Crawley did not please to answer her question. **"The man is obstinate,"** said Mrs. Proudie.

"I had better proceed," said the bishop. **"Mr. Thumble brought me back your reply, which grieved me greatly."**

"It was contumacious and indecent," said Mrs. Proudie.

The bishop again shook his head and looked so unutterly miserable that a smile came across Mr. Crawley's face. After all, others besides himself had their troubles and trials. Mrs. Proudie saw and understood the smile, and became more angry than ever. ...

"I forget where I was," said the bishop. **"Oh. Mr. Thumble came back, and I received your letter;—of course I received it. And I was surprised to learn from that, that in spite of what had occurred at Silverbridge, you were still anxious to continue the usual Sunday ministrations in your church."**

"I was determined that I would do my duty at Hoggstock, as long as I might be left there to do it," said Mr. Crawley.

"Duty!" said Mrs. Proudie.

"Just a moment, my dear," said the bishop. **"When Sunday came, I had no alternative but to send Mr. Thumble over again to Hoggstock. It occurred to us,—to me and Mrs. Proudie,—"**

"I will tell Mr. Crawley just now what has occurred to me," said Mrs. Proudie.

"Yes;—just so. And I am sure that he will take it in good part. It occurred to me, Mr. Crawley, that your first letter might have been written in haste."

"It was written in haste, my lord; your messenger was waiting."

"Yes;—just so. Well; so I sent him again, hoping that he might be accepted as a messenger of peace. It was a most disagreeable mission for any gentleman, Mr. Crawley."

"Most disagreeable, my lord."

"And you refused him permission to obey the instructions which I had given him! You would not let him read from your desk, or preach from your pulpit."

"Had I been Mr. Thumble," said Mrs. Proudie, **"I would have read from that desk and I would have preached from that pulpit."**

Mr. Crawley waited a moment, thinking that the bishop might perhaps speak again; but as he did not, but sat expectant as though he had finished his discourse, and now expected a reply,

Mr. Crawley got up from his seat and drew near to the table. **"My lord," he began, "it has all been just as you have said. I did answer your first letter in haste."**

"The more shame for you," said Mrs. Proudie.

"And therefore, for aught I know, my letter to your lordship may be so worded as to need some apology."

"Of course it needs an apology," said Mrs. Proudie.

"But for the matter of it, my lord, no apology can be made, nor is any needed. I did refuse to your messenger permission to perform the services of my church, and if you send twenty more, I shall refuse them all till the time may come when it will be your lordship's duty to provide during my constrained absence for the spiritual wants of those poor people at Hogglestock."

"Poor people, indeed," said Mrs. Proudie. **"Poor wretches!"**

"And, my lord, it may well be, that it shall soon be your lordship's duty to take due and legal steps for depriving me of my benefice at Hogglestock;—nay, probably, for silencing me altogether as to the exercise of my sacred profession!"

"Of course it will, sir. Your gown will be taken from you," said Mrs. Proudie. The bishop was looking with all his eyes up at the great forehead and great eyebrows of the man, and was so fascinated by the power that was exercised over him by the other man's strength that he hardly now noticed his wife.

"It may well be so," continued Mr. Crawley. **"The circumstances are strong against me; and, though your lordship has altogether misunderstood the nature of the duty performed by the magistrates in sending my case for trial,—although, as it seems to me, you have come to conclusions in this matter in ignorance of the very theory of our laws, —"**

"Sir!" said Mrs. Proudie.

"Yet I can foresee the probability that a jury may discover me to have been guilty of theft."

"Of course the jury will do so," said Mrs. Proudie.

"Should such verdict be given, then, my lord, your interference will be legal, proper, and necessary. And you will find that, even if it be within my power to oppose obstacles to your lordship's authority, I will oppose no such obstacle. There is, I believe, no appeal in criminal cases."

"None at all," said Mrs. Proudie. **"There is no appeal against your bishop. You should have learned that before."**

"But till that time shall come, my lord, I shall hold my own at Hogglestock as you hold your own here at Barchester. Nor have you more power to turn me out of my pulpit by your mere voice, than I have to turn you out of your throne by mine. If you doubt me, my lord, your lordship's ecclesiastical court is open to you. Try it there."

"You defy us, then?" said Mrs. Proudie.

"My lord, I grant your authority as bishop to be great, but even a bishop can only act as the law allows him."

"God forbid that I should do more," said the bishop.

"Sir, you will find that your wicked threats will fall back upon your own head," said Mrs. Proudie.

"Peace, woman," Mr. Crawley said, addressing her at last. The bishop jumped out of his chair at hearing the wife of his bosom called a woman. But he jumped rather in admiration than in anger. He had already begun to perceive that Mr. Crawley was a man who had better be left to take care of the souls at Hogglestock, at any rate till the trial should come on.

"Woman!" said Mrs. Proudie, rising to her feet as though she really intended some personal encounter.

"Madam," said Mr. Crawley, **"you should not interfere in these matters. You simply debase your husband's high office. The distaff were more fitting for you. My lord, good morning."** And before either of them could speak again, he was out of the room, and through the hall, and beyond the gate, and standing beneath the towers of the cathedral. Yes, he had, he thought, in truth crushed the bishop. He had succeeded in crumpling the bishop up within the clutch of his fist.