

# *The Church*

## *Walking With the World*

The Church and the World walked far apart  
On the changing shore of time;  
The World was singing a giddy song,  
And the Church a hymn sublime.  
“Come, give your hand,” said the merry World,  
“And walk with me this way!”  
But the good Church hid her snowy hand  
And solemnly answered, “Nay.  
I will not give you my hand at all,  
And I will not walk with you;  
Your way is the way of eternal death,  
And your words are all untrue.”

“Nay, walk with me a little space,”  
Said the World with a kindly air.  
“The road I walk is a pleasant road,  
And the sun shines always there.  
Your way is narrow and thorny and rough,  
While mine is flowery and smooth;  
Your lot is sad with reproach and toil,  
But in rounds of joy I move.  
My way, you can see, is a broad, fair one,  
And my gate is high and wide;  
There is room enough for you and me,  
And we’ll travel side by side.”

Half shyly the Church approached the World  
And gave him her hand of snow;  
And the false World grasped it, and walked along  
And whispered in accents low,  
“Your dress is too simple to please my taste;  
I have gold and pearls to wear—  
Rich velvets and silks for your graceful form  
And diamonds to deck your hair.”

The Church looked down at her plain, white robes  
And then at the dazzling World,  
And blushed as she saw his handsome lip,

With a smile contemptuous curled.  
“I will change my dress for a costlier one,”  
Said the Church with a smile of grace;  
Then her pure, white garment drifted away,  
And the World gave, in their place,  
Beautiful satins and fashionable silks,  
And roses and gems and pearls;  
And over her forehead her bright hair fell  
And waved in a thousand curls.

“Your house is too plain,” said the proud old World,  
“Let us build you one like mine,  
With kitchen for feasting and parlor for play  
And furniture never so fine.”  
So he built her a costly and beautiful house—  
Splendid it was to behold;  
Her sons and her daughters met frequently there,  
Shining in purple and gold.  
Rich fairs and shows in the halls were held,  
And the World and his children were there.  
Laughter and music and feasting were heard  
In the place that was meant for prayer.

The angel in mercy rebuked the Church,  
And whispered, “I know thy sin.”  
Then the Church looked sad, and anxiously longed  
To gather the children in.  
But some were away at the midnight ball,  
And others were at the play,  
And some were drinking in gay saloons,  
And the angel went away.

And then said the World in soothing tones,  
“Your loved ones mean no harm,  
Merely indulging in innocent sport.”  
So she leaned on his proffered arm,  
And smiled and chatted and gathered flowers,  
And walked along with the World,  
While countless millions of precious souls  
Were hungering for truth untold.

“Your preachers are all too old and plain,”  
Said the gay World with a sneer.  
“They frighten my children with dreadful tales  
Which I do not like to hear.  
They talk of judgments and fire and pain,  
And the doom of darkest night.

They warn of a place that should not be  
Thus spoken to ears polite!  
I will send you some of a better stamp,  
More brilliant and gay and fast,  
Who will show how men may live as they please  
And go to heaven at last.  
The Father is merciful, great and good,  
Loving and tender and kind.  
Do you think He'd take one child to heaven  
And leave another behind?"

So she called for pleasing and gay divines,  
Deemed gifted and great and learned;  
And the plain, old men who had preached the cross  
Were out of her pulpits turned.  
Then Mammon came in and supported the Church  
And rented a prominent pew;  
And preaching and singing and floral display  
Soon proclaimed a gospel new.

"You give too much to the poor," said the World,  
"Far more than you ought to do;  
Though the poor need shelter, food, and clothes,  
Why thus need it trouble you?  
Go take your money and buy rich robes  
And horses and carriages fine;  
And pearls and jewels and dainty food,  
The rarest and costliest wine.  
My children, they dote on all such things,  
And if you their love would win,  
You must do as they do, and walk in the way—  
The flowery way they're in."

The Church her purse strings tightly held  
And gracefully lowered her head—  
And simpered, "I've given too much away.  
I will do, sir, as you have said."  
So the poor were turned from the door in scorn;  
She heard not the orphan's cry;  
And she drew her beautiful robes aside  
As the widows went weeping by.

Thus they of the Church and they of the World  
Journeyed closely, hand and heart.  
And none but the Master, who knoweth all,  
Understood they had been apart.  
Then the Church sat down at ease and said,

“I am rich and in goods increased.  
I have need of nothing, and naught to do,  
But to laugh and dance and feast.”

The sly World heard her and laughed within,  
And mockingly said aside,  
“The Church has fallen, the beautiful Church;  
Her shame is her boast and pride.”

Thus her witnessing power, alas, was lost,  
And perilous times came in;  
The times of the end, so often foretold,  
Of form and pleasure and sin.

Then the angel drew near the mercy seat  
And whispered in sighs her name,  
And the saints their anthems of rapture hushed  
And covered their heads with shame.

A voice came down from the hush of heaven,  
From Him who sat on the throne;  
“I know thy works and what thou hast said—  
But alas! Thou hast not known  
That thou art poor and naked and blind,  
With pride and ruin enthralled;  
The expectant bride of a heavenly Groom  
Is the harlot of the World!  
Thou hast ceased to watch for that blessed hope,  
Hast fallen from zeal and grace;  
So now, alas! I must cast thee out  
And blot thy name from its place.”

But out from the side of the harlot Church,  
While she sleeps in indolent shame,  
Will flee the Remnant who keep God’s Word,  
And honor His holy Name.  
By faith they walk in the ways of the Lord,  
Unmoved by the scorn at them hurled;  
By the blood of the Lamb and their witness sincere,  
They overcome the World.  
For those who keep their garment clean,  
Shall walk with Him in white,  
In the day when He comes to claim His own,  
To make them His jewels bright.

—Adapted