

The Church Walking with the World

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The Church and the World walked far apart
On the changing shores of time;
The World was singing a giddy song,
And the Church a hymn sublime.
“Come, give me your hand,” said the merry World,
“And walk with me this way;
But the faithful 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 endless death,
Your words are all untrue.”
“Nay, walk with me but 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 path is thorny, and rough, and rude,
But mine is broad and plain;
My way is paved with flowers and gems,

And yours with tears and pain.
The sky above me is always blue,
No want, no toil I know;
The sky above you is always dark,
Your lot is a lot of woe.

My path, you see, is a broad, fair path,
And my gate is high and wide;
There is room enough for you and me
To travel side by side.”
Half shyly the Church approached the World
And gave him her hand of snow;
The old World quick grasped it and walked along,
Saying, in accents low -

“Your dress is too simple to please my taste,
I will give you 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 garments* drifted away,
And the World gave, in their place,
Beautiful satins and shining silks,
And roses, and gems, and pearls;
While over her forehead her bright hair fell,
Crisped in a thousand curls,

“Your house is too plain,” said the proud old World,
“I’ll build you one like mine;
Carpets of Brussels and curtains of lace,
And furniture ever so fine.”
So he bought her a costly and beautiful house,
Most splendid it was to behold;
Her sons and her beautiful daughters dwelt there,
Gleaming in purple and gold.

And fairs and shows in the halls were held,
And the World and his children were there;
Laughter and music and feasts were heard
In the Place that was meant for prayer,
She had cushioned pews for the rich and the great
To sit in their pomp and pride,

While the poor folks clad in their shabby suits
Sat meekly down outside.

The Angel of Mercy flew over the Church,
And whispered, "I know thy sin";
Then the Church looked back - a sigh and longed
To gather her children in.
But some were off at the midnight ball,
And some were off at the play;
And some were drinking in gay saloons,
So she quietly went away.

Then the sly World gallantly said to her:
"Your children mean no harm;
Merely indulging in innocent sports,"
And she leaned on his proffered arm
And smiled, and chatted, and gathered flowers
As she walked along with the World;
While millions and millions of deathless souls
To the horrible pit were hurled.

"Your preachers are all too old and plain,"
Said the World to the Church with a sneer:
"They frighten my children with dreadful tales,

Which I like not for them to hear.
They talk of brimstone, and fire, and pain
And the horrors of endless night;
They talk of a place which should not be
Mentioned in ears polite.

"I will send you some of the better stamp,
Brilliant, and gay, and fast
Who will tell them that people may live as they list,
And go to heaven at last.
"The Father is merciful, great, and good,
Tender and true and kind,
Do you think He would take one child to heaven,
And leave the rest behind?"

So he filled her house with gay divines,
Gifted, and great, and learned;
And the plain old men that preached the Cross
Were out of the pulpit turned.
"You give too much to the poor," said the World.
"Far more than you ought to do;
If the poor need shelter, and food, and clothes,
Why need it trouble you?"

Go, take your money and buy rich robes,
And horses and carriages fine;
And pearls and jewels, and dainty food,
And 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 ways
That they are walking in."

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

Then the sons of the World and the Sons of the Church
Walked closely hand and heart;
And only the Master, who knoweth all,
Could tell the two apart.
Then the Church sat down at her ease, and said,
"I am rich and in goods increased;

I have need of nothing, have nothing to do,
But to laugh, and dance, and feast.”