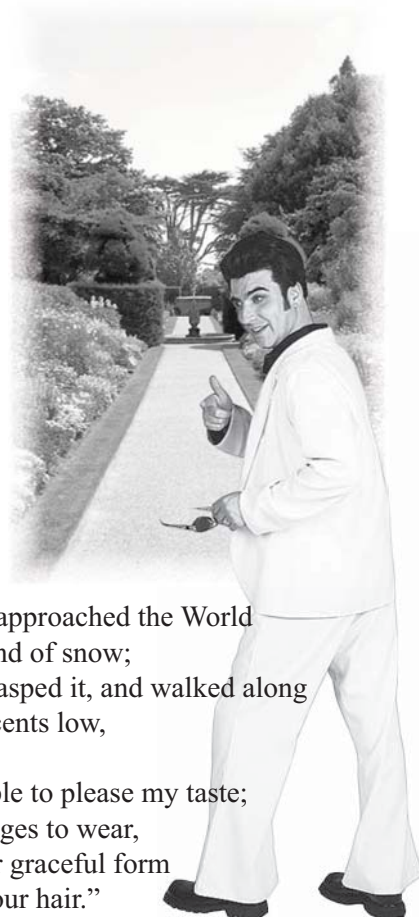


# The Church and the World ~Century 21~



The Church and the World walked far apart  
On the changing shore of time;  
The World was singing a silly song,  
And the Church a hymn sublime.

“Come, give your hand,” said the smiling World,  
“And together we shall go!”  
But the good Church hid her snowy hand  
And solemnly answered, “No!!”

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.”

“No, walk with me a little ways,”  
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 dews,  
And yours with tears and pain.

The sky to me is always blue,  
No lack, no toil I know;  
The sky above you is always dark;  
Your lot is a lot of woe.

My way, you can see, is a soft, easy one,  
And my gate is high and wide;  
There is room enough for you and me;  
So let’s 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 pinks and oranges to wear,  
Sensuous hues for your graceful form  
And sprays to fluff your hair.”

Then added he, with a shake of his head,  
Shielding his eyes in the glare,  
“It makes much sense in this fierce sunshine  
Your comely calves to bare.”

The Church looked down at her plain, modest clothes  
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 prettier one,”  
Said the Church with a smile of grace;  
So her simple garments were stashed away,  
And the World gave, in their place,

Beautiful satins and flowery sheens,  
With roses and lace and swirls;  
While over her forehead her bright hair fell  
In two bouncy, enticing curls.

“Your house is too plain” said the proud old World,  
“Let us build you one like mine,  
With kitchen for feasting and rec room for play  
And cabinets never so fine.”

So he built her a costly and beautiful house;  
Awesome it was to behold!  
Her sons and her daughters met frequently there,  
Shining in purple and gold.

There were cushioned seats for the lazy and rich,  
To sit in their glutton and pride;  
But the poor who were clad in humble array,  
Were scorned 'til they went outside.

They talk of judgments and fire and pain,  
And the doom of darkest night.  
They warn of a place that should not be  
Mentioned to ears polite!

I will send you some of a better stamp,  
More brilliant, educated, fast;  
Who will show how men their flesh may please  
And go to heaven at last.

**Powerpoints and films in the halls were shown,  
And the World and his children were there.  
Laughter and music and Ping-Pong were heard  
In the place that was meant for prayer.**

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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 bowl,  
And others online did play,  
And some were hangin' at Pizza Hut:  
So the angel went away.

Then said the World in soothing tones,  
"Your children mean no harm—  
Merely indulging in innocent sports,"  
So she leaned on his proffered arm,

And texted, and chatted, and uploaded photos,  
And walked along with the World,  
While countless millions of precious souls  
Over the fearful brink were hurled.

"Your preachers are too old-fashioned and plain,"  
Said the smart World with a sneer.  
"They frighten my children with dreadful tales  
Which I do not like to hear.

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 smart divines,  
Deemed gifted and great and learned;  
And the plain-spoken men who had preached the cross  
Were out of her pulpits turned.

Then Mammon came in and supported the Church  
And sat in a well-padded pew;  
And preaching and chorals 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 deprive you?"

And afar to the heathen in foreign lands  
Your thoughts need seldom roam.  
The Father of mercies will care for them:  
Let charity start at home.

Go take your money and buy nice shoes  
And cars and pickups fine;  
And phones and iPods and cameras,  
The latest and costliest kind.

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 up-to-date way they're in."

The Church her purse snaps tightly shut  
And shamefully lowered her head.  
She whimpered, "I've given too much away.  
I will do, sir, as you have said."

A voice came down from the hush of heaven,  
From Him who sat on the throne;  
"I know your works and what you have said—  
But alas! You have not known,

That you are poor and naked and blind,  
With pride and ruin ensnared;  
The expectant bride of a heavenly Groom  
Is the harlot of the World!

**So the poor were pushed out of her mind;  
She heard not the orphan's cry;  
And she silently covered her MasterCard  
As the widows went weeping by.**

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She heard not the orphan's cry;  
And she silently covered her MasterCard  
As the widows went weeping by.

You have ceased to watch for that blessed hope,  
Have fallen from zeal and grace;  
So now, alas! I must cast you out  
And blot your name from its place."

Thus they of the Church and they of the World  
Journeyed closely, hand and heart.  
And none but the Master, who knows all things,  
Understood they had once walked 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 play, to sing, and to eat."

The sly World heard her and laughed in his sleeve,  
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.

This old poem (*see note at end of article*) sadly depicts the state of most churches in America. The average American Christian is hardly any different than the world about him. He watches the same movies, listens to the same music, roots for the same sports teams, and pursues the same American dream. Yet this stands in direct opposition to Scripture that states, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." (2 Co. 6:17)

The Christian and the world are polar opposites. Just as the North Pole is a world apart from the South Pole, so should be the Christian from the world. Its values, goals, hopes, and dreams are diametrically opposed to each other. The world has only the here and now, but the Christian lives for that which is to come. The world lives by what is most pleasurable, the Christian seeks first the approval of God. The world lives only for self, but the Christian seeks the good of others. These great differences that the followers of Christ have with the world about them led Jesus to say in His prayer to the Father, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (Jn. 17:16)

But can Jesus still say the same of His followers today? Are they not of this world? Is there a distinction between the Christian and the world? The Bible has clear, distinct words to those who try to follow Christ yet still be a friend of this world.

**Ye adulterers and adulteresses, 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. (Ja. 4:4)**

To be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God. **Stop, think, ponder**—what a serious matter to be found the enemy of God. The church is the bride of Christ. When her affection is given to another (the world), she is labeled an adulteress. How disgraceful, shameful, and loathsome that title should be! Yet this is what we become when we become friends with what God hates.

The church's greatest desire should be a longing to be a pure, chaste bride for Christ. This is accomplished by separating ourselves from the world and its evil influence. This doctrine of separation from the world should stand as the cornerstone of the Church. The reasons for this separation are expounded in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16.

**What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God. (2 Co. 6:14b-16a)**

The answer to these five questions is an unequivocal NONE! There is no fellowship, no communion, no concord, no part, and no agreement between God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom. Yet too often man tries to have part with each of these opposing kingdoms. They want the blessings and promises of God, yet enjoy the pleasures of this world. Jesus said this divided affection is impossible. (Mt. 6:24) The Christian has to choose between the love of the world and the love of the Father. We cannot have them both, for Scripture says:

**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. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (I Jn. 2:15-16)**

In these verses we also see a description of what composes the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. The desires of the flesh are for food, drink, and fornication. While each of these desires can rightfully be fulfilled, the world places an undue affection on them, particularly fornication. This perverted view of intimacy

can be seen in the world's movies, television shows, and songs.

The lust of the eyes is for pretty things: nice houses, vehicles, clothes, furniture, collectibles, motor homes, boats, sporting equipment, cell phones, computers, entertainment systems, play things ... and the list goes on. Again, some of these may be legitimate, but the world plays on continually getting more, bigger, and better. The world's philosophy is "he who dies with the most toys wins." This is completely opposite to the Christian's view of life.

The pride of life consists of a desire for recognition, for prestige, and to be important. Man's pride seeks to be well thought of, to be honored by others, and to have authority over others. This pride of life displaces God by putting self on the throne that was intended for God. This amounts to nothing less than idolatry. The Christian is to keep himself from these lusts of the world. God's Word says "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this ... to keep himself unspotted from the world." (Ja. 1:27)

To keep oneself unspotted from the world requires a separation from the world. If we watch the world's television, listen to the world's music, read the world's books, and go to the world's places of entertainment and recreation, we will soon become like the world. Our interest in serving God diminishes as we serve self. We do little in fulfill-

ing the greatest commandment, to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." (Mt. 22:37) When we do fulfill the greatest commandment, there is no interest for the things of this world.

Imagine a wife who tells her husband, "I love you, but tonight I want to go out with Bill. We are friends too, and I want to spend a little time alone with him as well." What will that husband's response be? Quite likely a fury of jealous rage will overtake him. So with God when we want to two-time on him and enjoy the companionship of the world. God is a jealous God. (His name is Jealous; see Ex. 34:14.) He wants a people devoted entirely unto Himself. This complete devotion entails a separation from all other gods. He does not want to share that love with another.

In the Old Testament the Israelites were to drive out the wicked neighboring nations so they would not "make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice." (Ex. 34:15b) This



**The expectant bride of a heavenly groom has morphed into the harlot of the World!**

Old Testament principle of separation applies to the New Testament as well. We may no longer be tempted to go a whoring after other gods, but Satan tempts with the lusts of this world to draw our devotion away from God.

While we are no longer commanded to drive out the inhabitants of the land, we are commanded to drive out the world. We do not follow the world's fashions. We do not listen to world's music. We do not enjoy the world's entertainment. We do not follow the world's sports. We do not invest in the world's retirement plans. The Christian's distinct lifestyle is characterized by not patterning ourselves after the world. This fulfills Scripture that teaches:

**And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. (Romans 12:2a)**

When we separate ourselves from the evil influences of the world we are fulfilling Ephesians 5:11, "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." The true Christian will hate the violence and immorality that Hollywood spews out. The true Christian will hate the world's music that sings of good times and love affairs. The true Christian will hate the greed and dishonesty that is so prevalent in today's business world. The true Christian will hate the undress of American society. Yes, the Christian will be quite different than the world about him.

This difference with the world will not win the Christian favor with the world. The world will mock and hate us as we reprove them of sin. Yet this is to be expected as Jesus prayed, "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (Jn. 17:14) Jesus also said, "because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (Jn. 15:19b)

The early church understood this call of separation from the world. They placed great emphasis on not being part of the world and its evil system. The world did hate them because of this. The early church experienced much martyrdom and persecution as a result. However, today many reap the reward for not compromising their faith by being friends with the world.

Today the choice is ours to make. Someday we too can reap the reward if we choose God above the pleasures this world offers. But woe unto the church if we join hand in hand with the world and enjoy its companionship. Woe unto the church if it is ashamed to be different. Woe unto the church if it loves those things that God hates. Woe unto the bride of Christ if she is found to be an unfaithful harlot, drunk with the love of the enemies of her espoused.

We close with reflecting on the poem at the beginning. Have we exchanged our white robe for satins and silks? Do we now live in a house full of feasting and play? Do our preachers no longer warn of judgment but instead say that



**Imagine a wife who tells her husband, "I love you, but tonight I want to go out with Bill. We are friends too, and I want to spend a little time alone with him as well."**

we may live as we please and all go to heaven at last? Do we spend our money on ourselves rather than feeding the poor and spreading the gospel to the lost? Are we rich and increased with goods, but in the end will find our name has been blotted from the book of life? ~Phil Haines

*Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. (2 Pe. 3:13-14)*

Phil and Wanita Haines live near Waynesboro, Georgia, where Phil works in the food business. They, with their seven children, attend Burkeland Mennonite Church. This article was originally written for a newsletter, *A Call to Holy Living*, which is mailed to pastors throughout the US. This article is the eighth in that series.

*The poem at the beginning of this article was originally written in the 1800s or earlier. There are several versions published, and more than one author has been attributed to it in the past. The version used above is a mixture of several versions, modernized in a few places. The article originally used an older version of the poem.*