

**THE
CHRISTIAN
IS NOT
OF THIS
WORLD**

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The Epistle to the Ephesians, after blessedly unfolding the mystery of the Church, continues — *"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called"* (Eph. 4:1).

Law made standing to depend on walk. **Grace** makes walk to depend on standing. It sets us in heavenly places in Christ, and then demands a walk worthy of the position. This is God's present way, as remote from legalism on the one hand as from antinomianism on the other; equally clear in rejecting good works as the **ground** of acceptance, and in demanding them as the **result** of acceptance; proclaiming with the same emphasis that there can be no fruit *except* we abide in the vine, and that there must be fruit *if* we abide in the vine.

In an army each soldier is personally responsible to his sovereign. If there is a mutiny, and each regiment, under a different leader, pursues its own ends, pleading the sovereign's commission, the course for one who would act loyally is to learn, if possible, what the sovereign's commands really are, and to separate from all who are not faithfully obeying them. Such a divided and mutinous army is Christendom, but happily the course which might be impossible for the soldier, is possible for one who would walk in subjection to Christ. To give ear to the jarring voices of man is to plunge into a whirlpool of confusion and contradiction. To follow, with a single eye, the teaching of God's Word is to ensure safety at every step of our journey.

The walk of the individual Christian, then, must be suited to his calling in Christ. As a member of His body, he must behave consistently. If the body is not of the world, he is not of the world; if the body is heavenly, he is heavenly. As the whole body should manifest its true character, so should each member.

Now the Church is separate from the world, united with Christ in heaven, incorporated with Christ and indwelt by the Spirit. If, then, the believer is to walk worthy of his vocation, such is the character which he is to exhibit in the world. Looking at the matter from this point of view, what is the walk which would befit a Christian? Having a heavenly calling, how could he mix himself with the pleasures, the politics, the vanities, and the ambitions, of the world? The ball, the theatre, the concert, would be avoided, not because natural conscience condemned them, but as inconsistent with the believer's vocation.

Are such scenes, he would ask, suited for one who is associated with Christ in death and resurrection who belongs to heaven and is waiting the return of the Saviour to take him there? How can I enjoy the pleasures and frivolities of a world from which I am severed by my heavenly calling — a world which hates my heavenly Head and contemns my heavenly hope — a world which is rushing on at express rate to the fearful judgments that precede the day of the Lord? Would the honours, the applause, or the high places of such a doomed world, attract his heart? Would he not say, like Daniel, as he saw the

judgment of Babylon traced by God's finger on the wall — *"Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king and make known to him the interpretation."* (Dan. 5:17)? What would Belshazzar and his lords have thought of Daniel's interpretation, if they had seen him clutching at power and place in the city whose overthrow he had foretold? And what can the world think as it sees believers grasping at the empty distinctions of a scene on which the shadow of approaching judgment already rests? Surely it is for those who can read the handwriting to be solemnly warning the world, instead of chasing its fleeting honours or bidding for its worthless applause.

There are doubtless, believers who take part in the world's concerns from generous and philanthropic motives — simply with a desire to do good, to relieve sufferings, or to check the aboundings of iniquity. We cannot question their benevolence, their high principle, or their sincere wish to do God service. But the purest motives will not lead a Christian right, if he fails to understand the heavenly calling; and the question still remains whether these believers, sincere and excellent as they are, have entered into God's thoughts about what He would have them to do.

If God were still carrying out His earthly purposes, if His design now were to bless or to improve the world, such a course as that indicated might be the right one for a believer to pursue. But this is not the case. The world is not going on to blessing, but to judgment, and a Christian is called to walk in separation from it. If he seeks to follow the guidance of Scripture alone, what would he say, then, to the idea of attempting, by political and social means, to improve the world? Would he not say God has reserved the blessing of the earth till Christ comes; am I, then, to attempt it earlier? or can I, by going on without God, answer any good purpose? Am I more conscious of the evil than He is, or better able to redress it? If He has clearly foretold that the world is hastening on to the judgment it has incurred by rejecting Christ, can I arrest the judgment by my efforts, or shall I entangle myself in the system which is thus awaiting its doom? I am called to fellowship with Christ, and if He has bid Christ wait, shall not I, his fellow-heir, wait with Him? If God is now calling a people outside the world, is not this my place, instead of plunging into the thick of its affairs, hoping to bless where God is purposing to judge? I cannot, by becoming responsible for the world's government, hope to avert the sentence. And as no man would paint and ornament a house whose foundations he knew to be giving way, the mere attempt to improve the world shows that I am not expecting its judgment, and helps to foster the delusion that peace and safety are ahead instead of the sudden destruction which God's Word announces. True benevolence demands that I warn those inside of its impending fall, instead of lulling them into security by joining in its decoration.

All this, however, it may be contended, is mere inference from the general principle that the Church is heavenly in character. Is this inference supported by the directions given in the Word as to the walk of individual Christians? It is clear that the early disciples

were called to share their Master's rejection. *"If any man," says our Lord, "will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me"* (Matt. 16:24).

He Himself was giving up the place of earthly power, and taking that of earthly rejection. So long as such is His attitude towards the world, that is, until His kingdom is established in glory, this is the fellowship into which He calls His disciples. It is no remote inference, but a direct, express statement. The cross was the punishment of felons and slaves, not only a cruel, but a shameful, death. To take up the cross was to assume a position outside the world, the object of the world's enmity and contempt. This, then, is what Jesus calls His disciples to do and he did not cease with His death. *"If the world hate you," He said, "ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also"* (John 15:18-20).

This shows what the early disciples were to expect. Will it be said that the world has changed? that Christianity has so spread as to make such language inapplicable now?

In the first of the passages just quoted, Jesus joins His followers with Himself in rejection. For how long? No time is named, but as He utters these words in taking up the Church character and laying aside the Messianic, it seems clear that the rejection of His followers lasts during this state of things. In his Messiahship He will be exalted and His followers with Him. This conclusion is confirmed by the other passage cited, which contrasts two classes, the world and those who are *"not of the world."* These are spoken of as opposed, not for a time, but in character and principle, and therefore as long as the age lasts. It is asserted generally that believers are *"not of the world,"* and are, therefore, the objects of the world's hatred.

I admit that the outward marks of this antagonism are much effaced. Religion has become worldly, and the world has become religious. Christians, forgetting their heavenly calling, have struck hands with the world, bid for its favour and places, plunged into its pleasures and pursuits, and earned its patronage and rewards. But does this alter the Word of God, which says that the believer is *"not of the world,"* or that the world hates what is not of itself?

Alas! we measure God's truth by our own failures, and because the world tolerates a worldly Christianity, conclude that Christ and the world are reconciled! They are not; and if there is a truce between the world and His followers, it proves no change of the world toward Him, but the lukewarmness of those who profess His name. Scripture, instead of teaching that the spread of Christian profession would soften the distinction between true believers and the world, makes it one of the heaviest charges against the professing Church, that it has committed fornication with the kings of the earth. The

commerce between the Church and the world is infidelity to Christ. The enmity between them shows, not the conversion of the world to Christianity, but the conformity of Christians to the world.

Indeed, when we look at the descriptions uniformly given of the world in the New Testament, it is amazing that there can be any doubt upon the subject. What is the world as there portrayed? It is presented under two different, but kindred, aspects, as the place which has rejected Christ, and as an organized system of things with Satan at its head.

Everybody admits that Christ was rejected, but that the guilt of His rejection still clings to, and characterizes, the world, is a truth almost entirely overlooked. We are so accustomed to regard Christ's death from the side of God's grace that we forget to regard it from the side of His government. The cross stands before our minds simply as the means by which sin was put away, and the rejection of Christ by the sinner is deemed nothing more than his own individual rejection of salvation. But Jesus is set forth in Scripture both as the Author of salvation, and as God's anointed Ruler, and in each of these characters His rejection involves much more than the loss of personal blessing. It has a positive as well as a negative, a collective as well as an individual, aspect. It proclaims the *world* guilty before God and under His righteous judgment. *"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil"* (John 3:19).

Such is our Lord's own statement as to the condemnation into which the world is brought by its rejection of Him. Afterwards He declares, in immediate reference to His death — *"Now is the judgment of this world"* (John 12:31). The same death which brings salvation to the believer brings judgment not only upon the individuals, but upon the world. So, also, Jesus says of the Comforter, *"When He is come He will reprove [or convict] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more"* (John 16:8-10).

This is not, as often understood, the work of the Spirit in converting the sinner, but the testimony borne by the presence of the Spirit against the world, demonstrating on the one hand its sin in rejecting Christ, and on the other God's righteousness in setting Him at His own right hand, where He is seen no more to the eye of flesh.

It is not only, however, for having rejected Jesus as a Saviour that the world is under condemnation. God sent His Son into this world as the Anointed One, the rightful Ruler, and the world has cast him out. Can this be a matter of indifference to God? On the contrary, it is a matter of deepest moment. What God sees in the world, and what He expects the believer to see, is a place guilty of having rejected His Son as its rightful Lord.

On the day of Pentecost Peter preached Jesus as the Son of David, concerning whom "God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne." This Anointed of God the Jews had "taken and by wicked hands had crucified and slain." "Therefore," concludes the apostle, "let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" **(Acts 2:22-36)**.

Here the guilt urged home upon the Jews as a people was not that of refusing a Saviour, to their own individual loss, but of rejecting God's Anointed, to their own national condemnation. This guilt, however, is not confined to the Jews. In a subsequent chapter the Holy Ghost applies the language of the Second Psalm, where the powers of the earth are seen "gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ" to the conduct of both Jew and Gentile in condemning Jesus; "for of a truth against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together" **(Acts 4:26, 27)**.

In both these passages the charge is, not of rejecting a Saviour, the light that came into the world, but of rejecting God's Anointed. Can this, however, be alleged against the world now? Assuredly it can, for although, in our days, Christ's title is owned in name by millions of so-called Christians it is recognized in fact by none but real believers. His lordship is practically denied by the world as much as ever; in other words, the world is just as guilty of rejecting the Christ now as on the day when Jew and Gentile combined for His crucifixion.

What, then, is the Christian's position? He owns the lordship of One whom God has anointed as the world's rightful ruler, but whom the world has cast out with every mark of hatred and contempt. Can he, then, go on hand in hand with the world in ruling that inheritance which belongs to his Lord, but from which his Lord is excluded? "Can two walk together unless they be agreed?" Can there be consent as to the world's government between those who admit Christ's rights and those who deny them?

Let us look at the matter in the light of a parable, which defines with beautiful precision the present relationship between Christ and the believer on the one hand, and Christ and the world on the other. Jesus is the nobleman who has gone "into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return." He has entrusted His interests down here to his servants, and said unto them, "Occupy till I come." But His rightful subjects, the world, have "hated Him, and sent a message after Him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us" **(Luke 19:12-14)**. What is the condition of these citizens? They are in rebellion, and they are reserved for judgment. What is the duty of the servants? To occupy till their lord's return, but surely not to join their forces with the citizens in the government of the city, not to accept office and power in the place which has rejected the one whose rights they are left here to maintain and assert.

But there is another aspect in which Scripture presents the world. Besides being the place which has rejected its rightful Ruler, it is set before us in the Word of God as an organized system of things, with Satan at its head. When the devil took Jesus into a high mountain, and *"showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time,"* his offer was — *"All this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it"* (Luke 4:6).

Of course the Son of God does not acknowledge his right to this dominion, but at the same time He does not deny the fact. On the contrary, He more than once acknowledges it. Thus, when speaking of His death, He says — *"Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out"* (John 12:31). Here He is looking to the results of His death, which are regarded as immediately following, though in reality they have not yet been accomplished. Who, then, is *"the prince of this world"*? It cannot be Himself, for He says soon afterwards — *"The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me"* (John 14:30). He also speaks of the Holy Ghost as convicting the world *"of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged"* (John 16:11). The prince of this world, then, here spoken of is not Christ but one who has nothing in Christ, one who is judged and cast out by Him. It can be none other than Satan, who had before made this claim without contradiction in Christ's presence.

Nor did the work of the cross immediately dispossess Satan of this usurped dominion, any more than it immediately brought judgment on the world or drew all men to Christ. After His death, Satan's power is still recognized. Thus we are told, by the Apostle Paul, that *"the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not"* (2 Cor. 4:4).

Writing to the Ephesians, he says — *"In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience"* (Eph. 2:2). Later in the epistle he writes — *"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places"* (Eph. 6:12).

What is the darkness of this world? Christ is the light, and that which rejects Christ is blinded by *"the god of this world,"* and is in darkness. The world, then, as distinguished from believers, who *"are not of this world,"* has a ruler, and that ruler is Satan. In writing to the Col. (1:13), the apostle says that God *"hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."* Who *"the power of darkness"* is, we see from the text last quoted. It is from his dominion that grace has delivered us, and the world, those who are not delivered, are still under him. John, too, in like manner, declares that *"we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one"* (1 John 5:19).

This is very solemn, for it shows not only that Satan has great power of evil in the world, but that the world is looked at in Scripture as an organized system of which Satan is the head, the prince, and the god.

We need scarcely say that this power is not absolute, that it does not prevent God working in His providence, or carrying out His great governmental purposes. To what extent Satan's power reaches, it would, perhaps, be very difficult to say, and it is no part of our object to discuss. Two facts are, however, to be noted — **first**, that his power is at present restrained by the presence of the Holy Ghost down here, "*for He who now letteth will let until He be taken out of the way*" (**2 Thess. 2:7**) — **next**, that when this curb is removed, his boldness in wickedness and his dominion over the world will for a time be unchecked, and he will dispose of the dominion of the world, giving to the beast "*his power, and his seat, and great authority*" (**Rev. 13:2**). This will last but a short time, and will end in his own discomfiture and captivity. But until that time, however Satan's dominion may be restrained, Scripture owns him as being, in fact, the god and the prince of this world, the real instigating power in the hearts of men, the one in obedience to whose direction man's schemes are organized and his affairs governed. True, this is only by sufferance — but whose sufferance? The sufferance of God! And is it not a deeply solemn and significant fact that God should be withholding the kingdom of the world from His Son, and allowing it to be usurped by Satan? Is it not enough to warn every believer from taking part in the world's affairs, or seeking the world's approval and support? What is God opposing to the power of Satan? Simply the presence of His Spirit as the witness for Christ! Do Christians think that they know better? Do they suppose that by taking a different course, by setting the world to improve the world, by appealing to its suffrages to set things straight, they can really alter its character or deliver it from Satan's dominion under which God has left it? Is it wiser — is it more reverent — to attempt that which God is not concerned in, that which His Word tells can only end in fearful failure; or to walk in fellowship with Him, holding aloof from the world and its affairs, and in the power of the Spirit, setting forth the Christ in whom alone deliverance from the world and its judgment is to be found — gathering a people out of the world to the One whom God has set at His own right hand in glory, and by whom in His time the sceptre of the world will be righteously wielded, and the blessing of the world surely accomplished?

But did not Jesus, it may be asked, go about doing good? And may not the possession of political power and interference in the world's concerns, be the means of doing great good? This, however, is man's reasoning, and the place of a believer is not to reason, but to obey. Looked at broadly, in the light of God's truth, a Christian cannot do good by political action, for the end to which everything is working is plainly taught in the Word, and that end is not good, but awfully bad. Leaving, however, the domain of argument, and falling back on Scripture, what does the Word teach us? Undoubtedly it tells us that Jesus went about doing good, and it tells us, too, that believers are placed here for the same object for which He was here — "*As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world*" (**John 17:18**). How, then, did Jesus do good? Was it by the exercise of political power? Was it by worldly combinations and societies? Was it by seeking popular support? Himself the only One who had a right to rule, or whose rule

could bring blessing, He absolutely declined to receive power. Offered by the devil, He at once detected and denounced the deceiver. Asked to take the place of an arbiter, he replied, "*Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?*" (Luke 12:14).

Perceiving that the people "*would come, and take Him by force to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone*" (John 6:15). In private none ever laboured as He to do good! But the time for public and governmental blessing to the earth had not yet come. The sceptre was not yet put into His hands by the only One who had a right to bestow it, and He would receive it from no other. If the sceptre was not given by His Father, it must be taken either from the "*god of this world,*" or from man, and from neither of these would He accept it. In what respect are things altered? Has God yet changed His mode of dealing with the world? Can the Christian receive power from hands from which Christ refused it? Or will God give it to the fellow-heirs, while He is yet withholding it from the One whom He has made heir of all things?

But are not the powers that be ordained of God? Unquestionably they are. Civil government is a direct trust from God, and the ruler is responsible to God for the way in which He exercises it. The maintenance of peace and order is according to God's institution, and therefore Christians are commanded not only to render obedience, but to yield suitable homage, and to remember those charged with authority in their prayers. But though instituted by God, it is left to man, to the world, and a world which lies in the wicked one, to administer. The time when it can be administered according to God's plans, the time when it will be used to work out God's purposes of blessing to the earth, has not yet arrived, and will not arrive until the throne of Christ is established in Zion. The use which man is making of this institution is to bring about the fearful state of things preceding the judgments executed by Christ, and surely no Christian would wish to have any hand in forwarding this gloomy catastrophe.

It is most significant, then, that while the New Testament Scriptures give ample directions for the behaviour of the husband to the wife and the wife to the husband, of the children to the parent and the parent to the children, of the servant to the master and the master to the servant, and while they also lay down the conduct proper from a subject to the powers that be, they give no directions whatever as to the way of executing political trust. A Christian under authority has ample directions how to act. A Christian wielding political power has no directions at all. Why this omission?

True, Christians at the time when the New Testament was written, were not in a state to exercise political power; but if God had meant them to be placed in this position of responsibility, would He have withheld instructions as to the way in which they were to fill it? Was He so short-sighted that He omitted to provide for a state of things which would receive His sanction; or did He expressly withhold all directions, because the position was one to which his sanction could not be given? The character of believers as "*not of the world,*" as associated with Christ in His "*patience,*" as fellow-heirs with Him

whom God has not yet put in possession of the inheritance, fully explains the omission — and nothing else can. Strange, indeed, if He had authorized and instructed the fellow heirs of Christ to take part in bringing about that state of things which they will shortly be associated with Christ in judging and overturning!

And this is all the more striking from the contrast which it presents with the Old Testament teaching. There God speaks to a people, who, instead of being outside the world, are expressly promised the most favoured position, and the most abundant blessing in the world. For their guidance the fullest political and legal directions are provided. What treatment to give to captured cities, what exemptions to make from military service, what number of witnesses to require in criminal trials, what courts to establish for disputed, questions, what punishments to inflict for particular offences, these and other kindred matters are laid down with a precision suited to the worldly character of the subject with which they deal. As might be expected, where the righteous regulation of society was the object, strict assertion of right is the pervading principle; "*an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,*" fairly summarizes its spirit. Indeed, such must be the spirit of any code for the equitable government of man on the earth.

But is this the code laid down for the Christian to follow? No, the Christian is "*not of the world,*" and the directions given him are suited to his heavenly character and his association with the "*patience*" of Christ. He is a follower of Him who "*was brought as a lamb to the slaughter,*" "*who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.*"

How, then, is the believer to act? In just the same way! "*If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God; for even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps*" (1 Pet. 2:20-23). Such, too, are our Lord's own directions. Instead of demanding "*an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,*" as the Israelite was to do, His instructions are — "*Resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain*" (Matt. 5:39-41).

And this, though strongly put, is no figure of speech. Paul exclaims, as though the idea was shocking to entertain — "*Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?*" It is incredible that brother goeth to law with brother and that before the unbelievers. Now, therefore, there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" (1 Cor. 6:1-7). Imagine such language addressed to a Jew! It is absolutely subversive of the whole principle on which the institutions of his state were founded — absolutely ruinous to any scheme of righteous government on earth. Why, then, is it urged, as an almost self-evident principle, on the believer? Because the believer is not of the world! He belongs to Christ. True, he will judge the

world, and judge angels, but this will be with Christ; and if Christ waits for this time, so must he. He is not even to assert his rights now, but is called to suffer wrong as Christ did; not to render *"evil for evil, or railing for railing, but, contrariwise, blessing"* — not to avenge himself, *"but rather give place unto wrath"* **(1 Peter 3:9; Rom. 12:19)**.

Is it not a sad departure from the lofty position and heavenly association into which the believer is called, for him to step down to regulate the affairs of a world where Christ has no place, and where Satan reigns as prince and god? *"Our politics;"* says the apostle — for that is the true meaning of the word — *"are in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ"* **(Phil. 3: 20)**.

On the night of their deliverance from Egypt, the Israelites while still under grace were told to keep the Passover beneath the shelter of the blood-sprinkled lintel. *"And thus shall ye eat it: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand"* **(Ex. 12:11)**.

Could a people thus waiting for the call to depart give their time and attention to the affairs of Egypt? Had they not heard that judgment was coming? Did, they not believe what the Lord had said — *"For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord"*? **(ver. 12)**. Is our position less solemn, less momentous? Are the commands to us less stringent? Is the judgment hanging over the world less real, less awful, or less certain? The commands are identical. To the faithful servants He says *"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord"* **(Luke 12:35, 36)**.

The threatened judgment, on the unfaithful and on the world is identical too — *"If, therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee"* **(Rev. 3: 3)**.

If it would have been unnatural for an Israelite to busy himself on that fatal night with the concerns of the land over which the arm of the destroyer was already upraised, is it less a departure from our true place, is it less inconsistent with our heavenly calling, for us to be occupying ourselves about the affairs of a world in which we are but strangers and sojourners, — a world from which we may at any moment be summoned to depart — a world over which the black clouds of impending judgment are already hanging?

No wonder that the apostle should begin his practical exhortation to the Romans — *"Be not conformed to this world"* **(Rom. 12:2)**. The word, indeed, is age, but "this age," as we have seen, means the world during the present order of things, in contrast with "the age to come," the period of Christ's blessed reign. While, therefore, it is important to distinguish between "the end of this age;" and "the end of the world" — two very different epochs — it is not necessary to distinguish between the world and "the age," when used to describe the state of things in which we now live. Thus employed, the

word *kosmos*, generally found in John, is practically synonymous with the word *aiôn* generally found in the writings of Paul.

Why, then, is the Christian not to be conformed to the world? For two reasons; **first**, because it is an evil world from which Jesus died that He might set us free — *"who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father"* (Gal. 1:4); and next, because, being associated with Jesus in death and resurrection, our relationships with this world are broken, and the ground of our glorying now is *"the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world"* (Gal. 6:14). What was it that distinguished the past life of the Ephesian believers from their present life? *"In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience"* (Eph. 2:4). Surely there is something most solemn and instructive in the way in which conformity to the world is here set side by side with conformity to the will of Satan. Yet not more solemn, or full of deeper significance, than the description of those *"whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame — who mind earthly things"* (Phil. 3:19). The believer is *"risen with Christ,"* and to him, therefore, the exhortation is addressed — *"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth"* (Col. 3:2).

Such, then, is the character of the world as gathered from the writings of Paul. It is a thing to which we are not to be conformed; a thing from which Christ died to deliver us; a thing to which we are crucified, and which is crucified to us; a thing in the ways of which the godless walk; a thing by the minding of which those are characterized *"whose end is destruction;"* a thing from which our affections are to be transferred that they may be set on things above.

In the apostle to whom it was given in special manner to develop the truth of the Church, this teaching is peculiarly striking, but it is not by Paul alone that the world is held out as unsuited for the Christian. *"Ye adulterers and adulteresses,"* asks James, addressing himself to those who were holding commerce with the world, *"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).

And yet, what are Christians doing, on all hands, but bidding for popularity, courting the applause of the multitude, seeking to be the friends of the world where their Master received nothing but a cross? *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world,"* writes the beloved disciple. *"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"* (1 John 2:15, 16).

Alas! what a commentary on this Divine lesson to behold Christians rushing with all the eagerness of partisans into the strife of worldly factions, grasping at the riches and the

pleasures, the splendors and the emoluments, the powers and the applause, of a sin-stricken, Satan-governed, death doomed world, from whose defilement they are told to keep themselves unspotted, and from whose friendship they are bidden to hold themselves aloof!

And why is this? Simply because Christians have lost the sense of the heavenly nature of their calling!

Believing that God is going to improve the world, they suppose themselves set here to improve it, instead of to come out of it. They think they can make it better by mingling with it, instead of seeing that the only blessing they can confer upon it is to separate from it, and warn it of the wrath to come. They yoke themselves unequally with unbelievers to drag along the car of "modern progress," the Juggernaut of our day, forgetting that the world which is harnessed with them is lying in the wicked one, and never asking "*what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, what communion hath light with darkness, what concord hath Christ with Belial?*" **(2 Cor. 6:14, 15)**.

Alas! if they only knew that this modern progress was leading to all the horrors and judgments which are even now ready to burst like a tempest upon the world. They quote such texts as our Lord's entreaty — "*I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil*" **(John 17:15)** — as though this meant that they might go hand in hand with the world, provided they avoided certain gross wickedness; as though the very next verse did not expressly declare that "*they are not of the world;*" as though the whole teaching of the New Testament did not show the world to be evil and at enmity with Christ; and as though it were not obvious that a people who did not belong to the world, but were left in it, would be most effectually preserved from its evil by avoiding its associations, separating from its pursuits, and refusing its friendships.

Let us take the text with its neighbouring verses, and see how the whole passage reads. "*And now,*" says our Lord, "*come I to Thee, and these things I speak in the world that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves. 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. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world*" **(John 17:13-18)**.

Our relationship with the world, then, is the same as Christ's is now. We are as much separated from it in character as He is. We are, indeed, left in it, just as He was in it. But as He did not seek by human efforts, by political organizations, by philanthropic societies, by any fleshly or worldly means, to make it better, so that is not our object. He came to testify of the Father, to manifest the Father; and as He witnessed for the One who sent Him, so we are to witness for the One who has sent us. He has pronounced

the flesh to be hopelessly bad, and never sets the flesh to cure the flesh. The attempt to do so only shows ignorance of God's truth and God's manner of working, only proves that we have not yet learnt what man is, and that in us, that is in our flesh, there dwells no good thing.

True, we may make the world more comfortable; we may have our Jubals to "*handle the harp and organ,*" our Tubal-Cains, "*instructors of every artificer in brass and iron;*" we may eat and drink, buy and sell, plant and build; but what is the end of it all? Sudden destruction! Is this the sort of thing to occupy the heart of a Christian who is bidden to wait for the coming of his Lord?

Is there not something unspeakably melancholy in the stories one has read of condemned criminals dressing themselves out in the full height of the fashion to go forth to the scaffold? And is there not something incomparably more ghastly and appalling in the spectacle of a world tricking itself out in all the finery of modern ideas, the intellectualities, the refinements, the elevating pursuits and objects by which it seeks to make to itself a name, and build a tower whose top shall reach to heaven, when all the while the lightnings of God's judgment are ready to descend, and leave it a blackened mass of ruin and desolation?

And why have we gone thus at length into the teaching of Scripture upon this point? Simply to show that the Church is, not figuratively, but literally, a thing separate from and outside the world. The directions given to individual Christians correspond in every respect with the inferences we should have drawn from the character of the Church as traced in previous chapters, and bring out in clearer colours the heavenly character of our present calling. That this heavenly character should be exhibited *in* the world, and *to* the world, is what God requires at our hands; it is what is involved in walking worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.

But if these are shown forth according to Christ's example, what will be the result? Because these virtues "*are not of the world,*" the world will hate us. There is the widest possible difference between exhibiting the patience, gentleness, love, mercy, and self-sacrifice of Christ, and striving, however laboriously, to improve, elevate, and benefit mankind. The one excites the world's hatred; the other wins its applause. The one brings real blessing to man by setting Christ before him; the other puffs him up with the idea of self-improvement, and blinds his eyes to his true condition in God's sight. The one glorifies God by making Him the sole object before the heart; the other runs in opposition to His thoughts, making man's blessing the object, at a time when Christ, the only source of blessing, has separated Himself from the world, and is calling out a people to share his separation. The one looks the judgment fairly in the face, and points man to the only refuge in which he can be sheltered from the storm; the other shuts its eyes to the signs of the time, stops its ears to the mutterings of the approaching

tempest and bids man go on with his own schemes, his own improvements, his own inventions, as though the coming wrath were nothing but an idle tale.

We are but strangers here;
Heaven is our home !
Earth in a desert drear;
Heaven is our home !
Dangers and sorrows stand
Round us on every hand;
Heaven is our fatherland,
Heaven is our home !

Little Flock Hymns

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Therefore we'll murmur not,
Heaven is our home !
Whate'er our earthly lot;
Heaven is our home !
We shall yet surely stand,
There at our Lord's right hand;
Heaven is our fatherland,
Heaven is our home !

We go to meet the Saviour,
His glorious face to see;
What manner of behaviour
Doth with this hope agree ?
May God's illumination
Guide heart and walk aright;
That so our preparation
Be pleasing in His sight.

Little Flock Hymns

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Not sinful man's endeavour,
Nor any mortal's care,
Could draw Thy sovereign favour
To sinners in despair;
Uncalled, Thou cam'st with gladness,
Us from the fall to raise,
And change our grief and sadness
To songs of joy and praise.

