

cloud it provided the Conqueror with a chariot; its waves and winds in their wildest uproar were obedient to his command; at his bidding its water reddened into wine, his graves opened to give up their dead, its bread multiplied to feed his train; and as if the blow that struck him had fallen heavy on its head, it trembled with horror as it received his blood. It never gave its iron to be nails for his blessed hands; nor grew its thorns to pierce his brow. With high heaven, the earth was a mourner at Christ's death; and as if it were never to recover the shock of that day, when they hung its King and Creator on a tree, an old legend says, that the reason why the aspen leaf is ever trembling on its stalk is because the cross was made of an aspen tree.

It is not the world, but the men of it, that are corrupt and corrupting. It is from these that religion calls us to keep ourselves unspotted. Uncontaminated and unstained by their vices, we are to recoil from them, saying, My soul, come not thou into their secret; with them, mine honour, be not thou united. In Scripture, the world often stands for the ungodly; and the application of that term to them proves, alas! that the ungodly form the great mass of mankind. God's enemies are the majority; His people the minority; and in some places a very small minority. Hence they are called a *peculiar* people—a description appropriate, were the mass of society holy and leavened with divine principles: for in that case it would be the bad, not the good who were peculiar—distinguished from the multitude, like the man at the marriage feast who wore no wedding garment. An important, this is a serious and alarming consideration. It makes it all the more difficult to keep ourselves unspotted by prevailing ungodliness; just as it is more difficult to make way in the streets against a rush and press, and crowd of people, than against a few individuals advancing in a direction opposite to our own. Here number is power! mass is power! as in the ball that goes crashing through walls of oak, or grinds granite stones to powder, and owes as much to its mass as to its velocity.

Alarmed at this, and deeming it impossible, if exposed to it, to stem the flood of evil, and maintain a successful resistance

against such odds and power of numbers, some have fled from the world. There are good Christians now-a-days who shut themselves up as they would in a town where the plague was raging; retreating before danger, they keep aloof from society—mingling little, or not at all with the world. Under the same fears, though allowing themselves to be carried to greater lengths, men in old times withdrew to the solitude of deserts, rocks, and forests; and became hermits. Content with a bed of dry leaves for their couch, a bare cave for their home, wild fruits for their food, the crystal spring for their simple drink, they renounced the society of man for that of the more innocent beasts, that they might escape the contaminations of an evil world. It were unjust not to admire the self-denying, brave devotion of these old anchorites; yet they mistook the path of duty. While all, and especially young Christians—the raw recruits as they may be called—should carefully avoid the dangers of temptation, still, I ask, If the heaven is withdrawn from the lump, how is the meal to be leavened? If the candle is removed, how is the house to be lighted? If Christ's men and women are to retire from the world,—pity the world! how is it ever to be converted? It is well to retire at times; by prayer, and meditation, and communion with God, to get our wounds healed and our strength renewed for the warfare and the work. But though our Lord, for example, did occasionally withdraw himself to lone shores, and desert places, and mountain-tops, His common walks of life was among the haunts of men. Now He is at a merry marriage feast, and now in the silent house of mourning—here he dines with a pharisee, there he accepts the hospitalities of a publican—his foot-prints are on the sands of busy shores and the dusty streets of Bethsaida, Capernaum, and Jerusalem. He went about continually doing good.

Followers of Jesus! seek others' good as well as your own. We are to leaven the world, not to leave it; not to run away, but to stay. "The field is the world," said our Lord; our ploughshare is to gleam in its furrows, and with flashing sickles we are to go in and reap it. Though he sent them out as sheep among wolves, to be hunted, and torn, and murdered, Jesus said to his disciples, as to us also, Go ye