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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A DISCOURSE ON THE EVILS OF DANCING

A DISCOURSE
ON
THE EVILS OF DANCING

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DELIVERED MARCH 8, 1846

BEFORE THE CONGREGATION
OF
THE GERMAN REFORMED SALEM CHURCH
OF
HARRISBURG, PA.

By the Pastor, the Rev. John F. Mesick

PUBLISHED BY THE VESTRY

HARRISBURG

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1846

REV. JOHN F. MESICK—*Dear Sir:* On last Sabbath evening, 8th inst., you preached a sermon to our congregation on "*The Evils of Dancing.*" As this is a custom which is in much practise even by those who consider themselves patterns in society, and, who generally comprise the youth, and say that it is an innocent amusement. We would esteem it as a favor if you would furnish us with a copy thereof for publication that it may be circulated in our Sabbath Schools, among the votaries of dancing, the parents and friends of those who have been assenting to it, in the hope that they may read it and learn its evil consequences, and abstain from its practice hereafter, and be satisfied that its use is not in character with the present age, whatever may have seemingly commended it in former days.

**JOHN C. BUCHER, LUTHER REILEY,
GEO. P. GEORGE BEATTY,
WIESTLING, RUDOLPH F.
GEORGE ZINN, KELKER,
DANIEL W. GROSS, SAMUEL B. KEYSER,
ELIAS ZOLLINGER, VALENTINE EGLE,
JACOB SHELL, GEORGE L. KUNKEL.**

HARRISBURG, March 11, 1846.

To the Vestry of the German Reformed Salem Church:

DEAR BRETHREN: Although the Discourse preached on Sabbath evening last, was prepared during the preceding week as a regular duty, without a thought in reference to a request of this kind; yet as you have been pleased to express a wish to see it in print, in the hope of extending its usefulness, the manuscript is at your service.

With sincere esteem and affection, yours, &c.,
JOHN F. MESICK.

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THE EVILS OF DANCING.

ROMANS, XII. 3.—"BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD."

The Bible is the only rule for all who wish to be saved. The professed Christian, not only, but every unconverted man, must bow to its precepts, if he would gain the favor of God. There is but one way, and but one gate of entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, for saint and for sinner. Whatever, therefore, shall be acknowledged to be the duty of the covenanted follower of the Lamb, is equally the duty of every individual who stands disconnected with the visible Church.

It is a doctrine of revelation that, both classes of persons will be judged by the same law, and will be tried with equal impartiality and rigor. We are taught that, what Divine justice shall demand from the one, it will demand from the other; and that there is no respect of persons with God. The human race, as dependent and accountable agents, are placed on the same moral level in his sight. Each commandment of his word is addressed to every hearer of the Gospel. And all are under obligation to obey its injunctions, as they value the eternal welfare of their immortal spirits.

It is on this incontrovertible principle that I shall proceed to speak from the text: "Be not conformed to this world,"—assuming it as an undeniable truth that, what God requires of his children, he also exacts from the people of the world; and that whatever is inconsistent with the reputation or character of a good church member, is no less inconsistent with the eternal salvation of those persons who have not made a public profession of religion.

We take our ground boldly on this portion of scripture, and assert that the fashionable amusement of Dancing, is contrary to the *spirit* and *aim* of the Gospel, and, therefore, is opposed to the revealed will of God. Your attention is invited to two points:

FIRST—To the necessity of non-conformity to the world; and

SECONDLY—To the facts proving that Dancing is an act of conformity to the world.

I. We begin with *the necessity of non-conformity to the world*.

The Scripture sense of the term, *world*, is that collection of idolaters, unbelievers, and wicked men who constitute the great bulk of the inhabitants of our globe; in short all persons who do not belong to the Kingdom of God. [4]

This definition corresponds with the declarations of Christ: "My kingdom is not of this world;" "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world;" "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."

The sentiment of the text is not the voice of a solitary passage, but is amply sustained by other portions of the word of God. There are many similar precepts addressed to believers: "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest; because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction;" "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." "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." "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, follow him."

These commandments of our Heavenly Father, are not *hard sayings* to the soul that has been delivered from this present evil world through faith in Jesus; for it has acquired through the work of the Spirit, a holy resignation to every intimation of the Divine will, and supreme delight in God as infinitely lovely, which causes every other source of pleasure or of happiness to become tasteless and insipid. To carnal minds, we admit, that they will sound like tyrannical edicts, because they seem to them to take away their natural liberty; shutting them up from the pursuit of that kind of enjoyment for which they pant, which they know not where to find, and in search of which they wander "through earth, its gay pleasures to trace."

But to souls renewed by Divine Grace, the yoke of Christ is easy and his burden light. True Christians, the heirs of glory, are separated from the world, not only by profession, not only by external badges, but what is of higher moment, by their character and spirit. They are essentially a peculiar people; singular in their opinions and practices, and created unto good works. They are distinguished by a conversation in Heaven. They move through society as pilgrims and strangers on the earth. They keep themselves unspotted from the world, as temples of the Holy Ghost. They seek in Heaven an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, as heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. And they reflect the love and holiness of Jesus, as those who bear the Saviour's image.

A wide and unalterable distinction exists, therefore, between the servants of God and the people of the world, a distinction as perceptible as that which divides the night from the day, and the darkness from the light. "The one are born from above, the other from beneath. The one are quickened by Divine grace; the other are dead in trespasses and sins. The one are governed by the Spirit of God, and the other are under the dominion of Satan. The one consult the glory of God, and cheerfully resign all for Christ; the other make self the centre around which they move." [5]

Such irreconcilable discordance in the primary elements of their character forbids the thought of their amalgamation. We might as reasonably expect that oil and water would commingle and become one fluid, as that true Christians should blend their hopes and interests with those of the world. The natural and ardent opposition, growing out of their respective principles and aims, renders a separation between them inevitable, absolutely necessary, necessary at least for the safety, comfort, consistency, and usefulness of believers.

There is no need of further exposition, to show that the injunction of the text is deep-laid in the very constitution of things—and is the natural result of the incompatible differences between submission to the will of God and rebellion against his moral government. The followers of Christ can never consent to a compromise involving these principles, unless they are willing to sacrifice his cause. Allegiance to Heaven demands that true Christians should never shrink in the hour of trial from the ignominy or suffering of the cross. If they would be holy, they must possess the courage to dare to be singular, and to meet the world's derisive laugh on account of the tenderness of their consciences, or their inexperience in the vanities and customs of fashionable life. They should receive as an honor its scorn and ridicule, when heaped upon them because they continue faithful to Christ; because they implicitly follow the directions of his humbling doctrines before men; and because they steadily maintain the line of separation between the church and the world.

No man deserves the name of Christian, no man can indulge a good hope of salvation, unless his faith in Christ is productive of non-conformity to the world; a stand which is indispensable to his separation from a perishing race and his incorporation into the Kingdom of Heaven.

II. In the second place we proceed *to adduce the facts proving that Dancing is an act of conformity to the world*.

1. Even if could be shown that it is a *healthful amusement*, the position assumed by the text, would exclude it from the recreations of those who love and obey God, imposing on them the obligation to refrain from it, and to resort to other means of exercise, to which no valid objection could be made.

No apology, we are sure, can be offered for Dancing, as usually conducted, *more weak* than the common one, that it promotes the health of the body. Some thing doubtless might be accomplished by it for the attainment of this object, if it were practised in the day-time and in the open air. But usually, in obedience to the arbitrary decree of fashion, *the most unseasonable*

Many an untimely death has been the dreadful penalty incurred by exposure on such occasions; and the fearful blow has generally fallen among the ranks of lovely woman. Follow the fragile, venturesome forms of our delicate, modernly dressed ladies to the ball room. They pass from their habitations, arrayed in a garb whose style and materials would render it a fit garment to be worn only at mid-summer; covered with a light wrapper, lest the decorations of the toilet should be deranged, and protected from the snow or frozen pavement only by thin soled shoes. They spend several hours together under the excitement of lively strains of music, and of the glittering array of beauty and fashion, in a chamber brilliant with a multitude of dazzling lights, and crowded with guests to the destruction of the vital properties of the atmosphere; and in physical exertions to which they have been unaccustomed, and which open all the pores of the skin. The system is also deranged by loading the stomach with indigestible food, and by encroaching on the ordinary and necessary hours of repose. Then with heated and wearied frames, in that state peculiarly exposed to the injurious action of the cold, they suddenly exchange the warm temperature of the assembly chamber for the chilliness of the damp night air—the tropic of the ball room for the Siberia of the street. Alas! what a perilous price to pay for the admiration of the fashionable throng, or for the fleeting gratification of the hour. In that wintry blast consumption smites his smiling victims, and fills up the weekly calendar of his fearful ravages. In our large cities, where this insane contempt of health and life is sanctioned by the uniform practice of the God-forgetting multitude, this fell destroyer snatches his prey from the ranks of fashion by scores, and scourges them more fatally than the pestilence.

And yet individuals can be found in the midst of our community, so devoid of wisdom and foresight as to advocate the introduction of this pernicious amusement into our social circles. We trust that if they cannot be reached by any higher motives, that a regard for the health and lives which will be sacrificed to this modern idol, will induce them to pause, and to consider well the way of their steps.

2. The position assumed by the text, would exclude Dancing from the list of Christian diversions, even if it could be shown *that it is innocent in itself*.

This, however, is a point which the worldling labors in vain to prove by the most skilful use of religious sophistry.

Persons on whose judgment we rely with great confidence in matters of this sort, have abandoned the idea which they, in common with others, once entertained, that Dancing, if properly regulated, might be harmless. It is their settled opinion, founded on considerable personal experience and on observation, "that the nature of the amusement itself, even in its least exceptionable forms and in limited exercise, is such—that it has a tendency to inflame passion, to poison virtue, to endanger purity, and to lead on to gross and deadly evils."

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Modern dancing, as generally practised, is a gay and guilty pleasure. It receives no warrant from the Bible. The only kind of Dances recorded in the Sacred Scriptures, are religious Dances, forming part of the worship of God: "with the exception of that of the vain fellows devoid of shame, of the irreligious families described by Job, and of Herodias"—which are no more an example for us because they are recorded in the sacred narrative, than the treachery of Judas Iscariot, in betraying his master with a kiss.

But then we must remember the fact that the Religious Dance was practised only on joyful occasions; that it was performed in the day time, in the open air, and only by one of the sexes at a time. There is not a historical notice in the word of God, of *promiscuous dancing* either as an act of worship or amusement.

And those persons were reckoned among the vilest of mankind who perverted Dancing from a sacred use to mere purposes of amusement.

At the present time, as we cast our eyes over the map of the world, we discover that dancing is still practised as an important part of religious worship by the inhabitants of all heathen countries; by the Indians of our own Western forests; by the superstitious natives of Africa, and by the effeminate and luxurious Asiatics. But as employed among the ceremonies of idolatry in Southern Asia, it has been changed from the slow measured movements, practised by the ancient Greeks and Romans, to a style, which one Missionary remarks, "would not be tolerated on the boards of the lowest theatre in Europe, or in America." Dancing girls, arrayed in the most costly ornaments of dress, and quite equal in skill to some of the modern exhibitors of that art in the theatres of civilized lands, are invariably connected with heathen temples in the East Indies, as their constant attendants.

Let us turn our attention from these regions of idolatry, and inquire among what nations of Christendom this amusement is most popular, that we may trace it throughout its various existing associations. At the head of what are usually denominated civilized countries, we must place France, Italy and Spain, where on the Sabbath it is deemed entirely consistent with the claims of Christianity to go to the house of God in the morning, and to a bull-fight and a dance in the public gardens in the afternoon. And it might be an instructive commentary as to the evil effects of this amusement on the morals of those nations, to go more into particulars, were it not that the facts concerning the virtue, purity and chastity of the fashionable circles of France and Italy, disclosed by travellers, are too appalling to be repeated.

In England the chief patrons of the dance are their card-playing, theatre-going, and horse-racing aristocracy; who are indebted to their purse and to their title for their standing in society; who are too indolent generally to cultivate their minds; and who are seldom capable of gaining distinction, except by extravagance and debauchery. In these *higher* circles no man is deemed respectable who cannot "trip it on the light fantastic toe." And that person is scouted as a

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mawkish prude or a hypocritical fanatic, who scruples to go the whole round of these *elegant* amusements. Says a writer of this class: "He must be a desperate gnat-strainer who gives and goes to dances and yet objects to cards. The strictest Pharisee in the land, indeed, *could find no argument against it.*" This is a modest assumption which we have no time to notice. In commenting on this quotation, it is sufficient for our present purpose to remark that the opinions and practices of the fashionable world, compel us to class these recreations in the same category.

Let us now look at the *introduction* of this fashionable amusement into the United States. It comes from the gay saloons of Paris and of London, and it is an imitation of the corrupt and ruinous fashions of the old world. It is the entering wedge of luxury and licentiousness, the fatal antagonists to the purity and simplicity of our republican institutions and manners.

Look again at the *tutors* of this art, to whom fond parents entrust their beloved children, to enable them to acquire this agreeable indulgence, and you will generally find that they are the very refuse of foreign cities; men destitute of either stability or principle; who, on account of their profession, are not esteemed worthy of an introduction into the social circle of the families by whom they are employed. Every judicious person must acknowledge that there is great danger that the tender and susceptible minds of youth will be contaminated by such associates. There is not a family in our land, so high or well governed, but that its children are more or less exposed to temptation and destruction; and we cannot, therefore, with too great jealousy or care guard against the beginnings of evils.

Look, also, at the style and character of those modern dances, which are most admired and most fashionable; and you will perceive at a glance that their movements, attitudes and evolutions are repugnant to a natural sense of propriety, and inconsistent with that unsullied purity of mind which we consider inseparable from the individual to whom we would yield the homage of our hearts. The soul that commands the love of the virtuous, must be spotless as the unfallen snow. Genuine attachment can be based only on esteem. In all honesty, therefore, we must strike that from the list of innocent amusements, which, from its very nature, involves such a perilous trial of moral principles; that contact with it almost inevitably inflicts a loss of mental refinement, if not positive pollution, by opening the doors to a licentious imagination.

There are other evils of great magnitude, which strip off the mask of innocency from this frivolous and sinful amusement. It occasions a loss of precious time, which God has given for nobler objects. It produces dissipation of mind, disqualifying it for the ordinary and serious duties of life. It wastes money, which some cannot well afford to give away, or which might be much better employed in furnishing the means of intellectual improvement, or in works of benevolence. It encourages extravagance in dress; inflating the mind with intolerable vanity and pride, and training up our sons and daughters to become reckless spendthrifts, despising honest industry and commendable economy. It is ordinarily connected with the use of wine and of strong drinks, casting down unwary youth from the path of sobriety, into the depth of poverty and drunkenness. Finally, it indisposes the soul to *religion*, exciting folly, levity, and kindred corruptions of the human heart, and begetting disgust for the worship and service of God.

Miss Beecher, who ranks with the most distinguished ladies of our country, and who owes her reputation to those circumstances only, which should command esteem under our democratic institutions, to her intelligence, refinement, and virtue, speaks of this art in the strongest terms of disapprobation. "In the fifteen years during which she had the care of young ladies, she affirms she has *never known any case* where learning this art, and following the amusement, did not have a *bad effect*, either on the habits, the intellect, the feelings or the health." A testimony so respectable, ought certainly to satisfy every mind, which is governed by truth and reason, as to the evils of Dancing.

3. But a higher consideration, why dancing should be discountenanced, and that indeed which decides the course of duty, is, *that it is an amusement by which the world is distinguished from the kingdom of Jesus Christ.*

It is part and parcel of an *education for the world*. Its object is the acquisition of a graceful carriage, an easy movement, and elegant manners. Its aim is to prepare an individual for introduction into society with advantage. And its design does not extend beyond the success of his worldly prospects.

No one has ever had the hardihood to maintain that fashionable dancing is a medium of Divine blessings to the soul; that it secures the influences of the Holy Spirit; or that it prepares the mind for the hallowed exercises of the closet. No one ever yet adopted the absurd idea that it was a substitute for Faith and Repentance; that it was a means of recommendation to God; or that it was an accomplishment for the employments of Heaven. No one ever yet expected that a revival of religion would commence in a ball room; or that thoughtless sinners would be converted by going to a cotillion. These significant facts plainly show on which side of the dividing line, between the church and the world it is to be placed. They forbid mistake.

Dancing, so far from being a means of Grace, is a part of a counter system of means; devised by the God-forgetting, pleasure-seeking multitude, to exclude their Maker from their minds and from his own world. Their chief desire is to banish all serious thoughts of their sinfulness, guilt and danger; of their obligations and duties to their Creator; and of death, judgment and eternity. To escape reflection they flee to the excitements of the dance and of the revel; where art exhausts its skill and music lavishes its power to divert and engross the attention. Amid scenes of delusive splendor, which, to the youthful imagination, appear as enchanting as the creations of poetic fancy, they contrive for a brief season to lose the pang of remorse, and to snatch a draught of feverish and unsatisfactory joy. True happiness and solid peace are perpetual strangers in the artificial gayeties, and gaudy splendors of fashionable circles; where too often the honied words

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of flattery disguise a hollow heart; and the studied smile, and merry laugh, are assumed to conceal the sting of envy, jealousy and chagrin. The bright illusions by which the young are spell-bound, gradually fade away before the light of experience. And it is no uncommon thing in these resorts of worldly pleasure, to find the utmost gayety of manner in unnatural union with sadness of soul, produced by the discovery of the selfish passions, covertly working beneath the surface in all minds present; or by the sudden and irresistible conviction of its folly as an occupation for an immortal being. Especially on the return of the votaries of pleasure to the solitude of their chamber, have they been overwhelmed with remorse and the keen upbraidings of conscience.

But in all this sadness there is no religion; for it is only the sorrow of the world. It has no higher claim to approbation than the regrets of the wilful and deliberate murderer. It cannot atone for the wrong which it has committed; and it does not terminate in the purpose to renounce the sin in which it originates. Hence if any spiritual good grows out of these melancholy emotions it is by accident.

In vain, therefore, will the advocates of Dancing attempt to escape the dilemma in which they are involved. The practice of this amusement is altogether a worldly matter. Its obvious tendency is to keep dying sinners from thinking of the salvation of their souls; by pre-occupying their time and attention with earthly delights, and by tempting them to cast off fear and to restrain prayer. Its natural result is to incite infatuated youth to ridicule serious Christians and faithful Ministers of the Gospel, as fanatical, gloomy and righteous over much. It confirms them in a spirit of levity and thoughtlessness, emboldening them to mock at sin, to trifle with the most awful truths, and to go down gaily to the gates of eternal death.

No other measure is needed on the part of the God of this world, than to keep the votaries of pleasure engaged in such vain amusements, to insure their destruction in Hell. The more alluring this tempting bait is to their carnal taste, the more certainly will they become a prey to the great enemy of souls. They are condemned already because they believe not; and they need commit no other sin than to neglect the great salvation to perish under the withering curse of the Almighty. There is but a step between them and death. The next hour spent by them in such frivolous enjoyments may be their last. For aught that they know the very ground on which they revel, may cleave beneath their feet, and entomb their immortal spirits in eternal woe. To run the giddy round of the amusements of the fashionable world, under these hazardous circumstances, is as great a madness as to sport with arrows, fire-brands and death.

To each individual, therefore, I must say by Divine authority, in reference to this particular pleasure, see to it, that you "Be not conformed to this world." In opposing this message, you do not quarrel with the speaker, but with God. Your Sovereign commands; and at the judgment seat He will exact obedience at your hands.

To every professing Christian, who has joined in the Dance, I am in duty bound to say, without qualification or reserve, that he has broken his covenant with God; by which he pledged himself to withdraw his affections from the world and to renounce its pomp and vanities forever. That act is a violation of the promise, as obligatory as an oath, because uttered before high Heaven; to be governed by the example of Christ, to live for the salvation of souls, and to labor for the Glory of God. It is an infraction of the vow of self-consecration, voluntarily, deliberately, and prayerfully assumed; under all the circumstances which could impart sacredness to the verbal declarations of dying men, to forsake all for Christ, and to be crucified to sin and to the world. It would be just, it would be no more than you might expect, that God would do unto you as you have done unto Him; that as you have broken the contract between yourself and Him by neglecting your engagements, that He should decline to perform those stipulations which are dependent on its conditions, leaving you to perish in the paths of transgression in which you have delighted to wander.

The Dancing professor of religion, not only destroys himself but does immense injury to the souls of unconverted men. He encourages all who live without hope and without God in the world to persevere in their neglect of religion, and to go on securely in the entire round of fashionable amusements. They will naturally suppose that if it is consistent with preparation for Heaven, for him to venture so far within the enchanted circle of worldly gratifications, that there can be no harm in their proceeding a few steps further.

It is true, *all* of the unconverted may not reason in this manner, because their own consciences will testify that the misconduct of others is not the rule of duty, but there are many who will—the young, the ignorant, and the inexperienced, the weak in moral principle, the vacillating in purpose, and the strongly tempted; all of whom, will be led by the ignis fatuus light of your inconsistent and pernicious example, away from the path of piety and peace, into the slippery and downward course of sin, remorse, and eternal death. And at the judgment-seat of Christ, you will appear with the blood of lost souls on the skirts of your garments.

The Dancing professor of religion *gives offence to his brethren in the Church*. The fact that among this number, some of the weaker members may be found is no excuse for the deed. At the same time we think it a point of great moment, that the most eminent and exemplary Christians, and the most zealous and intelligent ministers of the Gospel, of all denominations, have put on it their seal of condemnation. They maintain that they cannot discover any sanction for this art, in the example of the blessed Saviour or of his holy Apostles. They contend that it unfits them for prayer and for communion with God; and that they cannot pass from the dissipating excitement of the crowded and noisy ball-room to the throne of grace, and do their duty there with comfort or profit. They say that they cannot ask God's blessing on the employments of an evening so spent; and that the next time they attempt to warn unconverted men of the dangers to which they are exposed in the world, that they feel rebuked by the remembrance of their own conduct to that degree that they are afraid and ashamed to open their mouths on the subject.

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For these obvious reasons the Ecclesiastical bodies of several religious denominations in our country, have expressed their deliberate opinion of its inconsistency; and have recorded their protest against it by a formal vote. And for the same reasons, the most active, self-denying and benevolent friends of the Redeemer in every community, never give their presence to the ball-room, and are deeply grieved with those nominal Church-members who do.

Under these circumstances what is duty? What would Paul do? Such was his anxiety for the salvation of others, that on this account, things lawful, and therefore much more unlawful he would resign. The tenderness of his concern for the spiritual welfare of others exceeded so far all selfish considerations that he declared—"If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth; lest I make my brother to offend." "It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." This is the Bible rule. And against those who disregard it, a fearful malediction has been uttered by the Great Head of the Church. "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

The dancing professor of religion, by his inconsistent example, paralyzes the energies of the Church. He is a *false* witness against Christ and his cause. He does not recommend but disgraces the Christian name.

The people of the world do not esteem him more highly on account of his conformity to their peculiar practices; on the contrary they do not believe that he is *any better* than themselves. They have no confidence in *such* members of the Church; they look upon them as hypocrites or mere professors of religion; they do not believe that they are converted and refer to their example only by way of excuse. They may applaud their beauty, they may admire their wit, they may emulate their accomplishments, they may envy their wealth, they may copy their manners, and they may imitate their style of dress—but they never speak respectfully of their religion. Not unfrequently they make their inconsistencies a subject of satirical remark. "See, that Church member!" say they, "to-day he is the star of fashion, and the leader of the midnight dance—tomorrow he occupies the chief seat in the sanctuary, and is in appearance a most devout and humble worshipper."

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Experience and the word of God, teach but one method by which the gay, frivolous, wicked and proud world, can be won over to the service of the Redeemer; and that is to hold up to its view the truth, through the medium of an irreproachable example; on the one hand rebuking its follies and sins, and on the other, showing it a more excellent way.

It cannot be denied, that the people of the world are often strongly tempted to skepticism by the conduct of the Dancing professor of religion. They are led to inquire—is there any *reality* in the work of the Holy Spirit? Here is a man that asserts that he has been born again, but where is the evidence? What does he do more than others? With his lips he declares that God is his portion; that religion is his chief concern, and that Heaven is his home. But by his actions he says more plainly than words can indicate, that his supreme happiness lies in the world, that Christ is a hard task-master, and that his anticipations of religious comfort have been disappointed.

It is no wonder, that unconverted men with such stumbling-blocks in their pathway, turn a deaf ear to the Gospel. Amid the perplexity of mind too often produced by the glaring inconsistencies apparent between Gods truth, and Gods professed people; nothing short of the Almighty power of the Holy Spirit, can persuade unconverted men to believe, "that godliness is profitable for all things." On these carnal members of the Church, must rest, therefore, the larger portion of the guilt incurred in a congregation by grieving the Spirit of God, and by infecting the minds of sinners with an uncontrollable degree of levity. To their worldliness must be attributed in a great measure, the check which is given to the progress of the glorious Gospel in converting perishing souls from Satan unto God. And it is a question which they must settle with their consciences, "how can they meet these charges at the bar of the Final Judge?"

The dancing professor of religion robs the Church of the benefit of his services. His moral influence in the community where he resides and is known, is destroyed. Like Samson shorn of his locks, he is destitute of strength. He has not only lost the spirit of prayer, but he has no power at a throne of grace, "The prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." His approaches to the Mercy Seat become lifeless and heartless. And it is no marvel, that eventually he deserts the closet, the social meeting for Prayer, and the House of God.

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Such a professor of religion is a contrast to the prevailing spirit of the age, which is characterized by efforts to enlarge the borders of the Kingdom of God in the conversion of sinners. He lives devoid of spiritual consolation himself, and by exciting prejudices against vital piety, keeps others away from the fountain of life. He leads thoughtless sinners down to Hell, whilst he tells them that he is conducting them to Heaven. With one hand he pulls down the kingdom of Christ, and with the other he builds up the kingdom of Satan. He betrays his Master with a kiss. He grieves the souls of all the well wishers of Zion. He brings down the displeasure of a righteous God on his holy heritage. He is far worse than an open enemy, for he strews the path that leads to perdition with tempting flowers, and he whispers peace in the ears of sinners who are walking in the ways of death. He is a traitor among the soldiers of the cross. He is an Achan in the camp of Israel.

And the same inconsistency and guilt which are chargeable on the dancing professor of religion, rest in a great measure on those members of the Church, who, although they do not indulge in this gay pleasure themselves, yet grant permission to their children to attend this kind of assemblies. The danger, whatever it is, certainly is as great for the members of the household, as for its head. And the word of God lays down the principle, that it is the duty of Parents, to use

their authority to prevent their offspring from following any amusement in which they think it would be wrong to engage themselves. Fathers and Mothers, therefore, who consent that their children shall learn and practice this art, are sadly neglecting their parental duties, and are to no inconsiderable extent partakers of this sin of their sons and daughters.

It is an act of cold blooded cruelty to the souls of those whom they ought to love most tenderly. And we would ask, how can they approach the Mercy Seat for prayer in faith, with the petition on their lips, "lead us not into temptation,"—whilst they have thrown the tender lambs of their little flock into the very jaws of the lion? They certainly are not so destitute of sensibility or understanding, that they would tempt their poor confiding little ones to dance, amid the rocking of an earthquake, or the roaring of a thunder storm, or whilst standing on the edge of a slippery precipice. How then can they with any claim to the feelings of common humanity, cast their children into the vortex of worldly pleasures, where they are momentarily exposed to the infinitely greater evil of having body and soul dashed to pieces on the rocks of eternal damnation?

In view of such considerations, every Christian parent ought to come to the unalterable determination of bringing up his family with the understanding that they are neither to know nor practice this fashionable amusement.

[15]

The just application of the principles introduced into this discourse, destroys this worldly pleasure root and branch. Their true interpretation is the language of total abstinence,—"touch not, taste not, handle not." They allow no compromise with this social evil. And in cases which admit of doubt, and where it is hard to draw the line, because the impropriety is not so manifest, they utter their interdict. It is wrong, therefore, for Christian families, among themselves or with a few friends, to practice dancing as an amusement. It is their duty to refrain from it, if for no other reason, because it is one of the distinctive badges of the ungodly world; and because they are bound to make the line of demarcation between the Church and the world plain and visible. In opposition, to this sacred obligation, it is a poor excuse to alledge that it is only a family affair. The family circle needs to be enlarged, only by the addition of a few guests, to impart to the parlor much of the appearance of a ball-room. Safety, consistency and usefulness, demand that every follower of Christ should renounce it altogether.

To see the true nature and character of this amusement we must view it in the light of Eternity. Let us contrast the merriment and folly of one of these gay and trifling assemblages, with the pure, earnest and solemn worship of the glorious intelligences gathered around the throne of the infinite God. How evanescent are their joys in contrast with the eternal blessedness of that bright circle of seraphic intelligences! How different is their estimate of sin, from that which is formed by the Holy Sovereign of the universe! They jest and laugh whilst trampling under foot his righteous laws; but He frowns on each transgression with a look of awful displeasure, and is "angry with the wicked every day."

Again, what an extreme of condition under God's moral government, does the gaiety and levity of that giddy company present to the weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, of the damned in Hell!—many of whom, in their life time indulged in the same guilty pleasures; and with whom, the principal actors of this scene might in one instant be associated forever, by a single word of an offended and neglected God.

Or who would not be shocked in turning from the contemplation of the sad spectacle of the crucifixion; the body of Jesus mangled, rent, covered with a gore of blood, his dying groans sounding in the ear!—to the levity and laughter of the ball-room, crowded by those whose sins have nailed him to the accursed tree and opened all his wounds anew.

But look forward a few years, or months only it may be; and how diverse will be circumstances of thoughtless trifles! They cannot live forever. Together with us, they are treading the path to the tomb, and there is one coming to meet them whose presence is a terror to all transgressors. Yet into its darkness they must descend, and before that Infinite Being they must shortly stand.

[16]

From the noise, splendor, and mirth of the ball-room, they must pass to the silence, gloom and grief, of the chamber of death. The giddy, vain, perhaps, scoffing circle of revellers, must be exchanged for the anxious, sorrowful, weeping company of relatives and friends. The showy finery of the ball dress, must be replaced by the winding sheet and the grave cloths. That form which under the tutoring hand of art, moved with such grace, through all the evolutions of the dance, must lie icy cold in the embrace of death.

Then they will have done with earthly things. No music with its dulcet notes will wake the echoes of the dreary caverns of the dead; no jovial companions will relieve the dullness of the grave; no dance will fill the void of slow revolving ages. The worm will feed on them sweetly there, and their souls will receive according to the deeds done in the body.

When this event arrives the votaries of pleasure will turn pale with terror. They will beg for life. The absorbing inquiry will be "What must I do to be saved?"

But then, oh! how horrible the thought—it may be too late. Unconverted sinner flee these scenes of guilty pleasures as the Gates of Perdition. Prepare without delay to meet thy God. Let the golden moments of life's short day, be consecrated to Prayer, to Repentance, and to Faith in Jesus. Then, too, mayest thou ascend at death, to that bright and better world, where the Saints forever reign, and where from before the light of God's countenance, sin, darkness and sorrow, flee away, and where the soul is filled with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

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