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DISCOURSE ON THE IMPROPRIETY OF CHRISTIANS  
DANCING.

Rev. S. Reed.

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A DISCOURSE,  
ON THE  
IMPROPRIETY OF CHRISTIANS DANCING:

PREACHED AT

• Port Huron, March 7th, 1858.

BY REV. S. REED:

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF MANY WHO HEARD IT.

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I COR., 8, 13. *Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*

Ought Christians to dance? This question, so often put by conscience to passion, and so seldom satisfactorily answered, merits a solemn and prayerful hearing.— It merits it because there is diversity of opinion on the subject, causing more or less, schism and sorrow in the “body of Christ.” It merits it because it is a practical question, of very extensive results, touching the interests of vital godliness. It merits it, because if right it should be known to be right; if wrong it should be known to be wrong; and if indifferent all should know it to be so, that the variance and conscientious scruples which everywhere prevail concerning it might cease. It is to be feared that the course too generally pursued by the Christian pulpit towards this subject, has not been that of candid investigation and earnest remonstrance, but of witty ridicule and abrupt denunciation; with such hasty modes of treatment however, the mind is dissatisfied, and the pleasure-loving Christian still asks, “Where is the harm of the dance?”

I am aware my hearers, that no subject of such importance as the one before us can be examined without the light of Scripture; and to the Scriptures we go

Three kinds of dancing are alluded to in the Bible.

1. That performed in religious services, which was expressive of great religious joy, and in which the sexes are never mentioned as uniting. Thus, at the passage of Israel through the Red Sea, Moses and the children of Israel sang a song unto the Lord, “and Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.”— Thus, when Jephtha returned from the conquest of the Ammonites and came to

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Mizpeh unto his house, " behold his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances." Thus, when Saul and David came back from the slaughter of the Philistines, " the women came out of all the cities of Israel singing and dancing to meet king Saul with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music." Thus, when the ark of God was brought up from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David, " David danced before the Lord with all his might." There are two or three other places also, where this act of religious service is mentioned with equal distinctness.

2. The second kind of dance alluded to in the Scriptures was that practiced in the worship of idols. This kind was strictly forbidden to God's people; nevertheless, instances did occur where they perverted the religious dance into the idolatrous worship, and then it was of the same character as that practiced by the heathen nations in their lascivious and bacchanalian assemblages, of which history is so full. Paul in writing to the Romans, warned them against the immoralities of idolatry when he alluded to the singing and dancing of the Bacchic worshippers, and exhorted his brethren to " cast off the works of darkness and to walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness." In his epistle to the Galatians he mentions " revellings," which is the same as the " riotings" in Romans. Peter also speaks of " revellings," classing them with " lasciviousness, lust, excess of wine," and " excess of rioting," and intimates that they abounded in heathen worship. The same kind of dancing is also mentioned in connection with the Children of Israel. Because their minister had been some time out of their sight they became carnal-minded, lost their piety, and persuaded Aaron to make them a calf-god out of gold; and when Moses came down from Sinai with Jehovah's laws to them, he found them *dancing* round the little idol.

3. The third kind of dance alluded to in the Scriptures is also a perversion of the religious act, and may be denominated the dance of *social amusement*.

The first allusion to this kind seems to be in 2 Samuel, where the ark of God was brought up into the city of David. Queen Michal looked out at her window and saw David, the king, dancing before the ark of the Lord with all his might, being girded with a linen ephod, and she was much displeased evidently with the great fervor and religious zeal of her husband. David went on to the tabernacle, blessed and dismissed the people and returned to bless his house. Michal met him with reproaches and charged him with acting like one of " the vain fellows." David explained to her the difference between his conduct and the dancing " of the vain fellows," told her " it was before the Lord " that his measured step had been taken, and declared that he would continue " to play before the Lord " who had chosen him in the place of her father. For her sin in ridiculing his religious zeal the queen was punished for life.

The second allusion to dancing as a social amusement is found in Job, where it is mentioned as forming part of the amusements of irreligious families who teach their children to dance. " Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them and their offspring before their eyes. They send forth their little ones like a flock and their children dance. They spend their days in wealth and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore say they unto God, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

The next allusion to the social dance from which any inference can be drawn respecting its character is in connection with Herod Antipas. John the Baptist had told him plainly that he was living in adultery, because his wife had another living husband. The reproof enraged the guilty woman, and she resolved to employ her arts in effecting his ruin. Her daughter Salome, the daughter of her other husband, was called in to dance before the King who was so pleased with her performance that he took an oath to give her whatever she would ask. Being previously instructed by her well-bred fashionable mother; the accomplished young dancer modestly asked the bleeding head of God's faithful minister.

In two places in the Scripture dancing is alluded to in such indefinite terms that the kind to which it belongs cannot be ascertained, hence no argument can be drawn from them, either for or against the practice. One is in the parable of the prodigal son; who, on his return from his wanderings to his father's house, heard the sound of dancing. And even here, as the family which the young man forsook is used to represent the Church of God, it is more than probable that the dancing should be classed under the first kind, or religious exercise. The other indefinite mention of dancing is in Ecclesiastes, where it is said "there is a time to dance;" and from this passage it is impossible to say which kind of dance is meant. It is evident however, that there is no commendation or approval given in the text to any of the things mentioned there. It says also, that "there is a time to kill;" but who would infer that, *therefore* the duelist is justified in his murders? It says "there is a time to lose," but who would infer that, *therefore* the gambler is justified in his game by which he may lose all? The most evident design of the passage is to set forth the strange contrariety among the actions of men, but does not itself approve or condemn any.

After a careful and prayerful examination of the Scriptures, I am fully satisfied that the only approval given therein is to the first or religious dance. It would be interesting had we time, to trace the history of this religious exercise from the early ages of God's people down to the present. So far as I know there is no religious denomination at the present day whose worship embraces this exercise, except one branch of the Quakers. Yet it is practiced by individual Christians of almost all denominations and of different nations. I have seen the thoughtful philosophising German, and the sedate adoring Indian, as well as the active joyous American, taking solemn steps in perfect time with the songs of salvation, hymned forth by the living Church of the living God. And I have seen too, the manifest approval of God upon that worship; for wicked men and women, instead of being attracted by mirth or flushed with passion, would stand and gaze in solemn silence; or, awakened, bow in contrition before Him whose presence was felt.

The religious dance is approved both in Scripture and in history, but beyond this kind the authority of God's word cannot be carried. The three instances of the social dance to which I have alluded are all very explicit—in one, those who practice it are called "vain fellows;" in another, the families who practice it or at least teach it to their children; are those who "say unto God, depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" and the other shows the fascinating power which it had over a wicked and adulterous man.

In the absence then, of any divine precept enjoining the social dance upon Christians as a duty, and in the possession of such decided authority against it, it



would be reasonable to expect that those Christians who advocate it must resort to unweighty and superficial reasons for their course, while on the other hand, we might look for solid and Scriptural arguments to oppose it. And here expectation is verified, for we hear always the same shallow, untenable reasons offered by the one class, and the same solemn Scriptural objections opposed to it by the other.— I will mention but one reason given in favor of the practice by Christians; that however, shall be their *principal* reason, and then pass to consider those substantial and scriptural deductions that oppose it.

It is asserted by almost every one who favors the practice, that dancing, *in itself, or in the abstract*, is not wrong for the Christian. Now we might all admit the assertion, *taken in the sense given to it* at the time it is used, though it bears on its face the blush of its own weakness; for, while it so tenaciously maintains that *dancing in the abstract* is not wrong, it does at the same time virtually admit that beyond the abstract act *it is wrong*. That is, considered in the motives that prompt it, the passions cultivated by it, and the associations incident to it; in short, all its attendant circumstances considered, it is improper and wrong for the Christian to practice it. But who pleads for dancing in this abstract sense?— What professing Christian is so very fond of it apart from its gaiety, apart from its excitements and from its *worldly* pleasures? If there are any let them dance on, we see no objection. Some one has said that war *in the abstract*, may not be wrong; that is considered apart from its national expense—its bloodshed—its cruelty—its hardening influence—its murder. But as we have never heard of such wars so may we ask, who has ever heard of balls extending in their influence no farther than to the mere physical act of dancing? No, my brethren it is not the physical act—the mere bodily exercise that draws professed Christians to those midnight scenes; the attraction is found in those attendant circumstances—those excitements—those associations which tend *in no way* to promote a Christian soul in holiness, but rather to gratify the passions of the unrenewed heart. And it is in these attendant circumstances, and the influences necessarily resulting from it, that we see the disapprobation of God upon the practice by Christians.

Let us now notice some of those plain Scriptural reasons why Christians cannot join in the pleasure-dance.

1. *It is in direct opposition to the sound judgment and enlightened conscience of the vast majority of Christians.* It is the few only who practice it, the majority condemn it. Now we do not say that the voice of the Church is always the voice of God; nor that a thing is made right or wrong by the voice of the majority.— But we do say, that in matters which are indifferent, that is, neither sinful in themselves nor yet obligatory upon Christians as a duty, if the consciences of God's people are grieved thereby, God's law does positively command us to abstain. Should we descend then, to the admission that dancing is innocent to the comparatively few professing Christians who practice it; yet, here is the wide-spread grief it causes to the Church of God. And it is no sudden superstitious vagary that the vast majority of believers have entertained in regard to this amusement; but it is the matured conviction of the different branches of the Protestant Church during ages past. This conviction has been expressed in unequivocal terms of disapprobation, by the highest ecclesiastical assemblages of the Church, by Councils, Synods, Conventions, Conferences and Associations; they severally, judging of the practice in the light of the same Scriptures I have

read to-day, and judging of it in the light of its results upon the health and spirituality of the Church, have come to the same conclusion respecting it. And these decisions of the Church, in her official capacities, have been only the expressed sentiments of the great body of her membership; for, all through the laity there is the same heart-burning, the same sorrow, the same humiliation of soul that God's people should be joined with the world in such pleasures. How then we ask, can a few Christians *in a matter of pleasure only*, go directly against the almost unanimous conscience of God's people? They cannot!

2. But it were easy my brethren, to see the disapprobation of God upon the practice by Christians, *from the spiritual condition of those who pursue it*. What part of the Christian Church frequent the ball-room? Is it the spiritually-minded part? Those who live by faith and prayer? Whose "lives are hid with Christ in God"? Do we see the dancing professors regularly at the meetings for prayer and religious conversation? Have they the family altar, and do they bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Are dancing professors the "fathers" and "mothers in Israel," who are always seeking souls to save them from sin and death and hell? Are they those whose holy lives bring forth fruit unto Godliness, and whose conversation ministers grace to those that hear it? In short are they the examples of the holiness, the faith, the humility of a life in Jesus Christ? You all answer, No! You are all ready to say that ball-room Christians are not praying Christians, are not living Christians, living unto God and dying unto the world. They are not those who "pray one for another, and exhort one another daily lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."—They are not those who "fear God and speak often one to another," concerning the salvation of the soul. But they are the formal portion of the Church, the careless, the backsliding portion. They are those generally, who "are at ease in Zion;" at ease respecting the divine life in their own souls and at ease respecting the salvation of souls around them. And my brethren, it is among ball-room professors, and not among the prayer-room professors that a revival of God's work meets with opposition. It is from the dancing Church members *first*, that we always expect to hear ridicule and loose unmanly taunts against God's work of saving souls. Yes; the advocates of the ball are the opposers of God's spirit: If a genuine revival of religion should bring a larger number of Christians of different denominations into the ball-room, then it would not be objected to by this class of professors; but because a revival of religion is plainly opposed to the ball-room and surely, tends to lead the converted ones *out of the ball-room into the prayer-room*, and thus to condemn the former; it is at once denounced as enthusiasm and excitement. You seldom hear them expressing fears that the dance will be carried to an extreme; but the labor of saving souls fills them with fear lest religion will be dishonored.

3. *Christians cannot join in the pleasure dance because it is unfavorable to the spirit of religion*. It cannot be practiced by them to the glory of God. The thoughts, the excited feelings which are induced while preparing for the dance, are in strange contrast with the spirit of Jesus. No Christian can go into his closet before going to the ball and kneel down before his Saviour and pray, "lead me not into temptation." Every one knows that such a prayer would be inconsistent with the purpose of his heart. And the state of mind, and the associations

indulged while in the dance, are all unfavorable to the spirit of piety. How intimate the association often, in the dance, between a professed disciple of Jesus and a character known by that professor to be vile and impure; and this intimate association too, *all for pleasure!* Yes; *for pleasure, worldly pleasure,* not for God's glory nor for the good of souls does that professing Christian love to waltz with those whose hearts are unregenerate, and who if God's word which they profess to believe be true, must soon be cut off in his anger. Are these your loved associations; are these your chosen delights, O ye followers of the Lamb? Does the Spirit of the Holy God, which dwells in the hearts of all that are his, lead you to such pleasures? When given to the midnight whirl with the ungodly, can you still say that "your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost?" O my Saviour what impiety! And is it here that Christian fathers and mothers, Christian husbands and wives, Christian sons and daughters cultivate the graces of God's spirit and fit their souls for a holy life, and a holy death, and a holy heaven? Is it here that they learn of Jesus, who is "meek and lowly of heart," and who has said "my kingdom is not of this world?" No, you all believe that a sinner who was really convinced of his lost condition, would never once think of going to these scenes of mirth and worldly pleasure to find his Saviour, or to learn the way to heaven.

4. *Christians cannot join in the pleasure dance, because its legitimate tendency is to deter those who would seek the salvation of their souls.*

In its origin it is worldly, and hence directly opposed to those convictions of duty which the Holy Spirit makes upon the heart, and which if obeyed, would lead to conversion. The pleasure dance does not originate among Christians, it is not the fruit of any one of the Christian doctrines nor an exponent of any of the Christian graces or affections. It is originated and carried on mainly by the irreligious; and no wonder that the sanction of a few Church members should be sought to give it the better countenance. Its fascinating power over the irreligious mind is very great, hence it is sought by the serious, as the dark and fatal stream where their unwelcome thoughts of God and the judgment are drowned. The question with every man who has been devoted to this pleasure, but who seriously thinks of turning to God is, *Which shall I surrender, the ball-room or religion?* He knows the two are incompatible and hence the choice is between them. An influential Minister of the Presbyterian Church in this state says, "In order to know more definitely the truth, I have made particular inquiry of numbers who were great dancers; but who are now consistent Christians, in regard to the effect of dancing upon themselves, and they have uniformly told me that it rendered them indifferent to religion, and gave them increased disrelish for serious things. And they have also expressed their conviction that they never could have become Christians while continuing to dance."

And this testimony agrees with that of many others who have had large observation. During the fourteen years of my own ministry, among all the conversions I have witnessed, I have not yet seen one who was given to the practice, but who acknowledged that he must abandon it totally before he could become a Christian. And very many who have abandoned the pleasure for Christ, have boldly declared that *while pursuing it they suffered severe rebukes of conscience in regard to it:* and I have no doubt but their rebukes of conscience are common to all professors who practice it.

But if dancing by Christians is unfavorable to those who *would seek God*, does it not also tend to draw away *those who have sought him*? Alas my brethren, here the evil is glaring upon us in all its fearfulness. In this direction we behold sights that make all true Christians of whatever name weep before God; I mean *the apostasies from piety* that this worldly pleasure everywhere causes. All the Christian Churches of our land are now saddened by this fruitful source of apostasy. I say all, for in those Churches which feel the least upon this subject, there are nevertheless many pious souls, both ministers and laymen who mourn the evil. And my brethren, in these cases of apostasy from piety what is the all-prevailing plea, what argument do they have always at hand sufficient to silence the voice of their conscience. Alas, that all-potent reason with them is, not that they were "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;" not that they had formed a league with death, but that *professors of religion set them the example*. They forsook a life of piety and entered the halls of mirth because they saw there the *ignis fatuus*. Yes, they were deluded by the *fire of fate*—the light that appears real but is false—that promises to lead the traveller in safety, but always leads him over faithless bogs to dismal swamps. A hollow profession! That is it which glares in the ball-room to lead young Christian souls to ruin! And it is at this point, namely, love for worldly pleasures, and the love of the dance often the most powerful of them all—that the soul of the young Christian needs *especially to be strengthened*. It is here that his religious integrity is most exposed, and here it generally yields first. Here the enemies of religion make their strongest assaults on his spirituality; and right here the dancing professor deals his death blows. All over the land are now to be seen the wrecks of Christian character caused by this amusement, and Church members are partakers in the work of spoliation. "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." So said Jesus Christ, whose disciples these dancers claim to be! O Christian, is this your calling "which is of God in Christ Jesus? Is this the way in which you are to be "the salt of the earth?" Are you indeed the light of the world shining by your Christian example in the midnight dance? God save the world from such lights.

Thus we have the direct testimony of Scripture that pleasure-dancing tends to lead the mind to increased disrelish for the things of eternity; and we have also the testimony of uniform observation in the world, and of those who from a regard to their own souls have ceased forever their attendance upon such amusements; that the pleasure dance does lead the heart away from God, and by its strong-captivating power, does close it to the influences of God's spirit. And this conclusion is not the result of observation in one place alone, but go where you will, you find that in those communities where dancing is most extensively practiced there is the least of practical godliness and true virtue.

5. *Christians cannot join in the pleasure dance, because by so doing they would give their sanction to other unchristian practices which at the present time are connected with it.*

Is there not generally, a close proximity between the ball-room and the bar-room; and is it not often the case that the intoxicating cup is passed from the one to the other? If the professor of religion be there and has conscience enough not to drink, (which however is rarely the case,) yet is his mouth closed against its

reproof. How would the Church member in the ball-room look who should meet his fellow member just coming from the bar-room, and should begin giving him a religious exhortation against the sin of drinking, and should warn him not to "enter into temptation," and then should ask the dance to wait a little while he kneeled down and prayed with his weak brother that the Lord would give him grace to overcome his besetting sin? And then suppose this pious man should leave the dance just a moment, and go to the bar-keeper and warn him against the sin of his ruinous business, and exhort him to flee from "the wrath to come." Would not that bar-keeper most likely say to him, "Back to thy dance thou consummate hypocrite?" No; the professing dancer has no reproof against the sins that lie along side of his favorite pleasure. Reproof from him would be trifling, and his arguments would fall powerless to the ground. His lips are closed and sealed, and the death-tide of liquor may flow on, and the dancing drinker may drink on, and the young man may form in the ball-room the appetite that will break other hearts and hide his own in eternal misery; yet are his lips closed and sealed, and he has no arm of religious power to lift up against the monstrous sin.

And is there not a fearful connection too, at the present day between dancing and gambling? We know that the unregenerate men of the world who practice the one very often practice the other. But it is of the professing Christian that I am speaking; and is not this generally true also of him? If his conscience will go to the ball-room, will it not also go into the next room to the card table, and there meet and sit down with the man from the billiard saloon, and the lady from her back-gammon and euchre; and there Christ and Belial have sweet concord!—In short my brethren, is not the whole class of dancing Christians so linked with card-playing and the various forms of gambling that they are individually, powerless to rebuke this most fearful and threatening vice of our land? I fear they are; and may the spirit of Almighty God awaken thought within them.—God in his word has told us, and uniform observation proves it true, that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a curse to any people." Every one must see that among the most fearful and pernicious sins of our land are drinking and gambling. And how we ask, can a man lay claim to the Christian character whose practices sanction these sins by closing his mouth against their reproof.

6. *The Christian cannot join in the pleasure dance, because of the grounds of exultation which it would afford the wicked, and because of the weapons it would put into their hands with which they would oppose religion.*

Wicked men exult when you bring your christian character along to decorate the ball room with. Though God's people everywhere are grieved, yet they are pleased, and here you see what is the choice of your heart. To your face those unconverted persons will admire your magnanimity, your liberality, the consistency of your piety, and then invite you to dance with them; but all the while they in heart despise your religious pretensions, and exult over your weakness. Their exultation is often the exultation of victory, for they are wont to prophecy when one forsakes the world and embraces the religion of Christ, that they will have him back again in their company and amusements in a few months or years. They do not predict, in so many words, that he will forsake religion, only that he will join the dance. And this with them is enough; for they know very well that all of piety there would be remaining then would not trouble the veriest

sinner. Very few unconverted persons, I apprehend, go to the ball with fears that they will be troubled by the piety of the dancers. And my brethren, in these predictions that are so often made, we see the honest judgment of irreligious men in regard to the incompatibility of religion and the dance. In heart and in judgment they condemn the effort at amalgamating the two, and wisely conclude that a religion which is not separate and distinct from the world is not worth the trouble of getting or of keeping, so they let it alone.

And the practice by professing Christians, puts weapons into the hands of the wicked with which they oppose religion. They oppose to religion the examples of these very professors with whom they have danced, and assert that they are no better than themselves: and they oppose to religion that it fails to correct these same evils in community which dancing professors sanction and practice; and so they supply the enemies of religion with their weapons. And as a mechanic could do much better execution by remaining in his workshop and making arms and ammunition, than by going into the battle field to use them, so do dancing church members often do more execution against religion than if they should throw up their profession and enter the ranks of its open opponents. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad."

7. *The Christian cannot join in the pleasure dance, for it is a practice which, should it become universal, would be most disastrous to Christianity.*

Some of the eastern countries furnish sad examples of this truth. Look at France and Italy where dancing is universal, on Sunday as well as at night, and what of Christianity is to be found there? Look at Northern Germany and Scandinavia where priests and people hurry through the services of their church that they may dance the rest of the day, and what of Christianity there? Look at some parts of our own country where foreigners have tried to substitute the dance for the services of religion on the sabbath, and what of Christianity there? It is easy I think, to see that should it become a universal practice, the hold that religion would have upon the public heart would be very feeble indeed. But my brethren, why not make the dance universal; for if it be proper and right for one Christian, why is it not proper and right for another, and for all? Who shall say it is right for this layman to go to the ball but not right for me? No one. Is a minister deprived of those amusements that are *innocent for a Christian*. No, not by God's word, not by the religion of Jesus Christ. And yet if a Christian minister should frequent the dance through the week and then go to minister in Holy things on the sabbath, he would, thank God, be likely to minister to empty seats. The discerning public would justly forsake him as an insincere man. No, if he would secure the confidence of the public in him as a true and faithful minister of Jesus Christ, he must not only absent himself from those scenes of mirth, both in their beginnings and their endings, but his voice to his flock and to the world must ring out clear and with a certain sound like Aaron's trumpet. Silence in a Gospel minister is a most fearful neglect when sin is ruining his flock. For this very purpose was he called to be a minister, that he might "warn every man and teach every man in all wisdom—that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." If his lips are closed against sin his people soon come to think that he winks at it. "These things hast thou done and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will reprove thee and set them in order before thy eyes."

8. *The Christian cannot join in the pleasure dance, for in its associations, its spirit and its tendency, it is in plain contradiction to the ordinances of religion.*

Everywhere I see that men are prone to speak of dancing and the Lord's Supper in one and the same sentence, either as irreconcilable extremes, or as the points where extremes meet. And why is it that these two things so often occur to the mind in close connection, unless it be by virtue of that unchangable law of mind, viz: association by contrast. And who ever imagined a more perfect contrast—waltzing to-night, commemorating the sorrows of the dying Saviour to-morrow, and waltzing the next night! If these things occur not on the three consecutive days it matters not; their occurrence is often so immediate that the one same heart passes through them all. And what was Jesus' prayer for us when he instituted that holy supper? It was this: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. I have given them thy word and the world hateth them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil; they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth." There Christian, take that prayer and before going to your loved dance, go into your closet and kneel down and repeat it before your Saviour. Repeat it till your heart feels some of the interest that the Saviour feels for it, and then tell me if you have a desire for the frivolities of the ball.

And how does the practice comport with the solemn vows taken at the hour of holy baptism? Then, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost," the Christian made a pledge and sealed his pledge in the sight of God's Church, that he would "renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that he would not follow, or be led by them." That is the baptismal vow in some of the Christian churches, and in others it is similar; and what I ask, can be its violation if the practice we are considering be not? By what are church members led to the ball room? If the irreligious are led thither by the "carnal desires of the flesh," who will say that the professor of religion is not led by the same? I think you are all ready to say that those who go to the dance, go for the same object, and God's spirit leads none there; "For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

9. *And lastly; the pleasure dance, in its spirit, its associations, and its tendencies, is forbidden to Christians by the word of God.*

It is forbidden by those Scriptures which require us to be distinct and separate from the world. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord." "And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God." I think all will admit that card playing, horse racing, dancing, and kindred practices are among the *favorite amusements* of the world; and if so, it is very certain that a Christian cannot practice them without conformity to the world.

It is forbidden by those Scriptures which enjoin upon the Christian a pure religious influence. This to him, is a pearl of great price. He is to guard it with prayerful vigilance. No earthly poverty can detract from its value; no earthly treasures can atone for its loss. It should always be such as would lead men to

repentance and to Christ. Aught that would tarnish his religious influence over the unconverted, is to the Christian a subject of profound regret. In proportion as his example is uncertain and his religious light obscure, is he destitute of a saving power over his fellow men. Hence God commands to "abstain from *all appearance of evil.*" That dancing by Christians has the "appearance of evil," none deny. Indeed its plea is, that the evil exists *wholly* in appearance; so that were the plea true nothing is gained by it but a feeble effort to evade God's law.

God says, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." The Christian's light is so conspicuous that it shines on every point in human life. It has a beam for man in all his lawful relations and pursuits; and if at any time it goes, just there it may cause the stumbling, and fall, and everlasting ruin of some soul. He is commissioned to light a company of immortal beings through this world of sin and moral darkness, and to do it he must hold up his light that all eyes may be fixed upon it at all times.

It is forbidden by those Scriptures which reveal the nature of worldly love. "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." "Love not the world; neither the things that are in the world." "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." "And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

It is forbidden by those Scriptures which enjoin on the Christian a life in view of the Judge and the Judgment. He is to live "as seeing him who is invisible." "So speak ye and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us—looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body."

Here I have repeated a few, and only a few of those parts of God's word which plainly prohibit his people from joining with the world in the dance. I might say also, that the *spirit of every precept of religion* prohibits it; "for if any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature," and will certainly have no desires for such amusements. Christ's spirit never leads its possessor to such pleasures, and "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

And now professed Christian, will you not take these precepts of the holy Religion which you profess, and study them as the precepts of your Judge and Saviour, given to you to guide and save you? Let them rest on your soul till they have imparted their own deep meaning to you, and then tell me, do you think it consistent, do you think it right for those who have professed a life of "holy conversation and godliness," and who are members of the visible "body of Christ," to engage in the dance? The appeal is in tenderness. It comes from those who mourn over the reproach of Zion. It comes from Christian parents, whose children have been drawn away from the fold of Christ. It comes from pastors, weeping over many a ruined lamb of the flock, the first step in whose downward course was taken in the ball room. It comes from that Spirit who is grieved at the rebellion of the heart. It comes from that Saviour who said, "My kingdom is not of this world." Will you not, I repeat, take these arguments and these precepts, and



in the sight of your God, and in view of the judgment day, examine well their relations to your lives and your hearts.

Permit me to close with a few words of earnest admonition to those of my hearers who have recently chosen as the object of their glorying, "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Many, my young brethren, will be the forms of temptation which will beset your future pathway. Repeated and varied will be the efforts of your enemy to lead your souls out of the narrow way. By means of which you are now ignorant, will he seek to accomplish his purpose and secure you again among the ranks of the world. All the arts that fallen depraved spirits can command, be assured, will be used to oppose your course to Heaven. On some the power of ridicule, of scorn, of slander, may be brought to bear; but in the ears of all I doubt not, the same voice of worldly pleasures will be whispered. Opposition to your piety may be open and bitter; confidence in your favorite examples of religion may be shaken; and all things may combine to work the trial of your faith; but nothing is so much to be dreaded and shunned by you as **THE PLEASURES OF SIN!**

For the amusements which I have to-day been considering, you at present have no desires. Your hearts now turn with loathing from them, to purer and higher delights. Let me remind you that the grace of God is sufficient for you at all times and under all circumstances; and you may always have those sacred feelings of repugnance to the sinful "pleasures of this life." On the preservation of those feelings your safety depends. "As ye have received the Lord Jesus, so walk ye in him," fleeing "youthful lusts which war against the soul." Though surrounded by the wickedness of this world, yet if faithful to your God he will save you from it. Be not deceived by its flatteries or its frowns, but remember that "*the whole world lieth in wickedness.*" Enter not into alliance with it, but "escape for thy life." God will as surely destroy the wickedness of the world as he did the cities of the plain. As they are now "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire," so all the "proud, yea all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up." The storms of His wrath are gathering and soon will burst in fury on "them that know not God." Then *escape for thy life!* "Tarry not in all the plain!" "Look not behind thee," but "flee to the mountain lest thou be consumed!" "Haste thee, escape thither, for the Lord will destroy this city." Behold here is Mount Zion, the mountain of His Holiness. Let us flee to it that we may dwell with the Lord forever. **AMEN.**





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