

FAMILIAR DIALOGUES  
ON  
DANCING,  
BETWEEN  
A MINISTER AND A DANCER,  
TAKEN FROM MATTER OF FACT WITH AN APPENDIX  
CONTAINING SOME EXTRACTS  
FROM THE  
WRITINGS OF PIOUS AND EMINENT MEN  
AGAINST  
THE ENTERTAINMENTS OF THE STAGE,  
AND  
OTHER VAIN AMUSEMENTS  
RECOMMENDED TO THE PERUSAL OF CHRISTIANS  
OF EVERY  
DENOMINATION.

---

---

BY JOHN PHILLIPS,

---

---

“What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost—  
For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify GOD in your body and  
in your spirit which are GOD’S.”

1. COR. vi. xix.

“Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate faith the  
Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be  
a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, faith the Lord  
Almighty.”

2 COR. vi. xvij.

“Ubi est saltatis ibi est Diabolus, Chrysol.”  
“Nemo sobrius saltat Cicero.”

---

New-York:  
PRINTED BY T. KIRK, No. 112, CHATHAM-STREET;  
1798.

2000-2001-2002-2003

2000-2001-2002-2003

2000-2001-2002-2003

2000-2001-2002-2003

2000-2001-2002-2003

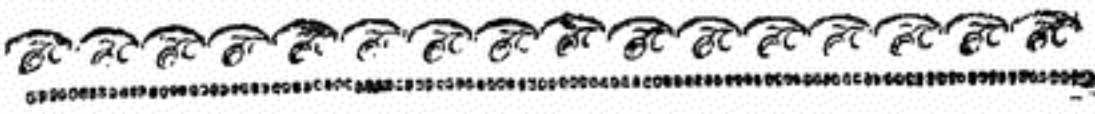
2000-2001-2002-2003

2000-2001-2002-2003

2000-2001-2002-2003

2000-2001-2002-2003

2000-2001-2002-2003



## P R E F A C E.

**W**HAT we receive by tradition from our parents, relatives, or tutors; what we are initiated into, and the impressions which are made on our minds, at an early period of life, are contended for with the greatest warmth, and often persevered in with the same integrity, as if altogether innocent. Tho' at the same time may have a most destructive and baneful influence, on both body and mind, being contrary to truth; and if not abandoned, will terminate in the destruction of both. The whole ungodly world, lieth in wickedness; that is, in the arms of the wicked one. They are lulled into a lethargy: their minds are blinded by the God of this world, who works with mighty energy on their hearts, lest they should awake to righteousness and sin not, lest they should believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. I have written the following with a view to facilitate the downfall of Satan's Kingdom, and with a sincere desire to assist unhappy beings in escaping out of the snare of the devil in which they are taken, captive that they may come to Christ for life and salvation.

CHARLESTON Feb. 4. 1797.



## DIALOGUES; &c.

**I** AM glad of this interview with you, and having heard of your opposition to dancing, I shall meet you on your own ground, and prove its utility from the sacred scriptures. The Hebrew verb *rakad*, is rendered by Buxtorf, *salire, subsalire*, to leap, to skip, to jump, which I shall prove to be full to the purpose. Had you been a member of the Church of England, you would approve dancing yourself. I presume then the difference between us, arises merely from education ; but however, I see no evil in it, and therefore it cannot be sin in me to practise it. Moreover, we may safely follow the example of our clergy, as they are an “ holy priesthood by succession.”

M. I will patiently hear what you can advance from the holy scriptures in defence of dancing ; for if the scriptures justify it, you have gained your point, meanwhile, permit me to say that assertions are not proofs, and that the example of your clergy must not be followed, as it is contrary to our Lord's example, &c. that their holiness by succession is a cunningly devised fable, in as much as a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, that, were your clergy holy, they would walk as Christ walked ; and consequently would not approve dancing. I was also a member of the Church of England, but on mature deliberation, saw that I could not partake at the Lord's table, and at the table of devils. I mean that I could not attend balls, plays, cards, &c. and then, by a feigned repentance, under the mask of religion, pretend to shew forth our Lord's death, by coming



to his table. Your seeing no evil in what you do, is no proof of your innocence, for the God of this world; viz. (the devil,) may have blinded your mind, and your conscience may be so hardened, that you see no evil in any thing that comports with the gratification of your carnal mind which is enmity against God. And as I do not object to skipping, &c. in a modest way, your quotation from Buxton, is nothing to the purpose. And I presume, the Canons of your church do not authorize you to live an unholly life, as all dancers most certainly do.

The dancing now under consideration, I call a practical science, the end of which, is either emolument, or else vain and idle amusement.

And first, I call it a science, because it is a theory consisting of a number of rules, arranged in a regular order. Secondly, I call it a practical science, because its theory is not intended to be a matter of mere speculation; but rather consists of rules which are to be put in practice.

Thirdly, I said, the end of which is either emolument or amusement: it is emolument in those who dance for hire, either in public or private, as well as in all who make a livelihood thereof by teaching it, but the general design of it is mere amusement.

Fourthly, I call it vain amusement; because it does not answer the end.

Amusement is nearly the same as diversion. Now diversion properly speaking, is intended to relieve the body, or mind, from the severity of too intense labours; that after this relief, we may resume our labours with greater advantage. But dancing will not do this, for it rather fatigues, and dissipates our powers, than revives and strengthens them, hence it is that however unfit for labour persons have been before dancing, they have been abundantly more so after it. Again I call it an idle amusement, because it originates in idleness, and is generally followed by idle persons.

Those who are quite intent on useful labours, either of the body or mind, have little inclination for dancing, of consequence are seldom, if ever exercised therein. Secondly, it is generally followed by idle persons. Persons most

addicted

addicted to dance, are either such as think they have little or nothing else to do, or else such as know they have business, but are too idle to do it.

Now it is this dancing, and this only which is the subject of our present dispute.

D. "Dancing, may be viewed, 1. as a natural manner of expressing our joy."

M. I answer, it is not so natural a manner of expressing it, but that there may be dancing when there is no joy expressed, nor is it so natural but that there may be joy expressed when there is no dancing.

And first, it is not so natural but that there may be dancing when there is no joy expressed. In idea, the joy which is expressed must be prior to the expression of it, as that joy is the foundation on which the expression is built, or the source from whence it flows. Now I ask, is it because dancers have cause to rejoice, and therefore do actually rejoice, that they go to dance in order to express that joy? Do they not rather dance without any prior joy exciting them to it? Do they not dance in general merely for the sake of dancing, while their hearts are far from rejoicing as the heart of an oak? Nay, do they not frequently dance in order to sooth their sorrows, to banish their fears, and to drive conviction quite away? It is certain, then that persons may dance when no joy is the cause of it or can be expressed thereby.

Secondly, It is not so natural, but that there may be joy, and every proper expression of it, without dancing. When our Lord rejoiced in spirit, Luke 10. 21. doubtless he properly expressed it; but did he dance in order to that end? So when the Virgin Mary said, my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, she expressed it in a very "natural manner," yet we have no account of her dancing. Again, we are told, Acts 5. 41. That Peter and John, went away from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name; but it is not said that they danced in order to a full and proper expression of it. St. Paul saith, Phil. 4. 10. I rejoice in the Lord greatly, but he gives no account in what manner he danced to express it.

Hebrews

Hebrews 10. 34. tells us that the Hebrew christians took joyfully the spoiling of their goods; and no doubt but they expressed their joy in a very natural and becoming manner, though we have no account of their dancing. Once more, when St. Paul said Phil. 4. 4. Rejoice in the Lord always, he hardly expected the Phillippians to dance always, in order to express it in the "most natural manner."

D. But "David we are told in 2. Sam. vi. 14, 16. leaped and danced before the Lord with all his might."

M. True, but in what manner did he dance? Certainly not in that way now under consideration.

D. *Rakad* is by. Buxtorf renders "*salire subsalire*, to leap, to jump, to skip. This verb is used in Psal. cxiv. 4. 6. where it is said the mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. And in Psal. xxix. 6. describing the awful effects of lightning and thunder under the idea of the voice of Jehovah which makes the cedars of Lebanon to skip like a calf. Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. And in its participle form in 1. Cron. xv. 29. Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window, saw king David dancing and playing."

M. Observe, the dancing of David before the ark consisted of leaping, jumping and skipping: of skipping like rams and young lambs: of skipping like a calf and a young unicorn: and therefore it is nothing to the present purpose, seeing it bears no resemblance to the dancing taught by dancing masters, which is prohibited by me and some others. And that the dancing of David was of the sort mentioned above, and not of that genteel and fashionable sort now in use among princes and others, appears from the sneers and contempt which Michal shewed on the occasion. For it is said, 2 Sam. vi. 16. That when Michal saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart. And the reason she gave for this is mentioned ver. 20. Because he uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself. It was therefore on account of his uncovering himself, and leaping and skipping in a most inartificial



cial and rustic manner, which caused Michal to despise him; and to upbraid him with imitating the vain and shameless fellows.

D. "We are told (Judges xi. 3, 5.) that Jephthah returning from the slaughter of the Ammonites, was met by his daughter and her companions with timbrels and with dances."

M. With regard to this passage I observe first, that the instance is so remote, and the circumstances are so different, that if we allow it to be any argument in favor of modern dancing, it must be owned to be a very far fetched one. But I do not allow it to be any argument at all; for the dancing which you approve, and which you attempt to defend as innocent, is artificial dancing: that is, the dancing which is taught and practised by art. But will you say that there was any such dancing in Israel in the days of the Judges? I believe you will not. And yet you will allow, there was that among them which we call dancing; such as leaping, jumping, skipping, &c. by which the people expressed their gladness on a great variety of occasions: and this, or something like it, was the dancing of Jephthah's daughter and her companions.

D. "But they came with timbrels; therefore it must be dancing by rule, seeing it was dancing with music."

M. I answer, it is certain that the music of those times, and long after, was as rude, and inartificial as their dancing possibly could be, and therefore I conclude that their dancing must be equally inartificial, and of consequence that it bore no analogy to the dancing now in dispute. The truth of the matter seems to be this: Jephthah returning from the slaughter of the Ammonites, his daughter and her companions went out to meet him, playing on timbrels, and with such other expressions of joy as became their sex, and the solemnity of the occasion.

D. "But it is said 1 Sam. xviii. 6. 7. that "the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music, and they answered as they played and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

M. Now on this passage I observe first, that it is said, the



women came out of all the tribes of Israël: that is, they came in great multitudes, even thousands upon thousands.

Now if we add to these all the men who came before them, with them, and after them, there must have been quite too many for artificial dances; for we all know that in some dances a single couple will occupy the greatest part of a considerable room. Now if there were only twenty thousand present, it must take up the whole side of a country, to make sufficient room for such a number to dance regularly and artificially. Secondly, these dancers must be uncommonly industrious in their dancings; for they must first observe tune and time in playing with their hands: and secondly attend to all the diversity of steps in artificial dancings with their feet, and make the responses with their voices, some of them crying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and others replying, David his tens of thousands; which is too absurd to be supposed; but the truth seems rather to be this. When the people had heard what Saul and David had done, they gathered together in multitudes from all parts, and expressed their joy in a promiscuous manner, and with such triumphant sounds and motions as cannot possibly be expressed by artificial dancing.

D. "It is written *Exod. xv. 20, 21.* that Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went after her with timbrels and with dances; and Miriam answered them, Sing unto Jehovah, for he hath triumphed gloriously. May we not suppose that Miriam and her company of women formed themselves into a seperate choir, and that their joyous motions were regulated by music, vocal and instrumental, while they repeated the triumphant words of the twenty-first verse?"

M. I answer, we have no reason to believe any such thing, quite the contrary. To make this appear, let us first consider the state of the Hebrews, both men and women. A little before this, they were in absolute slavery in Egypt, where their four fathers had been for four hundred and forty years. Secondly, that for a long time, they had suffered most cruel oppressions, which were intended; not only to prevent their flourishing, but even to destroy them. To this

this end they were appointed to labour in the most servile employment of making bricks. And lest this should not oppress them enough, they were obliged to make the full quantities, even without straw, so that the men may with great propriety be called the brickmakers of Egypt, and the women; the brickmakers mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters. Now was it ever known that such women were great adepts at artificial music and dancing. And can we suppose that while the men were toiling under the rod of their task-masters, their women were improving under the tuition of their dancing masters! Even while their cries and groans were entering into the ears of the God of heaven? It is certain, then, that unless they did this, they could know nothing of artificial music, and dancing, and whatever music and dancing was found amongst them, must be of the lowest and most inartificial kind; and the supposition that Miriam and her company of women, formed themselves into a separate choir, as our modern dancers do, is quite groundless. For all we can suppose they did; was to found in a rude and artless manner, the imperfect instruments they brought out of Egypt, and to shew such other demonstrations of joy, as is natural to a poor and oppressed people, just escaped out of the jaws of destruction.

D. "But David in Psalm 30. 11. says, Thou hast "turned my mourning into dancing."

M. I answer, in the old translation, which is in many respects by far the best, it is rendered; "Thou hast turned my heaviness into joy. And the copy of the 72<sup>d</sup> anciently, as well as now read it *eis charan*, into joy, and so is followed by the latin, Syriac, and Arabic. D. Again it is said, in Psalm 149. 3. Let them "praise his name in the dance."

M. I answer, the marginal reading is, Let them praise his name with the pipe; so in Psalm 150. 4. the margin reads it with the pipe. So that neither of these are any thing to the purpose.

D. "Again, Psalm 87. 7. is rendered by Buxtorf in his Hebrew Lexicon, *Et cantantes æqua ac tripudiantes*: i. e. As well the singers as the "dancers shall be there."

M. To this I answer as the text is; as well the singers as

as the players on instruments shall be there ; see Dr. Hammonds paraphrase ? “ but the singers as well as the minstrels shall come, &c.” From what has been said, it is evident that there is nothing said in the above about dancing, either of one sort or another.

D. “ Again from the above passages we may conclude, that dancing was practised in the religious worship of the Jewish church, and that it was connected with, and regulated by music, both vocal and instrumental.”

M. I answer, that no such thing appears from any passage which has been quoted, and that it was no part of the religious worship of the Jewish church, appears from hence; that though we have a full and particular account of all the officers of the Tabernacle and Temple, we have no account of the dancers, either masters or others. In 1. Chron. 15. 18. we are told that Zacheriah, Ben Jaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehial, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, &c. were the heads of the porters, then over the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were appointed to sound with cymbals of brass. Then Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, were over the Psalteries on the Abamoth, Mattithiah, &c. were over the harps on the Sheminith to excell. Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was for, or over the song, because he was skillful. Berechiah and Elkanah, were door-keepers for the ark, and Shubaniah, &c. did blow the trumpets.

We have here a distinct account of all the services, and officers of the Tabernacle and temple, even from the highest priest down to the meanest porter, and particularly of the several sorts of music, and the masters thereof, but we have not one syllable concerning dancing masters ; which is an infallible proof that there were no such beings employed in any part of the “ religious worship of the Jewish church.”

D. “ The next scripture is, Matt. 11. 17, where our Lord saith, “ We have piped and ye have not danced.”

M. To this I answer, if the dancing here spoken of, is to be understood literally, we must say that our Lord and the Baptist literally piped ; which was not the case. All therefore, that can be meant, is that there was something in the preaching of Christ and the Baptist, which bore some resemblance to children piping to their fellows ; and some-  
thing



thing in the Jews, which resembled the others refusing to dance.

D. "Again in Matt. 14. 6. we are informed that "the daughter of Herodias *prohesato* danced and pleased Herod."

M. She did, and by so doing, was the cause of one of the greatest murders ever committed on earth.

Would you seriously propose the dancing of a strumpet, before a debauched and an adulterous king, as an example for christians to imitate? What must the religious matron, and those who are communicants too, teach their daughters to dance as the daughter of Herodias did? Shudder at the thought?

D. "Again St. Luke mentions, chap. 15. 25. "that the return of the prodigal son was celebrated in his fathers house with music *kai chocon* and dancing."

M. On this passage I observe first, that the whole story is a mere parable, as every one ought to know, secondly, that in all parables a great variety of circumstances are introduced, only for the sake of making the narrative complete, and thirdly, that for this purpose instances are sometimes introduced; for wise and moral purposes, which in themselves are unwise and immoral. Take one instance. The Lord is said to commend the unjust steward. Now would you not shudder if you heard any one recommend injustice, because the Lord is said to do it? And yet there is better reason for so doing, than for recommending dancing from what is said in this parable; seeing it is not, either here or elsewhere said in the Bible that the Lord commended dancers or dances.

D. "But there is a passage in the Acts, viz. 3. 8. "which militates in favour of dancing, as being an innocent expression of joy, and even allowable in some circumstances, in religious worship."

M. (One would think that the grand argument remained which should give strength and weight to all the rest, but I think it is the weakest of all, however let it be examined.)

D. " The impotent man who had never walked, being miraculously endued with strength, in his limbs by Peter, in the name of Jesus Christ, leaped up from the ground where he had lain, stood and walked; and his loving grateful heart, urging him publicly to acknowledge the ineffable favour, he entered into the Temple with Peter and John, not only walking, but leaping and praising God."

M. On this passage I observe, first, that the impotent man is said to be so lame from his mother's womb, that he was carried wherever he went, of consequence he never could be under the tuition of a dancing master; secondly, that when he was restored, he leaped up, stood, and walked and entered into the Temple walking, leaping, and praising God. Now it is allowed that the Greek verb *allomai* *salto*, I leap or jump from which the participles *allomenos* leaping; and *exallomenos* leaping up; comes from the Hebrew verb *calal*, *sultare*, *tripudiare* to leap, to dance, to skip along. It is known that every interpreter, or commentator, &c. ought to chuse that term which best agrees with the subject under consideration, and not that which does not agree with it at all. But the terms, walking, and leaping, best agree with the lame man entering into the Temple, in a joyous manner, immediately after receiving so miraculous a cure, and therefore our translators must be in the right in rendering the words walking and leaping, and praising God. But suppose they had rendered them walking and dancing, &c. I should be glad to know what sort of dancing it was; whether artificial, or inartificial? If it was artificial, consisting of minuets, jigs, hornpipes, or country dances, I shall be glad to know first, who was the dancing master that taught him? And secondly, who were his partners! surely you will not say that Peter and John, were either the one or the other! tho' they were the only persons we have any account of, who spake to him, took him by the hand, lifted him up, and walked with him into the Temple. If it was inartificial dancing, consisting of leaping, jumping, and skipping, then it is nothing to the purpose; for I allow children to leap, skip, and jump, to exercise their limbs, and unbend their minds, and preserve their health and vigour of spirit.

D. "But dancing may be considered as an art whereby we are taught good carriage, a graceful and easy way of moving our limbs, and a genteel manner of address."

M. I answer these may be learnt without the help of a dancing master; instance, multitudes of the rich Quakers, both male and female; for tho' these hold dancing in abomination, yet it is a fact that thousands of them have as good a carriage, a graceful and easy way of moving their limbs, and as genteel a manner of address as any who have spent much time and money, under the instruction of a dancing master. (And I might have added, much more modesty.) The means used by the Quakers to give children good carriage &c. may, if attended to by parents, and teachers, have the same effect on others. This I know by experience, for the young ladies who were under my wife's tuition in England, were admired for their genteel carriage and address; and it was frequently asked who is their dancing master, tho' they had never been instructed by any, but only taught how to walk, to enter, and to leave a room, &c. by S—h P—s.

D. "But dancing is conducive to health."

M. What, artificial dancing, taught by a dancing master? With regard to health, I must beg leave to observe further, that for every single person who has suffered in his health for want of learning to dance, there have been thousands who have lost both health and life together by means of dancing; to say nothing of the numberless ABORTIONS caused thereby, in adults. Instance, Miss H—l, who went from Charleston to visit her friends in the country, where a dance cost her, her life. She was a young lady in the bloom of life, and of a very amiable disposition; are parents devoid of feeling? Or why do they not renounce this abominable practice? And the Rev. Mr. J—n's, daughter lost her life, thro' a dance; and so have many others.

D. "You have had your child taught to read, and you wish him, or her, to contract a fondness for reading. You are at last gratified in your wish. But the only books your son will read, are the loosest novels and plays which he can lay his hands on, &c. &c. Was it wrong to have had these children taught reading in their childhood, because they now make a bad use of the education they then received?"



M. I answer, the case is in no wise parallel ; for reading is one of the most excellent and useful accomplishments, any parent can give his son ; and whether the son makes a right or wrong use of it, the parent is to be commended for having performed a most necessary duty towards his child, if therefore the son abuse the benefit, he only is to blame. For instance, if a parent puts a pious book into the hands of his son, that he may improve by it, in the knowledge of religion, the parent is to be highly commended for what he has done ; but if the son throws it into the fire, he only is blameworthy. But this cannot be said of dancing, seeing as I have shewn above, it is in itself, an unnecessary qualification, and seeing the evils attendant on it, are not abuses thereof, but follow almost of unavoidable consequence : so that the parent is the original cause of them all.

D. "But we do not mean by any thing we have said to encourage or defend the practice of frequenting balls, assemblies, &c. we know how dangerous such entertainments are for young minds."

M. Is it not surprizing then, you do not see that whatever has any tendency towards it must be of dangerous consequence and that learning to dance, in children has this tendency ?

D. But children without dancing contract ungraceful awkward habits of sitting, standing and walking.

M. To this I answer, who stand or walk with more gracefulness and accuracy than the common *well* disciplined soldiers in the marching regiments ? Who stand more exact ? Who use their hands, arms, legs and feet, with more exact propriety ? and yet, though they were awkward and clownish to the last degree till they were even grown up to manhood, with *only* the instruction of a corporal and a serjeant, who themselves were absolutely clowns a few years before, all their awkwardness and clownishness is perfectly removed. Now I should have a very poor opinion of parents and teachers who could not do as much by precepts and examples, as a serjeant and corporal can so expeditiously do for a number of clownish recruits.

D. "But a dancing master can teach these things sooner and better."

M.

M. I deny this. For they may be taught much sooner and as well by the parent or tutor &c. who have not to attend to the particular bows, scrapes, steps and capers, of the different dances, but only to what is essential to the business in hand.

D. "But experience assures us, that music greatly assists them in receiving instructions, therefore the use of music cannot be prohibited."

M. Whatever use music may be of in learning to dance minuets, &c. the common soldiers in a marching regiment, the genteel Quakers, and thousands besides, shew that it is not necessary in order to a good carriage. I cannot see what need there is of music in order to teach a child, or a grown person to stand erect, to adjust the different members of his body, to turn upon the heel, to open or shut a door, &c. If I am not mistaken, the brayings of an ass, or the squalls of a parrot, are as much connected with these as the sounds of the flute or the violin. But let us suppose for argument sake, that dancing is a little thing, do we not know that the little foxes will ruin the vine, Cant. ii. 15. and that he who contemneth small things shall fall by little and little, Eccl. 10, 1.

The Primitive Fathers spoke of dancing as a most atrocious and scandalous evil; so St. Ambrose; "None may dance but the daughter of an adulteress; but she who is chaste, let her teach her daughter prayer, not dances." Again, saith he, "What modesty can there be where dancers shriek and make a noise together?"

St. Hieron saith, "Where the timbrels sound, the pipe makes a noise, the harp chatters, the cymbals strike together, what fear of God can their be?" *Hieron lib. contr. Helvid.*

St. Chrysostom saith, "Where wanton dancing is, there certainly the devil is present; for God hath not given us legs to dance but that we should walk modestly. not skip like camels; but if the body be polluted by dancing impudently, how much more may the soul be thought to be defiled? The devil danceth in these dances." See Hom. 49. on Matt.

St. Basil saith, "Men and women together entering into  
common

common dances, having delivered their souls to the drunken devil, wound one another with the pricks of unchaste affections: profuse laughter is cherished, and filthy songs, meretricious habits inviting unto petulancy are there used. Laugh-est thou, and delightest thou thyself with an arrogant delight, whereas thou oughtest to pour out tears and sighs for what is past. Dost thou stir thy feet and caper furiously, and dance unhappily, whereas thou oughtest to bend thy knees in prayer." See Orat. contra. Ebr. St. Augustine saith, "Every caper in a dance is a step into a deep jakes." Besides these we have large accounts of dancing being condemned and prohibited by councils and synods in former ages. In the council of Laodicea it was decreed that christians should not go to weddings &c. (*habere vel saltare*) bleat or dance: but sup or dine chastely as becometh christians. See c. 52.

The universal council of Constantinople, &c. forbade dancing, especially at weddings. Alsted.

Besides these, dancing has been condemned by a great number of other councils, &c. too numerous to mention.—And also by Peter Martyr, Erasmus, Pellican, Calvin, Aristotle, Seneca, Macrobius, Sallustius, Plautus, Polux, &c. Pope Clement V. Innocent III. &c. To these I shall add a few more of those christians who bore testimony against dancing. The ancient Waldenses, it is said, make dancing to be a breach of the Ten Commandments. Angel de Clavasio, is full upon the point. Quem. vide, page 55. where he makes dancing a mortal sin.

Cardinal Bellarmine inveighs very bitterly against it, and cites the authorities both of the Greek and Latin Fathers as on his side. Con. 6. 3. 19. 20. 21.

The titular Bishop of Geneva, (S. Fr. Sales) is very severe, but at last concludes that they (dancings) are like mushrooms, the best are bad and dangerous, at least nothing worth. See Sales Introd.

Cardinal Barrowmeus saith, when he was a young man at the University, he and his companions prevailed with one of their professors, a grave young man, to go with them to a ball, who observed—&c. told them it was an invention of the devil



devil to destroy souls. See Author of the Education of a young Gentleman. Mr. de Rhodéz saith, "Nothing doth more dissipate the spirits than the ravishing harmony of dancing, and charms of women."—Doubtless it was a conviction of this which caused Cicero long before to say, *Nemo sobrius saltat*. No modest man danceth.

I shall only add what Mr. Chambers says, viz. that Cicero reproached Gabinius on account of dancing, that Tiberius expelled the dancers out of Rome; and that Domitian excluded several members from the Senate for having danced. See Chambers' Cyclopædia. We have many instances of later date which mention the great distress which dancers have felt when near death; how they blamed their parents; &c.

Having considered your arguments and the scriptures you have advanced in favor of dancing, I cannot conclude without a few observations on the great impropriety of Christian Parents permitting their children to learn to dance.

As these parents desire their own salvation, it would be absurd to suppose that they did not also desire the salvation of their children. In order to this end, they must wish them to be bible christians, i. e. they must wish them to be thoroughly acquainted with the principles of our holy religion; possess the tempers, and walk in all the ways described therein. And if they wish this in earnest, they will think it their duty to warn and guard them against whatever may have the smallest tendency to divert their attention, and draw them aside from these important concerns. Now one mean of this, most certainly is dancing; which will be evident from the following considerations. First, it is the duty of every christian parent, to use all possible means to bring up his child in the instruction and discipline of the Lord; to inform him that it is his duty to love God with his whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and his neighbour as himself. That this is commanded by the ALMIGHTY GOD. Now that he may be brought to be thoroughly acquainted with this important duty, the parent ought to endeavour to fix his child's attention, and to cause him to think as closely of it as his capacity will admit. In order to this great end, the  
parent

parent ought to guard his child against every thing which will divert his attention, and turn his thoughts into a quite different channel. Now it is infallibly certain, that setting him to learn to dance has this tendency, as it fills his mind with thoughts of the pleasing amusement, and of various other particulars connected with it. It is therefore no wonder, that so many professing christian parents have cause to complain, that their children, even those who are ten, twelve, or fourteen, years of age, are more ignorant of God, and themselves, (having opposed the dictates of conscience) than if they were so many young Hottentots! which is really the case of multitudes of them, particularly of the young dancers, and those who follow the fashionable vices of the age. Where then is the prudence, the conscience, the fear of God, the love, the duty that such parents owe to their children, in putting such stumbling blocks in their way, as to prevent their taking one step towards the kingdom of glory. Secondly, If children as soon as they know how to refuse the evil, and to choose the good, are accountable to God for their actions, if they are free agents, if their obedience or disobedience depends on a right or wrong use of their moral free agency, how necessary is it that they should be guarded from the evil, and be exhorted to choose the good? That having done wrong, the parent may, by seasonable reproofs and kind admonitions, cause them to feel sorrow, and shame. Which being attended by a holy mourning, and true contrition, may be productive of that repentance unto life which needeth not to be repented of. And the parent must do this without delay, knowing that actual sin renders them guilty before God, and obnoxious to his divine displeasure; and that they may experience this repentance unto life, parents ought to guard them against every thing which has the smallest tendency to prevent it; and cause them to use every mean to raise and perfect it. But will teaching them to dance do this? Have the sounds of the vi l, the light airy frothy capers and instructions of a dancing master any tendency this way? The case is too obvious to require an answer, or even a moment's consideration; for every man, woman, and child, sees at once, that the

the only tendency of such things, must be to drive all penitential sorrow far away.

Thirdly, Prayer also is a most necessary duty incumbent on all children who are capable of it, and they ought to be taught this, as soon as they know good from evil. They ought also to be taught that the heart should be engaged therein, and also that they must be in good earnest, seeing God is the rewarder of those only, who diligently seek him.

Parents ought to be very cautious how they engage their children in any thing which tends to cause or encrease, in them, an aversion to prayer ! If they would do this, they must keep them from dancing, and all other vain amusement. As nothing can be more opposite than the spirit of prayer and the spirit of dancing.

Fourthly, In order to our salvation, whether we are parents or children, there must be a relish for all the ordinances of God. We must delight in the word and sacrament, in hearing, reading, and meditation, and also in conversing with the followers of Christ. Now I ask, even those parents who suffer their children to dance, if they think that dancing has any tendency this way ? Partial as they are, they cannot but own the contrary ; they cannot but own that, if their children spoke freely, they would own that they have a thousand times more pleasure in hearing the music of their dancing master, than in hearing any minister of Christ ; and that half an hours converse with the people of God, or even with religious children, about any thing serious, would be irksome to them, while the conversation of their companions in dancing, would for hours together, be the very joy of their hearts.

Fifthly, As the work of our salvation is a matter of the most serious concern, parents ought to teach their children to be seriously engaged therein, to think, pray, read, and hear the word in the most serious manner, and thus to grow in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and men, until they arrive at the measure of the stature, of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. Has dancing any tendency to promote this seriousness ? Is it not rather as great an antidote against it, as can be possibly conceived ? For what can be a more effectual guard against, even a serious thought, than the appearance



appearance and performance of a dancing school, or a ball-room, plays, horse-races, cards, &c.

Sixthly, Every parent who wishes the present and eternal welfare of his children, ought to teach them to set God always before their eyes; to remember, that he is about them; and about their path, and spieth out all their ways: that there is not a word in their tongue, nor a thought in their heart, but he knoweth it altogether. Now as this is really the case, ought not children, long before the time they are capable of learning to dance, to be instructed in, and deeply impressed with a sense of this most awful truth? But if instead of doing this, we send them to learn dancing, and other worldly amusements, what wonder that they can spend days and weeks, if not months and years, without having God in all their thoughts?

Seventhly, That parent is most shamefully wanting who does not teach his children to redeem their time. The great work of answering the end of our creation, which is to manifest the glory of God, and thereby, to secure eternal life, is not the business of a moment. We ought to begin it as soon as we are capable of knowing good from evil, and earnestly pursue it all our days. If so, what time for learning to dance in our youth, and for following it afterwards? Certainly none at all. The mighty concerns we all have on our hands, demand all our attention, all our care, and all our endeavours, and therefore, he who squanders away any part of his momentary existence, knows but little of the importance either of time, or eternity. 8thly Every wise parent, who wishes to preserve his children from destruction, will endeavour to instil into them, a deep sense of their danger. To this end, he must inform them, that their adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour, and then must strongly urge them to take to themselves the whole armour of God, that they may be able to stand in the evil day; and that they ought to watch in all things, lest their inexperienced hearts should be beguiled by the subtilty of satan. Suppose the parent, after giving such solemn, such necessary admonitions, should talk of sending these children to a dancing school, or suffer them  
to

to frequent balls, or to appear at the public, so called, &c. could they possibly think he was in earnest? Could they think their parent believed one word of the danger he had been speaking to them of? For, would they not naturally conclude, if he really believed the caution he had been giving them, he could not be so inconsistent as to wish them to learn or see any thing which so naturally tends to alienate their minds from God, and to set them off their guard.

Ninthly, The parent who wishes well to his children must guard them against conformity to the world. For if he is wise, he will see how ensnaring the vanities of the world are to youthful minds, therefore he will daily, and almost hourly, be ringing in their ears. Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds; for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, (that is, the desire of the pleasure of the outward senses, of the pleasures of the imagination, all that pomp in clothes, houses, furniture, &c. which generally procure honor from the bulk of mankind, and so gratify pride and vanity,) is not of the father, but is of the world; and the world passeth away and the lust thereof. Now if a parent really desires his children to stand clear in this respect, will he, can he put them under the tuition of a dancing master, whose very profession is to sow, water, and bring up to maturity the seeds of folly and vanity.

Tenthly, A wise and humble parent cannot but wish that his children may learn of Christ to be meek and lowly of heart, that they may find rest unto their souls; and will wish them to appear so in all their outward deportment. And must urge them to this by telling them that God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. But supposing after all those important warnings, and admonitions; Miss is told that she is going to learn to dance, and that she must mind her master and be very clever, and that she must not suffer herself to be excelled by the first lady in the school; moreover, when she comes home she must give her mamma, and pappa a specimen of her improvement, (i. e. if she goes abroad to learn,) and if all is not done to a nicety, there is this fault in her carriage, and ten or twenty more in her ungenteel appearance.

pearance. I ask after this, what notion can this young lady (so called) have of the lectures on humility she so lately and so often received? Will she not think that humility is of no great importance? Or else that her parents are dreadfully inconsistent.

Eleventhly, It is the indispensable duty of all christians, both parents and children, to deny themselves, and to take up their cross daily, and follow Christ. Ought not parents then to labour to instil into their children a true notion of the necessity of this? And ought they not likewise to endeavour to give them a habit of doing it, before the principal of self-indulgence takes too deep root within them? I ask, has learning to dance any such tendency? Quite the reverse, as every one may see at first view. Hence the generality of those who are used to follow dancing and dancing masters, have no more desire to follow Christ in the regeneration, than to sink into the bottom of the sea.

Twelfthly, Parents who are not slothful in business, but rather labour to be useful members of society, ought to bring up their children in such a manner, that they also may be useful in their day and generation. But of what use can it be, either to themselves or others that they are taught to dance? With respect to themselves, will it either in their childhood or at any other time be a mean of helping them to glorify God in their bodies and spirits in this life, or add one pearl to their crown in that which is to come? And as to others, what will they be the better for our learning to dance? Will it give more weight to our instructions, warnings and admonitions? will it enable us or our children to cause our light, our christian light, to shine before men, that they seeing our good works, both we and they may glorify our Father who is in Heaven? Certainly nothing of this kind is, or can be expected.

Thirteenthly, As all christian parents are taught to glorify God with their bodies and their spirits which are his, and that they must do this in eating and drinking, and in whatever else they do, they ought to teach their children to do the same. But will teaching them to dance do this? Who will be so absurd, so ridiculous, so prophane, as to say, a child glorifies God with his body in learning to dance? Or, that a grown person does it in the act of dancing?

Fourteenthly,



Fourteenthly, Whatever a christian does in word or deed, he ought to do it to the glory of God in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I ask, (if it is not too absurd to be mentioned) can any parent, while putting his child under the tuition of a dancing-master say, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ I put my child to learn to dance! And ought not every parent to teach his children also to do all things in the name of our Lord? Suppose he has done this, and then hears them say, particularly those who are ten or twelve years of age, In thy name O Christ! I am going to dance! Is not the thought almost too shocking to be mentioned? And yet christian children must, in effect, thus express themselves or else have nothing to do with dancing.

Fifteenthly, St. Paul saith that christians ought in every thing to give thanks, that is they are to thank God in every affliction, on account of its not being greater, and to thank him *for every favor, or in the possession thereof.* I ask, can a christian parent thank God for giving him an inclination, and an opportunity of getting his children taught to dance? Or can the children thank God for the assistance they have had in dancing? and for the great proficiency they have made therein? If a child of five years old was to mention such a thing, would not one who is only a year older be ready to reprove the great impiety of such a proposal.

Lastly, As God has promised to reward his people for all their virtuous actions in this life, no christian parent ought to do any thing but what he believes is in its own nature rewardable. But what reward can he expect for having his children taught to dance? Certainly none at all: and therefore all the pains and expence they have been at on this occasion, to say the least, must go without a reward. And the same may be said of their children; for they have no cause to think that Christ will say unto them, on account of their dancing, Well done good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord. All, therefore, that remains for such parents and children to expect on account of dancing, is, that they be either pardoned or punished, for rewarded they cannot be. And although some of these dancers, who dance for emolu-

ment, and some of the play actors have done apparent acts of Charity, to blind the eyes of the public, yet notwithstanding these as their gifts, were a part of the wages of unrighteousness, or of their unjust gain, they cannot be rewarded for them, as none can be rewarded but he who does God's commandments. And as God has nowhere commanded us to do evil that good may come, the damnation of all dancers, and play-actors, &c. &c. will be just, if they die as they live! Yea, though they should say we have ate and drank in thy presence, and in thy name done many wonderful things; God will say unto them, together with their auditors, "Depart from me ye workers of iniquity."—"There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth!" Tate Wilkinson (manager of the Theatres Royal at York and Hull) says, that Play-actors are agitated fiends, that it requires a spice of the devil, to make a good actor, &c. Is it not strange that many ladies so called, will not keep company with or countenance an actress, yet they will go to hear them! What is the reason, do you think they are immodest, why do you encourage them in it by frequenting the play-house? Know you not that these shall be your companions in hell fire unless you amend your ways, come out from among the wicked, and become altogether christians, all your mock modesty will avail you nothing! Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever seed a man soweth that shall he also reap.

From all that hath been said we learn that it is absolutely inconsistent with the duty which christian parents owe to God—their families and themselves, to suffer their children to learn artificial dancing; and that it is more especially so, and at the same time highly criminal, if in any degree they have an active part therein. Some of the Clergy (to their shame be it spoken) have most shamefully degraded themselves, and exposed their children to present shame and future contempt through suffering them to be instructed in this fashionable vice. O! how will they look God in the face, on account of their thus conniving at, and publicly abetting the damnation of men? O ye Clergy, another day will teach you terrible things! O! what will you think when death lays hold upon you, and when the wrath of God comes upon you to the uttermost?

A young lady in England, (at an early period of life) was sent to Miss O—ns school at P—bl—w, (where she under the ministry of the word through divine grace) experienced justification from sin, and peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. But her father, who moved in a high circle, not content with the inward adorning of her mind, and the plainness of her dress, (*though in the sight of God of great price*) would often put her to the blush before company, because of the plainness of her dress, or, because she did not dress suitable to her station, as he termed it; but all to no purpose, till at length he promised her that he would purchase a very grand country seat and a coach for her, if she would alter her dress, &c. by which means, he, with strong importunity, prevailed on her to yield to his wishes. He sometime after this married her to a Gentleman of respectability by whom she had several children. But what was the consequence of her being prevailed on by her Father thus to deny Christ for earthly pleasures? It was that Christ left her to pursue her unhappy choice, as the event has proved; for she has eloped from her husband with the father of her sister's husband (who is a Col. in the Army) to the unspeakable grief of her Father who was brought near the gates of death through it; and her Mother-in-law died, it is probable through mere sorrow of heart. How foolish then, beyond description, are those parents who do not instruct their children, to shun the very appearance of evil, and who do not reduce every effort to practice, to prejudice them against all fashionable vices, and in favor of genuine religion. I have just received the above relation from England, the family I was well acquainted with, I hope it may be a warning to others, whether parents or children, how they trifle with God and divine things, lest he give them up to a hard heart and a reprobate mind, and swear in his wrath that they shall not enter into his rest.

O ye parents! Can you reconcile light with darkness, or Christ with Belial? You cannot! Why then are you so vain, as to imagine that your children, when trained up in the fashionable vices and amusements of the age, will love God and religion? Or can it possibly be, that you are so much blinded by the God of this world, as to suppose that they can



serve God and the world at one and the same time? Or are you living without God in the world, in a shameful, Christless, thoughtless and careless manner? Regardless whether they are saved or damned? Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? That the pleasure-taker is dead while he liveth? Dead to God, dead in trespasses and in sins? O ye parents! Are you not ashamed to confess Christ openly? Let it be remembered that Christ will be ashamed of you before his Father and the Holy Angels! Do you not resign your dignity in your families, through neglecting prayer, lest you should give offence to your pretended friends? And when they scoff at religion, do you not *trifle* with them, when you ought to reprove them? Or by conniving at their sins, suffer your children to be led astray? O! how will you meet death and judgment? Must the sentence "Depart ye cursed," convince you of sin and its evil nature and consequences?

---

AN

## APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

SOME EXTRACTS, &c.

FROM THE TRULY GREAT PASCAL.

**T**HERE is nothing more capable of letting us into the knowledge of human misery, than an enquiry after the real cause of that perpetual hurry and confusion, in which we pass our lives. The soul is sent into the body, to be the sojourner of a few days. She knows this is but a stop, till she may embark for eternity; and that a small space is allowed her to prepare for the voyage. The main part of this space is ravished from her by the necessities of nature; and but a slender pittance left to her own disposal: and yet this moment that remains, does so strangely oppress and perplex her, that she only studies how to lose it. She feels an intollerable burthen, in being obliged to live with herself, and think of herself; and therefore, her principal care is to forget

forget herself, and to let this short and precious moment pass away without reflection, by amusing herself with things that prevent her notice of its speed. This is the ground of all the tumultuary business, of all the trifling diversions amongst men; in which our general aim is to make the time pass off our hands without feeling it, or rather without feeling ourselves; and, by getting rid of this small portion of life, to avoid that inward disgust and bitterness, which we should not fail to meet with, if we found leisure to descend into our own breasts.

————Having no infallible remedy against ignorance, misery, and death, we imagine that at least some respite, some shelter may be found, by agreeing to banish them from our meditation. This is the only comfort which mankind have been able to invent under their numerous calamities. But a most miserable comfort it proves, because it does not tend to the removal of these evils, but only to the concealment of them for a short season; and because, in thus concealing them, it hinders us from applying such proper means as would remove them. Thus, by a strange revolution in the nature of man, that grief and inward disquiet which he dreads as the greatest of sensible evils, is in one respect, his greatest good, because it might contribute, more than all things besides, to the putting of him in a successful method of recovery. On the other hand, his diversions, which he seems to prize as his sovereign good, are indeed his greatest evil, because they are of all things the most effectual in making him negligent under his distemper: they do but amuse and beguile him; and, in the conclusion, lead him down blindfolded into the grave. It is indeed one of the miracles of christianity, that by reconciling man to God, it restores him to his own good opinion; that it makes him able to bear the sight of himself; and in some cases, renders solitude and silence more agreeable, than all the intercourse and action of mankind. Nor is it by fixing man in his own person, that these wonderful effects are produced; it is by carrying him to God, and by supporting him under the sense of his miseries, with the hopes of an assured and complete deliverance in a better life.

## FROM THE PRINCE OF CONTI.

**I**T is impossible to consider the business of a player, and to compare it with the christian profession, without being sensible that there is nothing more unworthy of a child of God, and of a member of Jesus Christ, than this employment. I do not speak of the gross irregularities only, and the dissolute manner in which the women appear on the stage, because those who justify plays, always separate those sort of disorders from them in their imagination, though they are never separated in effect. I speak only of that which is absolutely inseparable from them. 'Tis an employment, the end of which is the diversion of others, where men and women appear on a Theatre, to represent the passions of Hatred, Anger, Ambition, Revenge, and chiefly that of Love. They must express them as lively, and as naturally, as is possible for them; and they cannot do so, if they do not, in some manner, excite them in themselves, and if their souls do not take all the changes which we see in their faces. Those then who represent a passion, must be, in some measure touched with it whilst they represent it; and it is not to be imagined, that they can presently efface from their minds that impression, which they have voluntarily excited in it, and that it does not leave a great disposition to that same passion which they have been so willingly sensible of. Thus, plays are, even in their nature, a school and an exercise of vice, since it is an art in which one must necessarily excite in himself vicious passions. And if we consider that the whole life of players is employed in this exercise, that they pass it entirely, either in learning by themselves, or rehearsing among one another, or in representing to spectators, the image of some vice; and that they have scarce any thing in their minds but these follies; we shall easily see, that it is impossible to join this employment with the purity of our religion. And thus, it must be owned, it is a prophane employment, and unworthy of a christian; and that, by consequence, it is not allowable for others to contribute to maintain them in a profession contrary to christianity



tianity, or to authorize it by their presence.

——— 'Those deceive themselves extremely, who think that plays make no ill impression on them, because they do not find them excite any formed evil desire. ——— There are many degrees before one comes to an entire corruption of mind, and it is always extremely hurtful to the soul, to destroy the ramparts which secured it from temptation.

'One does not begin to fall when the fall becomes sensible; the fallings of the soul are slow, they have progressions and preparations; and it often happens, that we are overcome by temptations only by our having weakened ourselves in occasions, which seemed of no importance; it being certain, that he who despises little things, shall fall by little and little.'

——— 'It must not be imagined that these wicked maxims, of which plays are full, are not hurtful, because people do not go there to form their sentiments, but to divert themselves; for they do not fail of making impressions, notwithstanding, without being perceived; and a gentleman will more sensibly resent an affront, and be the more easily transported to avenge it in the criminal manner which is common in France, when he has heard such sort of verses recited; the reason of which is, that our passions are excited by the objects, and the false opinions with which the mind is prepossessed. The opinion that the Chimera of honor is so great a good, that it must be preserved, even at the expense of life, is what produces the brutal rage of the gentlemen of France. If those who fight a duel were never spoke of but as fools and madmen, as indeed they are; if that phantom of honor, which is their idol, was never represented but as a chimera and a folly; if care was taken never to form any image of revenge, but as of a mean and cowardly action; the resentment which men feel upon an affront would be infinitely weaker; but that which exasperates and renders it the more lively, is the false impression, that there is cowardice in bearing an affront. Now, it cannot be denied, that plays, which are full of these evil maxims, do greatly contribute to fortify that impression, because the mind being by them transported, and entirely  
out

out of itself, instead of correcting those sentiments, abandons itself to them without resistance, and delights to feel the motions they inspire, which dispose it to produce the like upon occasion.'

——— 'Plays and romances not only indispose the soul for all acts of religion and piety; but they give it a disgust, in some measure, of all serious and ordinary actions. As nothing is represented in them but gallantries, or extraordinary adventures, and the discourses are far distant from such as are used in serious affairs, one insensibly takes from them a romantic disposition of mind; the head is filled with heroes and heroines, and women seeing the adorations which in them are given to their sex (of which they find the image and practice in companies of diversion, where young men talk to them what they have learned in romances, treating them as nymphs and goddesses) imprint that sort of life so much in their fancy, that the little affairs of their family and housewifery become insupportable to them; and when they return to their houses, with minds thus evaporated and filled with these follies, they find every thing there disagreeable, and especially their husbands, who, being taken up with their affairs, are not always in the humour of paying them those ridiculous complaisances which are given to women in plays, in romances, and in the romantic life.'

——— 'The need which men have of diversion, is not by far so great as is thought, and it consists more in imagination, or in custom, than in a real necessity. Those who are employed in bodily labour, have only need of a bare cessation from it. Those who are employed in affairs toilsome to the mind, and but little laborious to the body, have need to recollect themselves from that disposition which those sort of employments naturally cause, and not to dissipate themselves yet more, by diversions which extremely engage the mind. 'Tis a jest to tancy that one has need to pass three hours in filling the mind with follies at a play. Those who find in themselves this need, ought to look on it, not as a natural weakness, but as a vice of custom, which they must cure by serious employments.'



————— If the soul abandons itself to these false pleasures, it immediately loses the relish of spiritual ones, and finds nothing but disgust for the word of God. These are those four grapes, of which the prophet says, "They become numb, and set on edge, the teeth of those who eat them."

—Jer. xxx. 31. —That is to say, when one feeds himself with the vain pleasures of the world, the spiritual senses become stupified, and incapable of relishing, or understanding the things of God. Now, among the pleasures of the world which extinguish the love of the word of God, it may be said that plays and romances hold the first rank; because there is nothing more opposite to truth, and that the Spirit of God, being a spirit of truth, can have no part with the vanities of the world.

————— There will be many persons ready to assert that they have never received any ill impressions from comedy; but I maintain either that they are very few in number, or that they are not sincere, or that they have not reflected enough on themselves to perceive it, or else, that the only reason why comedy has not corrupted their manners, is, because it found them already corrupted, and that they had left it nothing to do in this matter.

————— God does not impute to us the coldness which proceeds from the withdrawing of his light, or merely from the heaviness of this body; but, no doubt he imputes to us that, to which we have contributed, by our negligence, and our vain diversions. It is his will that we should esteem nothing so much as the gracious gift, which he has made us of his love, and that we should be careful to preserve it by giving it nourishment. This command he has made to all Christians in the persons of the priests of the ancient law, whom he ordains always to maintain the fire on the altar, and to take care to put wood upon it, every day in the morning. This altar is the heart of man, and every christian is the priest, who ought to be careful to nourish the fire of charity on the altar of his heart, by putting wood every day upon it; that is to say, maintaining it by the meditation of divine things, and by exercises of piety. Now, if those who go to plays have yet any sense of piety, they cannot



own that plays deaden, and entirely extinguish devotion ; so that, they should not doubt, God judges them extremely guilty, for having made so little account of his love ; that instead of nourishing and endeavouring to augment it, they have not feared to extinguish it by their vain diversions ; and that he will impute to them as a great sin, the abatement or the loss of their love to him. For if a dissipation of the goods of the world, and of earthly riches, by luxury and gaming, is no little sin, what must be judged of a dissipation of the goods of grace, and of that precious treasure the scripture speaks of, which we ought to purchase, by the loss of all the goods, and all the pleasures of this life !

---

#### FROM CHIEF JUSTICE HALE.

**B**EWARE of too much recreation. Some bodily exercise is necessary, for sedentary men especially ; but let it not be too frequent, nor too long. Gaming, taverns, and plays, as they are pernicious, and corrupt youth, so, if they had no other fault, they are justly to be declined, in respect to their excessive expense of time, and habituating men to idleness and vain thoughts, and disturbing passions and symptoms, when they are past, as well as while they are used.

---

**CLARKE**, in his Essay on study, speaking of plays and romances, says, ‘ By what I have seen of them, I believe they are generally very indiscreetly and foolishly written, in a way proper to recommend vanity and wickedness, rather than discredit them ; they have a strong tendency to corrupt and debauch the mind with silly, mischievous notions of love and honor, and other things relating to the conduct of life.’

---

**ARCHBISHOP TILLOTSON**, mentioning plays, says, ‘ They are intolerable, and not fit to be permitted in a civilized

vilized, much less a Christian nation: they do most notoriously minister to vice and infidelity; by their profaneness, they are apt to instil bad principles into the minds of men, and to lessen that awe and reverence which all men ought to have of God and religion; and by their lewdness, they teach vice, and are apt to infect the minds of men, and dispose them to lewd and dissolute practices.'—AND

Again, 'some parents are such monsters, as not "to know how to give good things to their children; but instead of bread give them a stone; instead of fish give them a serpent; instead of an egg give them a scorpion," as our Saviour expresses it.

'These are evil indeed, who train up their children for ruin and destruction.' 'Who, instead of teaching them the fear of the Lord,' infuse into them the principles of Atheism, irreligion, and profaneness; instead of teaching them to love and reverence religion, they teach them to hate and despise it, and to make a mock of both sin and holiness; instead of training them up in the knowledge of the holy scriptures, which are able to make men wise unto salvation, they allow them to profane that holy book, and to abuse the word of God, which they ought to tremble at, by turning it into jest and raillery; instead of teaching them to pray and bless the name of God, they allow them to blaspheme that great and terrible name, and to profane it by their continual oaths and imprecations; and instead of bringing them to God's church, they carry them to play-houses, and places of debauchery, those schools and nurseries of lewdness and vice.'

---

*The following are taken from the Works of WILLIAM LAW.*

'CAN any one think that he has a true Christian spirit, that his heart is changed as it ought to be, whilst he is diverting himself with the polished lewdness, profaneness, and impure discourses of the stage? Can he think that he is endeavouring to be holy, as Christ is holy, to live by his wisdom, and be full of his spirit, so long as he allows himself in such entertainments? For there is nothing in the

the nature of christian holiness, but what is contrary to the spirit and temper of these diversions.'

————— 'You own that God has called you to great purity of conversation ; that you are forbid all *foolish discourse and filthy jestings*, as expressly as you are forbid swearing ; and that you are told to *let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth* ; and yet you go to a house of corrupt communication : you hire persons to entertain you with ribaldry, profaneness, rant, and impurity of discourse, who are to present you with poisonous sentiments, and lewd imaginations, dressed up in elegant language, and to make wicked, vain, and impure discourse more lively and delightful, than you could possibly have it in any ill company. Is not this sinning with a high hand, and grossly offending against the plainest doctrines of scripture ?'

————— 'As prejudices, the force of education, the authority of numbers, the way of the world, the example of great names, may make people believe, so the same causes may make people act, against all sense and reason, and be guilty of practices which are utterly inconsistent with the purity of their religion.'

————— 'The pleasures and diversions of people are certain means for judging of the state of their minds ; nothing can please or affect us, but what is according to our nature, and which finds something within us that is suitable to itself. Had we not inward dispositions of tenderness and compassion, we should not find ourselves softened with miserable objects. In like manner, was there not some inward contracted corruption that finds itself gratified, by the irregular passions that are there represented, we should find no more pleasure in the stage, than blind men find in pictures. — If impure speeches, if wanton amours, if wild passions, and immoral rant, can give us any delight, is it not past all doubt, that we have contracted something of all these disorders ? *And that we nourish and strengthen them by those gratifications ?*

————— 'There is no doctrine of our blessed Saviour, that more concerns all Christians, or is more essential to their salvation, than this : "blessed are the pure in heart, for



for they shall see God." 'Now, take the stage in its best state, when some admired tragedy is upon it ; are the extravagant passions of distracted lovers, the impure ravings of inflamed heroes, the joys and torments of love, and refined description of lulls ; are the indecent actions, the amours, transports, the wanton address of the actors, which makes so great a part of the most sober and modest tragedies ; are these things consistent with this christian doctrine of purity of heart ?'

———— 'All people who enter into these houses of entertainment, or contribute the smallest mite towards them, must look on themselves, as having been, so far, friends to the most powerful instruments of sensuality, and to be guilty of contributing to an open and public exercise of splendid impurity and profaneness. When we encourage any good design, either with our consent, our money, or presence, we are apt to take a great deal of merit to ourselves ; we presently conclude that we are partakers of all that is good and praiseworthy in it, of all the benefit that arises from it, because we are contributors towards it. A man does not think that he has no share in some public charity because he is but one in ten thousand that contributes towards it (*or because it would go forward without his contribution ;*) but if it be a religious charity, and attended with great and happy effects, his conscience tells him, that he is a sharer of all that great good to which he contributed. Now, let this teach us how we ought to judge of the guilt of encouraging any thing that is bad, either with our consent, our money, or our presence. We must not consider how much our single part contributes towards it, how much less we contribute than several thousands of other people, *nor that the work would go forward if he did not at all contribute to it ;* but we must look at the whole thing in itself, and whatever there is of evil in it, or whatever evil arises from it, we must charge ourselves with a share of the whole guilt of so great an evil.'

———— 'People of fashion and quality have great advantage above the vulgar ; their condition and education give them a liveliness and brightness of parts, from whence one  
might

might justly expect a more exalted virtue. How comes it then, that we see as ill morals, as little religious wisdom and as great disorders among them, as among the most rude, uneducated part of the world? It is because *the politeness of their lives, their course of diversions and amusements, and their way of spending their time, as much extinguish the wisdom and light of religion, as the grossness and ignorance of the dullest part of the world.*—Any way of life *that darkens our minds, that misemploys our understanding, that fills us with a trifling spirit, that disorders our passions, that separates us from the Spirit of God,* is the same certain road to destruction, whether it arises from stupid sensuality, rude ignorance or polite pleasures. Had any one, therefore, the power of an Apostle, or the tongue of an angel, it would be well employed, in exposing, and dissuading from those ways of life, which wealth, corruption, and politeness, have brought among us. We indeed only call them diversions, but they do the whole work of idolatry and infidelity, and fill people with so much blindness and hardness of heart, that they neither live by wisdom, nor feel the want of it, but are content to play away their lives with scarce any attention to the approaching scenes of death, judgment, and eternity.

It must appear evident, to every sober and unprejudiced mind, that the sentiments of these virtuous and enlightened men, against such dangerous ways of spending our time, are, indeed, solid and awakening truths. Let us therefore, as rational beings, as christians, who are travelling towards a better country, and who are called to renounce the vanities of this perishing world, assert the dignity of our nature, and act conformably to the excellence of our destination. A few fleeting years will bring us all to the verge of an awful scene, where, the vain diversions and pastimes of this, will appear in their true light, a most lamentable abuse of that precious time and talent, with which we have been entrusted, for the great purpose of working out our soul's salvation. At that solemn period, the great business of religion, a pious and virtuous life, dedicated to the love and service of God, will appear of inestimable value, and the only thing worthy the pursuit of reasonable beings. Happy therefore will it be  
for

For us, if we become wise in time, take up the cross to all ensharing pleasures, for the few remaining days of our lives, and steadily persevere, under the divine aid, in fulfilling the various duties assigned us, and in making suitable returns to the Author of all good, for the unmerited blessings which he has abundantly poured forth upon us. In these exalted employments, we shall experience the noblest pleasure, and feel no want of empty and injurious entertainments, to occupy our minds, or fill up our time. We shall abhor the pretence of acquiring moral and refined sentiments, from such polluted mixtures, and feel ourselves deeply concerned to discountenance, by our example and influence, those splendid engines of impiety and dissipation.

**FINIS.**