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AN ANSWER
TO
CERTAIN QUERIES
ON THE
SUBJECT OF DANCING.

BY
P. ANDERSON, ALIAS "HONESTUS."

RICHMOND:
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Entered, according to act of Congress, in the year 1857,

By PHILIP ANDERSON,

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PREFACE.

The occasion of the following discussion was the publication of a series of queries on the subject of DANCING in the *Newbernian*, a political paper of Newbern, N. C., in 1845, to which their anonymous author, "A.," solicited an answer of any one disposed to make a reply. Prompted by the advice of several clerical friends and the Editor of said *Newbernian*, "Honestus" undertook the reply when surrounded by circumstances of business peculiarly disadvantageous to such an investigation of the subject as its importance required. And now, after the lapse of ten years, under the constraining influence of a friendly counsel, which the writer is bound to respect, and in view of the growing tendency of the popular fashion of which it treats, even among professors of religion, he

offers it to the public with all its acknowledged incoherency and crudeness, and with the devout supplication that God may grant to it the blessing of his favor in the eyes of all who may *honor* it with a *perusal*, and thereby justly appreciate the honest motives of the author's first attempt to write and publish something like a book for the good of all, but especially those of his own denomination.

“HONESTUS.”

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ON DANCING.

MR. EDITOR:

In replying to the queries on Dancing propounded in the last *Newbernian* by your correspondent, A., I wish I could view him in the light of a candid and humble enquirer after truth; but from his own remarks in connexion with those questions, which carry with them all the weight of the most positive affirmations, I am forced to the conclusion that his opinion was already formed in relation to the innocency of dancing, and, therefore, he must be regarded as a controversialist, or one who might possibly feel an anxious concern to remove the scruples and misgivings of your fair readers, and thereby contribute to swell the aggregate of pleasure to be derived from their presence and participation in dancing parties. I confess I am not willing to enter

into a controversy with him on this subject, but simply intend to show *my* opinion also, and the reasons for it, which I think are clearly deducible from the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the standard to which he makes his appeal.

With regard to his first question, "Is it not a sound principle, in matters of religion, to acknowledge no criterion but the Word of God—to condemn nothing which that does not condemn?" I feel no hesitancy in answering affirmatively. But Mr. A. and I, no doubt, differ widely as to *what* the word of God condemns. He seems to suppose that nothing is condemned by it which is not nominally or specifically prohibited. Whereas, I think that a moral action, or immorality, may be as clearly and satisfactorily prohibited by inference as if it were done expressly by name. And many things are virtually and indirectly enjoined, for which we have no positive authority or command. For instance, ladies are not positively or by name commanded to observe the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, yet they commune, inferring it to be their

duty to do so from reasons as applicable to themselves as to men. Again, we have no positive precept for a change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, yet, Christians, with one consent, have united in making that change, inferring the duty of so doing from circumstances which afford a strong presumptive proof that it was the Lord's will they should do so. And further, a very large majority of Christian believers have confidently inferred the obligation of baptizing infants from facts recorded in Scripture, which constitute the ground of a conviction in favor of infant baptism so thorough that it forms the basis of a settled practice. Many things which I could mention, if space permitted, are left by the Almighty to the dictates of Christian prudence and enlightened conscience, upon which those will promptly and correctly decide, who are more anxious to know what they must do to be saved than what they *may* do and yet reach the port of bliss.

The second question in the series we are endeavoring to answer, is, "Does the Bible,

either in the Old or New Dispensation, condemn dancing?" We answer, that neither the Old nor the New Dispensation, (Testament,) condemns dancing by name any more than gambling, the most flagrant of vices according to the confession of gamblers themselves, racing, theatrical amusements, circus plays, and other vain, idle and cruel sports. Suppose, then, there is no explicit law against any of these things, are they "expedient?" If not expedient for Christians, they are not for any, because it is the duty of all to be Christians. If they be not expedient for any, it is manifestly the solemn and imperative duty of all reasonable and religious men to refrain from them, as St. Paul in the New Testament enjoins. It is "plainly and perspicuously" our duty, then, to avoid what is inexpedient or improper for all men, whether they profess religion or not. Here, then, we have the ground of an objection to the practice of modern dancing; it is unbecoming, imprudent, inexpedient and contrary to the New Testament, which does not contradict, but illustrates and confirms the Old. If circumstances require or

justify it, we intend hereafter to consider this subject again in relation to expediency, contenting ourselves at present with a brief answer to the several questions proposed, and a few other remarks in the conclusion.

The third question in the series, is, "Where the New Testament is silent on any particular action, is not the Old Testament the best authority?" Strictly speaking, or speaking in the sense of inference as well as precept and prohibition, the New Testament is not silent upon any subject of duty or interest or sinful action. We have been taught to receive it as a "perfect law," called by St. James "the perfect law of liberty." If it were imperfect, we should certainly refer to the Old. Both, however, harmoniously conspire to point out good and evil, the way of duty, and the way of sin and folly. It matters not with what ease or difficulty, with what clearness or obscurity we obtain a knowledge of the Divine will, it is our indispensable duty to walk by the best light we have, however dim and uncertain, and always act on the safe side. This rule is never dubious nor difficult to an honest

and docile child of God, whose displeasure he will never risk for his own gratification in a matter of doubtful propriety.

The fourth question is, "Is not dancing sanctioned by the examples as well as precepts of good men, recorded in the Old Testament?" This question naturally leads me to examine upon what occasions, and for what purposes dancing was practiced by the good, or enjoined by them in the Old Testament. In Exodus, 15th ch. and 20th verse, we read: "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*. On this passage several facts are to be noted to show that it affords no example for us to follow, and no countenance nor encouragement to *modern dancing*, with which Mr. A. would confound all dancing in every period of the world's history. First, then, *religious* dancing was practiced from the remotest times; and this was a part of those religious solemnities, which she was appointed to conduct among the women as joint leader of the people with her two brothers, as God

said, I brought thee, (Israel,) up out of the land of Egypt, and sent before thee Moses, Aaron and Miriam, (Micah vi. 4.) From the beginning the Jewish women worshiped apart from the men. Of course this instance of religious dancing separate and apart from the men, whose devotions were conducted by Moses and Aaron, affords no example nor encouragement of mixed dancing. Secondly, it should be observed that great victories were applauded and celebrated by the daughters of Israel, as we learn from 1st Samuel, xviii. 6-7 verses. Indeed, it was the principal business of certain women to celebrate victories, sing at funerals, &c. Signal and memorable was the victory of the Israelites over the Egyptians at the Red Sea. It was celebrated by demonstrations of joy and gladness suited to the customs and usages of that age. The women, apart from the men, performed their part of the joyful thanksgiving with Miriam in the lead, who was a prophetess, a poetess and skillful musician. And if it was now customary for ladies to celebrate victories in the same way, I should be pleased to hear of their

praising God with vocal and instrumental music and dances, in memory of our national jubilee. Thirdly, in Judges, ch. xi. 34th verse, we find it was an ancient custom for the women to go out from home to meet returning conquerors, with musical instruments, songs and *dances*; and that it was continued afterwards, is evident from the instance already given, 1st Sam. xviii. 6-7. But will any sober man plead this as a precedent for modern dancing, or identify this with such a precedent or instance of antiquated and now obsolete dancing? I believe not. One other example of dancing found in the Old Testament, I must consider in this communication, and postpone the examples of it in the New, and the precepts, if any can be found in the Old and New. The one to which I now refer is that of David, who danced before the Ark of the Lord, when he removed it from the house of Obbedom to the tabernacle which he had prepared for it in the city of David. The circumstances connected with this act of dancing on the part of David determine its moral character to be altogether different from mod-

ern dancing. It was done "before the Lord," under a sense of his mighty presence, and in reference to His glory. It was an act of worship usual in his day. It would be absurd to regard it in any other light, as no man of his sense and relation to society would have rendered himself ridiculous and foolish as a madman upon a different supposition. It was an external act, significant of the unspeakable gladness and joy which overflowed his heart, and almost unconsciously influenced his steps, and the whole of his motion. He went on singing and shouting, as he afterwards wrote in one of his Psalms, saying, God, (meaning His Ark,) is gone up with a shout; sing praises, sing praises: he went on, I say, singing and shouting, leaping and bounding more like a man in an ecstasy of triumph than according to the fashion of a modern fiddler and dancer. It is evident that David's example of holy triumphal dancing would serve as an apology for one's jumping up and clapping his hands, and moving his head and feet, yea, his whole body, according to the measures of holy music and sacred song, better than as an example of, or

apology for the profane revelry and fashionable dances of modern frolics and parties and pastimes. When the advocates of dancing in our day shall institute a dance in token of sincere praise and gratitude to God, because his spiritual Ark is moving upward and onward to the Holy and Heavenly Jerusalem above, we, who are travelling thitherward, will joyfully bid them God speed. Until this is done, we shall not cease to blame sinners for dancing with hilarity and levity in and over their sins, as if they were triumphantly victorious over some physical or moral foe. I am not very sure that modern dancers have not robbed the people of God of this once holy and ecstatic exercise, and now delight in this unseemly plunder as if it did not exhibit them in a very inconsistent and unsuitable aspect; yea, even ludicrous light.

Well, Mr. Editor, I have been reading the Bible from childhood's tender years to almost hoary age, and never before have I been startled and astounded with such a question as the fourth of our friend, A. "Is not dancing," meaning, no doubt, such as now obtains, not

at religious revivals, but in the parlors and saloons of the gay and gorgeously appareled feasters and triflers with their God, their time and souls; "Is not dancing sanctioned by the examples, as well as the precepts of good men recorded in the Old Testament?" I answer boldly, No. "And let all the people say, Amen." The above "plain and candid answers," demanded by your "plain and perspicuous" correspondent, A., have been given with an humble and respectful regard to the opinions of those who honestly differ from the writer of this communication, though he has no doubt as to the moral wrong and turpitude of the present practice of dancing. We fear men are in the habit of approving what they merely imagine to be right, through a blind and pleasure-loving partiality for it, without sufficiently studying that high and infallible authority, which alone can distinguish between guilt and innocence. And this habit is not harmless, but vastly detrimental to the interests of sound morality and religion. It does not wound my feelings at all with your correspondent, A., that he should compare all op-

posers of modern dancing to those "over-zealous fanatics, who, in former days, had the Bible in their hands, and yet were infatuated enough to think it a sin of omission to permit a witch to live, and consequently brought dishonor upon the cause of religion, by burning hundreds of the poor wretches who were witches. Did Mr. A. intend to compare modern dancers with the witches of former days, or the opposers of modern dancing with the murderers of witches? As the former is the more reasonable comparison, and the latter is by no means just or apt, seeing the opposition to dancing is not comparable to the persecution, much less the murder of weak and deluded human beings, we will not be offended by what is altogether out of place and inapplicable to us. Mr. A. must have acutely felt the sting of the resemblance instituted by himself between the advocates of dancing and the witches of former days, or the injustice of comparing our opposition to it to the cruel and deadly violence inflicted by relentless persecutors on weak and wicked witches; hence that qualifying expression of a "lighter hue,"

with which he seeks to palliate and soften one or the other point and member of the comparison. If the comparison was intended principally for the opponents of the fashionable dance, and he was not blinded by the kicked-up dust of a furious, blustering vehemence against them, he must have seen that the objects of *persecution*, to use his language, are immensely different; one being a bad practice, the other a set of human beings requiring our sympathy; the methods of *extinction* altogether contrary; in the case of dancing, a written or verbal opposition; in the case of the witches, a burning to death. And I would ask Mr. A. what resemblance he can discover between the opponents of dancing, who respectfully endeavor to put it down by moral suasion, and those persecuting fanatics who burnt people alive on a free soil, and thereby "brought dishonor upon the cause of religion?" I think his "over-zealousness" *for* dancing and *against* the opponents of it, has infatuated himself, and rendered him blind to the force, or rather weakness, of his reasoning, and the entire irrelevancy of his compari-

son. I wish Mr. A. to understand that I am perfectly willing to be identified with the opponents of those "good and wise in all ages," who, he says, have looked upon dancing as an innocent recreation, and not as a "heinous offence." I beseech him to adduce the name of a solitary good and wise man, and establish his wisdom and goodness, who entertained the opinion he thus imputes to *all* such. Where, I would ask, can he possibly find such a name, and goodness and wisdom in connection with it, except in the conjurations of his own "over-zealous" imagination? Finally, I would beg leave most respectfully to suggest, that, in all matters of sound morality and religion, our object should be to ascertain how much *good* we can *get* and *do* by any particular practice, and not *how little harm* we may do and suffer by it.

HONESTUS.

Reply of A.

MR. EDITOR:

Were not controversy entertaining as well as instructive, we should refrain from answering the article of HONESTUS. Therefore, as to an agreeable and useful repast, we modestly invite your readers to enter with us upon its examination.

In the outset, he is guilty of a fallacy which logicians term an "ignoratio elenchi, or misapprehension of the question." We ask, is dancing wrong? He answers, that gambling is wrong. Besides the technical difficulties arising from this sophistical mode of reasoning, it tends to multiply issues indefinitely. But we excuse it, as it is a fallacy of most common occurrence. Let us approach his argument as to inexpediency. His syllogism is, that Paul exhorts to avoid whatever is inexpedient—dancing is inexpedient; therefore, we should avoid dancing. But, alas for the premises: for, first, he must show precisely what the Apostle meant by the term inexe-

diency; for it is inexpedient to freight a vessel with lumber, and send her to Maine; it is inexpedient to open a dry goods store in a pine forest; and a thousand other examples, to which no man attaches moral right or wrong. Then, as to his minor premise, he must prove that dancing is inexpedient, precisely in the sense in which the Apostle uses the term. By the time he has done this, we fear the syllogism will have melted into thin air.

HONESTUS enters upon the merits of the question, when he admits that the New Testament no where positively condemns dancing; but condemns it by inference, or more properly by implication. Let us examine this doctrine of inference, and our remarks will tend to prove, first, that so far as the doctrine can be relied upon, it is all in our favor; secondly, that it is a doctrine which our notions of the Bible condemn as unsound. Now, music and dancing were very common amusements at the time the New Testament was written. We refer the reader to the parable of the prodigal son, and to that beautiful passage, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not

danced;" where Christ mentions dancing without reproof; also to the various commentaries upon the New Testament, and to the histories of the Oriental nations. The Saviour witnessed dancing on every side, the Apostles saw it, they read of it in the Old Testament; yet, in the whole compass of their dispensation, they mention it not, except in such connection as seems to sanction, rather than condemn. They were not afraid to attack any sin; nor were they negligent in the performance of duty. What then must be the argument from inference? We leave the answer to every man who calls himself HONESTUS.

But farther: the New Testament is unto us a *perfect law*. A law is a rule of action, or order of sequence. Now, let us suppose that the legislative power of a State should enact a code of laws, or certain rules of action, and the penalty attached to disobedience should be death. Further, in connection with this code, there should be a number of familiar epistles addressed to different provinces of the State, adding to, explaining, and of equal authority with the laws themselves. Now, sup-

pose that the people, who are to obey these laws, must not only avoid those crimes which are openly written, but a thousand others which are wrapt up in implications, and which are to be unravelled by inference; else should they disobey, they must suffer death. Who could imagine a more horrid tyranny? Then is God more unjust than man? He has given us a law; to disobedience, He attaches eternal death. Has He left us then to grope our way through the dark mazes of inference? Human laws approach perfection in the exact ratio in which they avoid uncertainty and implication: therefore, as God's law is a perfect law, it never leaves man to the uncertainty of inference. These arguments, from inference, have been a fruitful source of error. A. takes the New Testament in his hands, and infers a long catalogue of forbidden actions. B. takes it and infers, and makes out his list. The natural consequence is, that these inferences, being the offspring of their own minds, are contended for more strenuously than the plain teachings of the Scriptures.

We think, then, that we may affirm that the

New Testament is silent upon the subject of dancing. Then, as HONESTUS says that the New Testament is not silent upon any duty or act of sinfulness, the conclusion is, that dancing is not an act of sinfulness.

Our argument might rest here; but we wish to follow HONESTUS in his journey through the Old Testament. We wish to remark, in the outset, that we think the Old Testament does afford an example of "mixed dancing." In the 31st of Jeremiah, 13th verse, it is written: "Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old, together." But we cannot see how this affects the morality of dancing. It would not be hard to exhibit many examples, where the prejudices of a semi-barbarous community prevented a commingling of the sexes, the folly of which has been clearly shown by a more advanced civilization. But HONESTUS insists that dancing was always restricted to religious rites and the celebration of victories in war. Now, the Old Testament is principally a record of the political and religious history of the Jews. Then, *à priori*, dancing, or any other such

like practice, would be mentioned only in connection with religious or political celebrations. But let us make use of what HONESTUS admits, namely, that dancing was sanctioned in religious rites, and in the celebration of national triumphs. But he argues that dancing, in itself, is morally wrong. What, then, is the conclusion? That the Jews, with the sanction of God, employed in religious rites, and on occasions of national triumph, a practice which, in itself, is morally wrong. It cannot be answered that dancing now, and dancing in the olden time, are different. Right and wrong are immutable. What was right three thousand years ago is right now, and will be right to all eternity, and *vice versa*. But HONESTUS throws away this staff, however weak. He "would be glad to hear of our ladies celebrating our victory over Great Britain, and praising God for our national independence with vocal and instrumental music and dances." How then? Would he have our ladies praise God by an action, the "turpitude of which is similar to that of gambling?" We see how difficult it is to

avoid the meshes of absurdity, when once we depart from the plain doctrines of the Bible. We see that HONESTUS must vary his mode of attack. From his own article he must admit that dancing, in itself, is not morally wrong. When he has candidly admitted this, and has changed the issue, by affirming that under certain circumstances it is wrong, like every thing else, we are ready to assist him in determining what are these circumstances. We are anxious, however, to settle one point at a time.

We have no doubt but that we are inferior, in theological knowledge and controversial experience, to HONESTUS; but truth is a Gibraltar, behind which a weak force may repel a mighty host.

Before closing, we would guard all men against the sophistry wrapt up in the concluding remark of HONESTUS—"that our object should be to ascertain what we should do to be saved, not what we *may* do, and yet reach the port of bliss." The remark is specious, but leads to error. Suppose one, who uses this language, thinks it harmless to condemn

a certain action, viz. dancing, and in the end it should turn out that dancing was innocent in the sight of the Lord. How do we know that God will justify such an one, who thus narrows down to his own ideas the path to Heaven, and, unwilling to discuss and investigate, elbows away from himself those whom he thus blindly condemns? May not such a man also be in danger of imbibing the spirit of the Pharisee, who said, "Lord, I thank Thee that I am not even as this publican?"

The sophistry of the conclusion of his article will, we think, startle HONESTUS, even more than he was startled when he met our fourth question.

A.

Rejoinder of Honestus.

MR. EDITOR:

I take my pen *now* to portray a few of the beauties, or rather deformities, of A.'s last performance on dancing. I intend to be as respectful as the nature of it will permit. Had *he* perceived the contradiction and "meshes of absurdity," in which that strange production entangled him, before it was committed to the printer, he certainly would not have had the "modesty," or rather the vanity, to invite the attention of this intelligent community to it, as to an "agreeable and useful repast."

In the first place, he has built up an imaginary "fallacy." For what? To "excuse" me for it, or to make his own sophistry pass for sound logic? If A., at first, had asked this question: Is modern dancing a moral wrong, or sinful? I should have entered at once upon the establishment of an affirmative answer, on Scriptural grounds, where he placed the argument. But having propound-

ed his queries in vague and general terms, without any distinction of time and circumstances, I, of course, had to show what kinds of dancing we find in Scripture, in order to ascertain which were right and which were wrong, in a moral point of view, according to that test. To define my position in relation to the subject of *modern dancing*, as well as I could in one short communication, and prosecute my plan of investigation, I answered, that though not *positively* forbidden in the New Testament, it was nevertheless inexpedient. Lest any one should "misapprehend" my application of this term, which I took from the writings of St. Paul, I afterwards affirmed that I had no doubt as to the *wrong* of modern dancing. By inexpediency I *evidently* meant no such commercial or mercantile inexpediency as A. mentions. And but for the flippancy of A.'s "repast," I should take him to be a trifler to throw out any such "notion." To illustrate the *manner* of deducing the inexpediency or moral wrong of modern dancing from Scripture, I referred to gambling, which, though not positively or by name prohibited

therein, is confessedly a moral wrong, and forbidden by inference. To show more fully that, by inference, we learn from the Bible that dancing, as a moral wrong or inexpediency, is virtually prohibited, I instituted a syllogism, thus: St. Paul exhorts and advises us to avoid what is inexpedient; but dancing is inexpedient; therefore, St. Paul exhorts and advises to avoid it. The establishment of the minor premise, to wit, that dancing was inexpedient, was put off, (though for the present taken for granted,) in my last, to make room for ascertaining what data the Scriptures furnished for and against the whole practice; in other words, to ascertain what light the Scriptures would shed upon the whole subject. And now, instead of prosecuting the plan commenced in my last, I am, for the present, prevented by the necessity of noticing A.'s inconsistencies and sophistries, with which he tries to forestall the establishment of the moral unfitness, or unchristian inexpediency of modern dancing by *inference*, which unchristian inexpediency, I had proposed to demonstrate by arguments founded

on notable facts, morally qualified by the unerring and immutable principles of religious and revealed truth.

To prevent your readers from putting any confidence in the doctrine of "inference," when employed in support of the inexpediency or moral wrong of modern dancing, he undertakes to demolish it by saying, first, so far as the doctrine can be relied upon, it is all in our favor; secondly, that it is a doctrine which our notions of the Bible condemn as "unsound." Mark, gentle reader, these are all the arguments he now uses against the doctrine of inference. In his first reason for opposing the use of it in our reasonings, he gives us to understand *some* reliance may be placed upon it, else why say, it is all in our favor? Next, he calls it an unsound doctrine. But who ever thought of relying at all upon an unsound doctrine before A.? Here, then, is A.'s "notion" about inference; it is unsound, may be relied upon to *some* extent, and is in his favor. Of course, he must use it, even after denouncing it as unsound. He begins to use it by laying down a long list of

premises, whether disputed or not, is not now the question. What are they? Take his own words: "Now, music and dancing were very common amusements at the time the New Testament was written. We refer the reader to the parable of the prodigal son, and to that beautiful passage, 'We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced;' where Christ mentions dancing without reproof; also to the various commentaries upon the New Testament, and to the histories of Oriental nations. The Saviour witnessed dancing on every side; the Apostles saw it—they read of it in the Old Testament; yet in the whole compass of their dispensation they mention it not, except in such connection as seems to sanction, rather than condemn. They were not afraid to attack any sin, nor were they negligent in the performance of duty." Here, now, are the premises. What will he do with them? Has he gotten to a dead stand? Yes, without inference. Well, he is "modest" enough to pick up that very inference which he just now denounced as "unsound," and relies upon it with all his might; and because the unsound-

ness is all "in his favor," draws the inference at a venture; and, behold, what is it? Don't laugh. Here it is. *We* think, then, that we may affirm, "that the New Testament is silent upon the subject of dancing." I quote his own words in the fifth paragraph of his piece. What is the difference between him and me, in relation to the use of inference? Answer. From the New Testament, he infers that the New Testament is silent upon the subject of dancing. I infer from its principles to facts. The Bible is a revelation of moral principles, and, in many cases, we are left to argue and determine the moral quality of facts from those principles. The application devolving upon us of those principles, as a test of right and wrong, to practice, is easy and not uncertain.

HONESTUS intends hereafter to take up the premises assumed above, and see if there is any soundness in them, and if anything can be justly and fairly inferred from them in favor of that kind of dancing which now obtains. They are introduced at this time merely to show A.'s inconsistency in denouncing

the doctrine of inference as unsound, and yet using it to establish his "notions." Is not inference, by which HONESTUS proposes to establish the moral wrong of modern dancing, as valid for him as for A.? In the fourth paragraph, A. commences again his outcry against inference. He tries hard to argue it down by making the perfection of God's law the basis of his argument. "A law," says he, "is a rule of action, or order of sequence." Now for the premises: "Now let us suppose that the legislative power of a State should enact a code of laws, or certain rules of action, and the penalty attached to disobedience should be death. Further, in connection with this code, there should be a number of familiar epistles addressed to different provinces of the State, adding to, explaining, and of equal authority with the laws themselves. Now suppose that the people, who are to obey these laws, must not only avoid those crimes which are openly written, but a thousand others which are wrapt up in implications, and which are to be unravelled by inference; else, should they disobey, they must suffer death." These

suppositions are the premises from which he draws another inference against the doctrine and use of inference. But admitting that these suppositions are a correct illustration of the facts in the case of God's law and the "epistles" upon it, in a qualified sense, especially that the wrapt-up implications be clear and satisfactory, which must be in all matters essential to salvation, whether the satisfactory clearness be inferential, or direct, positive and irresistibly plain, and that God is too merciful to condemn any man to eternal death, without giving him, in all respects, a distinct knowledge of his duty; all which we fully maintain in connection with the validity of inference, and could not in the case of the Divine law without it, then A.'s "horrid tyranny melts away into thin air," with respect to that law. I did not refer to these suppositions to give a "theological" disquisition on the correctness or unsoundness of them, but only to show again A.'s inconsistency in inferring from them, as premises, the "horrid tyranny," of which he speaks, while arguing against inference. These inferences, "who could imagine

a more horrid tyranny?" and, "Then is God more unjust than man?" which A. draws from the above suppositions, are, according to his own showing, unsound, uncertain and erroneous, "because," says he, "the doctrine of inference is unsound, God's law leaves nothing to the uncertainty of inference, and arguments from inference have been a fruitful source of error." Alas! how he exclaims against the dark mazes of inference, and relies upon them at the same time! A. says *human* laws approach perfection in the exact ratio that they avoid uncertainty and implication. Here he makes the perfection of law to depend altogether upon the language in which it is clothed, not upon the equity and justice of its provisions and principles. Of course, if a law is clothed in plain and easy words, it is perfect, however unreasonable in its requirements and prohibitions, according to his "notions." Moreover, according to A., the strength of a man's capacity to understand is to determine the perfection of a law. I ask, may not a law, just and reasonable in its principles, be a perfect law to one who is partially ignorant of

the words in which it is expressed, and therefore compelled to *infer* the meaning of some from others? A.'s illustration of divine by human law, makes the former more imperfect than the latter, seeing there is a much greater variety of opinion concerning the meaning of the one than the other, which variety of opinion he would impute to the *obscurity* of language as a mark of imperfection, and *not* to other causes found in man, the true causes of that obscurity and imaginary imperfection.

The offspring of the minds of fanatics, "A. and B.," is no argument against inference more than against the Bible itself. The abuse of anything is ascribable to the agent of that abuse, not to the thing abused. Men of corrupt hearts and minds have thought they could legitimately deduce doctrines from the Scriptures they do not contain. This is no reason why we should condemn *them* as unsound, as A. does *inference*, because it is liable to abuse, and is, in some cases, only "the offspring of their own minds." The unlearned and unstable alone wrest inference, as well as the Scriptures, to their own destruction. Let

A. then change not only his *mode* of attack, but the object of it. Let him no longer decry inference, seeing he is indebted to it for all the thesore he has ever used, and for all the conclusions of his last essay in "controversy." I must finish my review of his beauties in my next, if permitted.

HONESTUS.

From A.

MR. EDITOR :

We will endeavor to cull from the last essay of HONESTUS, whatever bears upon the subject under consideration. We would wait until that "hereafter" he so often refers to has arrived, and then answer, did we not perceive that he has started badly, and we feel an irresistible desire to set him right in the premises. As it is unnecessary for me to give another "performance" on dancing at the present stage of the controversy, our efforts will be directed to the correction of some of the misapprehensions of HONESTUS.

In the first place, let us bear in mind that he holds the affirmative. His proposition is, that the Scriptures condemn dancing. We deny it; therefore, it is not our province to establish the negative by positive argument, for that is necessarily established if we succeed in overthrowing the reasoning on which the affirmative rests.

If this is borne in mind, it will, perhaps,

more clearly elucidate our remarks on the doctrine of inference, though we did not see any necessity for HONESTUS to misconceive, or misconstrue those remarks. Our object is not to use the doctrine of inference; for we consider the negative of the question sufficiently guarded, if we deprive HONESTUS of its support. We lay down two distinct propositions: First, that the doctrine of inference from Scripture is an unsound doctrine; therefore it cannot be relied on by any one. Secondly, that supposing it be sound, it is more against HONESTUS than in his favor—*à fortiori*, it cannot be relied on by him. There is certainly nothing very obscure in this. In the first place, we deny your premises: then we say admit them to be true, they will not support your conclusion. So you perceive clearly, that we do not rely on the doctrine of inference, or any other argument thus far, our object being gained if we knock this prop from under HONESTUS, who represents the affirmative. According to our ideas of the rules of controversy, HONESTUS should prove that it is allowable to establish the moral right

and wrong of actions by inference from the Scripture; and further, that the Bible thus condemns dancing. If he fails in proving these two propositions, the doctrine of inference avails him nothing, but by his failure avails the negative every thing.

One remark upon the argument derived from the perfection of God's law—we refer the reader to that argument as being as yet unrefuted.

HONESTUS remarks in terms of dissent, that A. 'makes the perfection of law to depend altogether upon the language in which it is clothed, not upon the equity of its provisions and principles. Certainly the equity of its provisions and principles are important; but is not the language or medium of communication equally important? Suppose the civil law was just and equitable in its principles, but should be written in a language so obscure that none but the learned could know when they transgressed; it would be far from a perfect law. If a law can be complete in all its parts, or perfect, and the medium of communication to those governed by it obscure

and dark, let HONESTUS prove it. We therefore may call upon him to reconcile the perfection of God's law with this doctrine of inference. If any thing is true, and not self-evident, it certainly can be established by argument.

The term dancing appears to be too comprehensive for HONESTUS. We suppose he means that there are some kinds of dancing which the Scriptures do condemn, and other kinds, which they do not condemn. It is his duty to classify; and he is at perfect liberty so to do. He may, if he chooses, confine his remarks to that kind of dancing to which he has given the cognomen, "modern." It is, however, no more than just, that he should define or describe this kind, and show us in what it differs from ancient dancing, or how the age in which an action is performed, can affect its moral quality. However, we shall not complain if he confines his remarks to modern dancing; having first told us how far he permits us to look, whether or not to the age of the Apostles.

HONESTUS would accommodate us very

much if he would adopt some regular plan for his argument. That "hereafter," which was to unravel, explain and establish the major and minor principles of the syllogism, wherein the term inexpediency is used, appears a long way off. But we are willing to give him his own time.

We are sorry, Mr. Editor, that HONESTUS finds any difficulty in being respectful. If the reasonings of your opponent are too sound for you to overthrow, it is always better to submit with a good grace, than to lose your dignity. The invitation to the "repass" by no means referred to our article; but rather to the examination of the essay of HONESTUS, or perhaps to the controversy. Besides, Sir, as far as rhetorical beauty is concerned, it was about as graceful an introduction as the first sentence of HONESTUS' last, viz: "I take my pen now to portray a few of the beauties, or rather deformities of A.'s last performance on dancing." A sentence which reminds me forcibly of A.'s performance *in* dancing. It seems to me that the affirmative of the question is suffering very much from want of at-

tention, while HONESTUS is dilating upon A.'s vanity, modesty, beauty, notions, flippancy, deformities, tendency to trifle, &c., &c. Thus far, however, we have found no difficulty in being respectful. But for the love of truth, let us discuss one thing at a time: after we have settled the right or wrong of dancing, we shall then have leisure enough to look into A.'s perfections and imperfections.

A.

From Honestus.

MR. EDITOR:

I will now complete my review of A.'s second performance on dancing, or as he might prefer it without an ellipsis, and in more literary and refined style, A's second classical effort in polemical composition on the "entertaining" subject of genteel dancing; the "equity" of which, I will not say, "are important" or obvious, though the effort, composition, "article or examination, or perhaps controversy," may be a precious treasure to "cull" from, when he has shed his first feathers. It has been seen that A., after drawing an inference from the New Testament in favor of dancing, affirms that it is silent upon the subject; then makes this contradictory declaration the major proposition of another argument. The minor proposition of this argument is in these words: "HONESTUS says the New Testament is not silent upon any duty or act of sinfulness." These words of HONESTUS are wrested from their connec-

tion, and his meaning, therefore, not fairly represented. I had assumed the position that modern dancing was an act of sinfulness or moral wrong, and that the New Testament, being "a perfect law," could not be silent upon it; because, strictly speaking, it was not silent upon any duty or sinful act. What, then, are the real premises from which A. draws the conclusion that dancing is not an act of sinfulness? First, "We affirm the New Testament *is* silent upon dancing." Secondly, "HONESTUS says it is not silent upon it." "The conclusion is, it is not an act of sinfulness." After giving such a sample of *his* logic, will any *really* logical man blame me for not accepting his proffered "assistance" to decide upon any question of Christian Ethics? A.'s *example* of mixed dancing, Jer. xxxi. 13, happens to be a prediction, in which the word dance is used as a figure expressive of joy, the reverse of mourning and sorrow. Really, he does not seem to know the difference between an example and prediction, any better than he sees the difference between dancing now and dancing in the "olden time," or even between

consistency and contradiction. Is it not time, therefore, for him to begin to distrust his ability to enlighten this community, at least on morals? I have examined the above prophetic declaration in three Bibles, and find the punctuation in each different from A.'s, which—I mean *his* punctuation—alters the sense, and, in a measure, favors his construction. “Together,” in the passage, evidently refers to the “young men and old” alone, and not to the “virgins,” as one might suppose from reading it with A.'s punctuation. Now, take the passage honestly and truly pointed: “Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together,” &c. With the text thus pointed, can any honest man, by any fair interpretation, find in it, or deduce from it, an *example* of mixed dancing? A. assumes the position that the Old Testament furnishes examples of mixed dancing. I deny it, and put him upon the proof of the negative; in other words, I demand the proof of his position or affirmation. Then, instead of producing even one example, he adduces a *prediction*, in which he alters the punctuation, which, as I find it

in three Bibles, shows that the virgin should rejoice in the dance apart, but the young and old men together. Observe, he makes no attempt to quote precepts in favor of modern dancing from the Old Testament, and when challenged to produce both "examples and precepts" therefrom in favor of dancing, failing in both entirely, he shamefully shuffles and skulks off, saying, "HONESTUS represents the affirmative," viz: that the Scriptures condemn dancing; "I deny; therefore, let HONESTUS prove this my negative, or *his* affirmative." Before this is done, however, for want of time, (which, by the way, is not necessary in an argument against the innocency of dancing, by inference, for more than one in a million, that is, for a senseless sophist only,) he flies off in a tangent; and, by twists and turns, assumptions and contradictions, offering me his feeble assistance, alleging my want of a plan, and charging me to change my *mode* or plan, &c. &c., he shows his restless sense of the hard pressure, and cuts his work short in repetition and unrighteousness and the hopeless imbecility of his cause.

I would now ask A. if one prediction, perverted by him as to punctuation, and hence misrepresented, abused and misapplied, *embraces* that great array of “examples and precepts of good men recorded,” as he says, “in the Old Testament,” and upon which he founds the innocence, or rather *duty*, of dancing? For I am sure that such “examples and precepts” *for* an action in morals—“once right, always right,” as A. says—if found in the Old Testament, would convey to us the idea of *duty*, for the observance of which the churches ought to enact and enforce a rule, instead of reprobating the practice of it, as many of them do, and all ought to do.

A. cannot see how the commingling of the sexes in dancing affects the morality of it. On this I observe, first, it shows a very important circumstantial difference, even in a moral point of view, between the modern practice, and those dances in religious worship and the celebration of victories, which were not mixed nor forbidden, but rather sanctioned by the Almighty. And here I will take occasion to say more fully, what I evidently *intended* be-

fore, that, if it were now *customary*, and we had the sanction of God for the custom, as the Israelites had it, to worship and praise him in the dance, and also celebrate victories with dancing, I should be glad to hear of our ladies dancing on such occasions. All in this remark, as before, is made to depend upon a divinely sanctioned custom. I observe, secondly, that a very large majority of Christians have seen a tendency to sin in those actions which are performed in a mixed dance, and being taught of God to refrain from all occasions, and even the first approaches and appearances of sin, they prudently abstain from the modern dance on these grounds, and others that might be named. Yes, they abstain from it for reasons which keep them from the theatre and such like places of amusement. And when A. becomes a converted man, he will see and do likewise. Till he suffers the Spirit of God to awaken his conscience, and enlighten his understanding, he will see as he now does. To return, I will further observe, that we have a partial comment on the view which genuine Christians

take of this subject, even in the conduct of some inconsistent and cold-hearted professors, who visit dancing parties, and take pleasure in looking at the dancers, but have a little too much conscience left to let them join the mazy, giddy practice.

A. says, "it would not be hard to exhibit many examples where the prejudices of a semi-barbarous community prevented a commingling of the sexes, the folly of which has been clearly shown by a more advanced civilization." Let him give us these examples; but let him not travel from the record of Scripture, on which he rested his defence of dancing, to "various commentaries and histories of Oriental nations." In the mean time, I will give him an example of the contrary, from the most enlightened nation and authentic record, (Esther i. 3, also 9th to the 12th inclusive,) where, it will be seen, it was not customary for females to appear among men at feasts. This accounts for Vashti's refusing to come before the king at his commandment. Now, though it may be a proof of "advanced civilization," for aught I know, for ladies and gen-

tlemen to meet together for religious, intellectual and charitable purposes; yet it can be no proof or means of "advanced civilization," to meet at dancing parties for tittle-tattle and mixed exercises, like the indecent and immodest waltz, that do not, in the remotest degree, tend to the knowledge or love of God.

A. says, "HONESTUS insists that dancing was always restricted to religious rites and the celebration of victories in war." Far from it. Let him give the language for this, in my communication, "word for word, and letter for letter." There is nothing in it which imports as much by any fair construction. If those examples adduced in my first were thus restricted, there remain others to be considered not subject to this restriction; nor did I even intimate that there were no other kinds of dancing on record. But this remark is as true as another of his, viz: "HONESTUS says that dancing is, *in itself*, sinful." Of course, the man who is guilty of falsehood will accuse another of it. Again, he says, "the Old Testament is principally a record of the political and religious history of the Jews." This is

another wide mistake. By far the greater part is biographical, poetical, devotional and prophetic, in which, I believe, dancing is used mostly in a figurative sense. Take another blunder from the unguarded and hasty pen of A. "HONESTUS admits," says he, "that dancing was sanctioned in religious rites and in the celebration of triumphs. But he argues that dancing, in itself, is morally wrong." Really, I pity the man who is capable of imputing to me such an absurdity and contradiction, without the slightest reason, authority or evidence for it. In opposition to A., it may be truly urged, that dancing now, and dancing in the olden time, are different in a moral sense. That kind of dancing which was then sanctioned does not obtain now, and that which obtains now was not sanctioned then, as any attentive reader of the Bible may see. A.'s position on the subject of dancing, to my apprehension, is, that it is, *in itself*, morally right or innocent. And being determined on diametrical opposition to me, he imagined, really or pretendedly, that I maintained it to be wrong "*in itself*," though he

had stated I restricted it to religious rites and the celebration of victories, which uses manifestly implied no moral wrong, especially under the divine sanction.

I admit that the moral *principles* of right and wrong are immutable, but it does not follow hence that an *action* once right is always right. Might not God sanction the dancing of Miriam at the Red Sea, and not sanction the same exercise among the Israelites in the worship of the golden calf, and of Salome afterwards before Herod? Whatever the circumstances were which occasioned the moral difference in these exercises, it is abundantly obvious to the candid that Miriam's dancing was precisely the opposite of the Israelites' and Salome's, in a moral point of view.

To argue from principles to practices as A. does is the veriest sophistry imaginable. According to this the observance of Jewish rites and ceremonies would be right now, because it was once right. A. argues all along upon the principle that dancing is immutably right; pretends in a few words to admit, that, under some circumstances, *it* may be wrong,

(meaning that the circumstances only are wrong,) whereby an immutable right is abused. Whereas HONESTUS maintains that, as to modern dancing, the thing itself, but not dancing of the Old Testament, is morally wrong, because it is a waste of time and substance, an injury to enlightened conscience and the spirit of piety, practiced without reference to the glory of God, and a preparation for death and judgment, all which and more than which might be added, is directly and plainly contrary to the word of God, and hence morally inexpedient or sinful. The facts asserted are easily established by numberless witnesses; the inference is just, that it is therefore a moral wrong. As to this legitimate and common use of inference, there is no dissent of any nation under Heaven. It is a principle upon which we reason, we act, and, above all, try the innocent and guilty, and condemn or acquit, according to what is called presumptive and circumstantial evidence. The man who thinks and acts otherwise is unlike the great majority of men, and ought to be treated as a madman or victim of insanity.

I wish to inform A., for his consolation, that no *intelligent* Christian will condemn a certain action merely because he thinks the *act* of condemning harmless. If he does so, he will do it from a sense of duty; nothing less will be a sufficient reason, especially when the "certain action" is a worldly and fashionable amusement. His supposition, then, is no more than the chimera of a sickly fancy, having no foundation in fact or reason.

I now promise to accommodate A. with the "hereafter," about which he expresses so much anxiety, when he has established the affirmative which he holds, viz: that dancing is sanctioned by the examples and precepts of good men recorded in the Old Testament, and abandons his unbelief in inference. Till then it will be unnecessary for me to notice any more he may say, at least for his benefit.

It is known that every body, in dancing after the modern fashion, is compelled, from the very nature of this exercise, to lay aside both "dignity" and gravity. Is it, therefore, very surprising that, in writing upon it, I should, for a while, dispense with a little of

both, not because A. crows, "victory," before day, but because the subject and his whole manner of advocating it irresistibly tempt me to use a little sharpness or severity? But let it be remembered, if I am at all severe in any of my remarks, that I am not personal in them; they are directed only against the sophistries and fictitious name of A—Dancer. Let A. remain occult behind Gibraltar, the rock of truth, should I again face it to establish more fully the affirmative which I hold, viz: that the New Testament condemns modern dancing, by inference. May he not *continue* "an offence unto truth," as Peter was for a time, when Christ, the Truth, said unto him, "Get behind me, Satan," (meaning Satan in Peter,) "thou art an offence unto me;" but may the weapons of truth, which are not carnal, protect him against the "carnal" pleasure of this sinful and worldly amusement. So prays your obedient

"HONESTUS."

From A.

MR. EDITOR:

The manner in which HONESTUS persists in treating the subject of dancing, compels us to retire from its farther discussion with him. We regret that the answers to the questions, which originated this discussion, should have been attempted by one who manifests such an irresistible aversion to methodical argument. We have desired, we have entreated, and we have endeavored to compel HONESTUS to confine himself to the point at issue; but our efforts have been in vain. Why this is so, we cannot imagine; for certainly his view of the question is not so weak but that some argument may be built upon it, which may be specious if not true. But, perhaps, HONESTUS found it the easier way to establish his propositions by discussing qualities which he imagined belonged to A. The result, however, has been, that no one has been benefited by his enquiries, and the right or wrong of dancing has become to be considered a dry subject for investigation.

All we have to say is, that our queries are still before the public, and we will read with pleasure any communication which will answer those queries in such a manner as will enlighten our minds, and the minds of others upon the subject to which they refer. Perhaps, Sir, the communication of "Amigis" was an answer to those questions: if so, we should be happy to see it published. If there is any one who will answer our queries in an intelligent and methodical manner, he will excuse us if we guard him against some mistakes which it may barely be possible for an intelligent man to make.

In the first place, let it be remembered that we come forward as an inquirer, desiring to be enlightened ourselves, as well as to have others enlightened. We do not even affirm that dancing is right: our only question being, Is it condemned by the Scriptures? If the arguments which are intended to prove the affirmative of this question, are unsatisfactory, we will endeavor to show their fallacy. If he fail in showing that the Scriptures condemn dancing, then we can all safely advance

to the conclusion that no man can condemn the practice.

In the second place, we desire that our peculiar qualities, logical, rhetorical, polite or religious, will not be made the most prominent subjects for remark.

In the third place, we desire that whoever will answer our queries, will be one who, unlike HONESTUS, will in no instance dispense with dignity or courtesy, qualities which must be possessed by that man who can claim from others polite attention.

If, however, Mr. Editor, the subject is dropped, we cannot say that we shall feel very much dissatisfied, though we are acquainted with many gentlemen who condemn dancing, and whose reputation might warrant us in expecting a fair and candid discussion of the subject.

A.

From Honestus.

MR. EDITOR :

It is clear to all who have carefully read the articles on dancing, recently published in the *Newbernian*, that A., in the outset, did assume the position, in the form of a question, which carried with it all the force of a most positive affirmation, that dancing, for amusement and pleasure, was sanctioned by the examples and precepts of good men recorded in the Old Testament. Up to his last communication, the whole tenor of what he has written upon the subject shows that he has been trying to maintain this position. This will manifestly appear, when it is considered that, like a drowning man catching at a straw, he introduced a prediction for an example of Scripture, thus showing conclusively that he could find no examples and precepts upon which to rest his position. Against this position, in my first communication, I asserted that the New Testament condemned it by inference, and stated that the Old sustained and

confirmed the New. This first communication of mine was only the commencement of a series of numbers, by which I intended to establish the assertion. The prosecution of the series, or the examination of Scripture, was suspended by the necessity of reviewing and exposing, in two articles, the sophistries, groundless charges, and gratuitous assertions found in A.'s second production. These I called upon him to establish, which he has failed to do. As an honest man, therefore, he should retract them. But, instead of this, he tries to sneak off and sidle away, by pretending, as a reason, that he has "desired, entreated, and endeavored to compel me to come to the point at issue, but all in vain." The true reason was, if he had the magnanimity to confess it, I had dismissed him as being almost equally incapable of teaching and being taught, and he felt the shame of seeing his weakness and sophistries exposed. His giving us to understand that he will not be dissatisfied if the discussion be dropped, only shows that he has acquired a little more knowledge of his "inferiority in theological

knowledge and controversial experience." This too must be the real cause of shifting his ground from that of an advocate of dancing to that of an inquirer. I might suppose, that as he could not discover the difference between an example and a prediction, and between "dancing now and dancing in the olden time," so also he might not see the difference between a defeat and a victory. But really it looks like an insufferable pretence, or an instance of willful blindness, in A. to say, he "cannot imagine why I manifest such an irresistible aversion to methodical argument, and will not adopt some regular plan." I suppose he thinks he may as well say this as anything else, since his ideas on dancing are exhausted, and he knows not how else or better to parry the force of what I say. I now gladly flatter and console myself that he is done "darkening counsel by words without knowledge," and that I shall have the pleasure of resuming and prosecuting the argument begun in my first communication.

By examining the Old Testament, we find, as before stated, that dancing was practiced

in divine worship and in the celebration of victories. On such occasions, we have not the slightest reason to believe it was wrong. But it was practiced in the worship of the golden calf. This was an act of gross and pagan idolatry; therefore, undeniably and obviously wrong.

There are no precepts for dancing in the Old Testament, except such as inculcate this exercise upon the Jews, in the praise and worship of God, such as we find in Psalms clix. and cl., where David exhorts and commands the people to praise Him, thus, "Let them praise his name in the dance;" and again, "Praise Him with the timbrel and dance." I am sure that no man, in his sober senses, will ever derive any authority from such precepts as these, for the *amusement* of dancing, as now indulged. I am equally sure that no intelligent and candid man will apply this passage, "There is a time to *mourn*, and a time to dance," Eccl. iii. 4, to the modern dance, after reading the context; if he were to construe it literally, and not as a figurative expression of the opposite of mourning, (in

which latter sense he ought to construe and apply it,) he would certainly apply it to that part of religious worship, which, in Solomon's day, was equally usual perhaps with vocal and instrumental music. Yet this is neither an example nor a precept for the now fashionable dance. To construe this passage, and the others in near connection with it, in a literal sense, would be perfectly absurd, as such a construction would involve an injunction to *kill*, as it is written, "there is a time to kill."

The first *example* of dancing which I shall notice of the two that occur in the New Testament, is that found in the parable of the prodigal son, (Luke xv. 25.) A parable is a comparison of one thing with another, used to illustrate the principles and effects of religion by objects and customs familiar to our senses. Among other things, the above parable was intended to represent the natural benevolence and placability of the Almighty towards sinners, by the tender affection and natural amiability of disposition in the heart of an earthly parent towards a rebellious, but penitent child, and also the joy produced in the Church of

God by the conversion of a repentant sinner. Many irreligious men, on account of their strong natural affection, make the most indulgent and forgiving parents; and it is this affection which constitutes the point of resemblance between an earthly parent and the Father of our Spirits, without at all determining the moral or religious character of such a parent. But if the figure be taken from a *good* man, in a religious sense, it is rendered the more striking and beautiful. In addition to this point of resemblance between a good man and God, (by the way all figures of spiritual things are necessarily gross and imperfect,) the joy occasioned by the salvation of a penitent sinner is in like manner explained by a *figure* taken from a particular act, without deciding or sanctioning the moral quality of that act. If this idea be inadmissible, then would our interpretations of Scripture be contradictory thereof, seeing that theft is a moral wrong and forbidden thereby, yet the coming of a thief is used as a figure to describe the sudden and unexpected advent of Christ to judge the world. On the suppo-

sition that the dancing mentioned in the parable of the prodigal son was a *worldly amusement*, these remarks show that the use of the word, as a figure in that place, does not countenance the practice of it as such, any more than the gold ring put on the prodigal's finger countenances the wearing of gold as an *ornament*, in opposition to the plain letter and whole spirit of Christianity; otherwise, we might prove that racing, wrestling, and fighting, or wars, are morally right, because these exercises are used in Scripture as figures to illustrate the character of the Christian life. Yea, upon this mode of reasoning, we should involve ourselves in the heinous absurdity of making a moral right of drunkenness, which is used as a figure in the Scriptures, and of whose sinful and damnable character and tendency God plainly and pointedly speaks, when he associates drunkards with liars and adulterers, and declares that they shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. But if the exercise of dancing in the family of the father of the prodigal son was a religious exercise, and this cannot be

disproved by the advocates of modern dancing, then is it altogether against his doctrine upon this subject.

The other case of dancing found in the New Testament I must reserve for another paper; remarking, in conclusion, that the notice I have taken of A. in the present is not for his benefit, seeing nothing I have said would satisfy him, unless I had passed unnoticed his erroneous statements, and would concede to his vanity the victory which he so fondly arrogates to himself. No antagonist, Sir, would suit him but one who would gratify him in these respects.

HONESTUS.

From the same.

MR. EDITOR:

The other case of dancing found in the New Testament is that of Salome before Herod and his guests, at a feast on the anniversary of Herod's birth-day. When we consider the character of this woman, the occasion on which she danced, and the effects of it upon herself and others, so far from being encouraged by her example to indulge in the same practice under similar circumstances, evidently and widely different from those connected with religious worship and the celebration of victories, it ought to serve as an awful warning against it to all parents and children.

It was not customary for women of unsullied character to make their appearance with men at public feasts, (Esther i. 3-9.) None but those of suspicious and doubtful repute appeared in the midst of feasters and drinkers of wine and profligate persons. From this fact and *others* we may gather from the narrative, we may justly infer that Salome was

an abandoned prostitute, like her mother Herodias, who married her uncle Philip, but forsook him, and lived unlawfully with his brother Herod. John the Baptist told Herod it was not lawful for him to have his brother's wife. This excited *her* malice against the faithful minister; to gratify which, she devised a stratagem in which her daughter very promptly participated. For it is said by the sacred historian that she came in with haste. Being before instructed by her revengeful mother, she *leaped* or *jumped* into the midst of the festive company. This is the import of the original. No doubt, she did her best and prettiest, when the sundered head of a godly man was the prize of her maternal bidding, and the great object to which she aspired more than to half the kingdom. This elegant example of the accomplished art of polite and graceful education must have been very remarkable, to have lulled the king's conscience for a while, and made him willing to kill a good man, for fear of violating his oath, and displeasing his guests. It must have been a very bad company, to have been pleased

enough to desire that Herod should pay for dancing the bloody head of a good man. What a splendid and superb present for a lady of refined sensibility and virtuous modesty! If this be sarcastic irony, then the reverse of this exclamation is the stern truth and fact in the case. One other incident connected with the history of this ill-fated female is the fact of her terminating an infamous life, by meeting an accidental and untimely death, as those did who were co-workers with her in the murder of a holy and useful man of God—an end they met as just and merited, as the cause was criminal and cruel; under God's judicial vengeance, this awful end they realized.

Will any one plead for festive, sportive dancing in view of consequences like these? Was there any thing just or lovely or pure or virtuous or praiseworthy in that kind of dancing which was prompted by vanity and revenge, rewarded by murder, and eventually punished by the Providence of God with a premature and ignominious death? The history of this case will be a standing argument against it to

the end of time, an argument durable as the pillars of Heaven—an argument as impressive as the voice of God sounding from the vaulted arch of the visible firmament, and as clear and loud, in the ear of wisdom, as the stunning roar of seven-fold thunder. If any, therefore, have ears to hear and a heart to feel, let him hear and feel the solemn, awful sound, as if the great archangel's voice he heard, as well as the last trump of God. Yea, let him feel as ne'er before he felt, as if he saw the great white throne, and Him that sits thereon.

Having looked in vain through the New Testament for precepts in favor of dancing in the modern style, and found two examples, from which we can infer nothing in favor of it in either case, and much against it in one, to wit, that of Salome, I desire now to answer an objection to the moral evil of it, founded by A. upon the following assertions: "Now, music and dancing were very common amusements at the time the New Testament was written. We refer the reader to the parable of the prodigal son, and to that beautiful passage, 'We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced;' where

Christ mentions dancing without reproof; also to the various commentaries upon the New Testament, and to the histories of Oriental nations. The Saviour witnessed dancing on every side; the Apostles saw it, they read of it in the Old Testament; yet in the whole compass of their dispensation they mention it not, except in such connexion as seems to sanction, rather than condemn. They were not afraid to attack any sin, nor were they negligent in the performance of duty." Here now is the language of bold declamation, as if he knew, with absolute certainty, that Christ and the Apostles taught and prohibited nothing, except what is *expressly* laid down by the pen of inspiration. From these *assertions* or *supposed facts*, A. infers, yes, affirms, that the New Testament is silent upon dancing. What then? Why, of course, Christ and the Apostles, and the New Testament are not opposed to it. If this is not A.'s *inference* from their *supposed* silence, it is of no use to his argument. He seems as much pressed for examples and precepts in favor of dancing from the New as from the Old Testament.

But why *seek* for such in both, and find none, if, in fact, as he says, he only denies and puts me upon the proof of the negative, or upon the *proof* of *my affirmation*, which proof I have *admitted* from the beginning to be only inferential, and yet perfectly satisfactory, as I have demonstrated by various examples, and shown the absurdity of the opposite position, and the insanity of denying the validity of such proof.

I ask the reader now, if it is not as fair and logical for me to draw an inference from what is recorded in the New Testament on the subject of dancing, as for A. to draw an inference from suppositions, or *asserted* facts, to the silence of Christ and his Apostles, and another inference thence to the innocency or moral right of dancing? But let me consider and analyze those suppositions. And, first, he says, "Now music and dancing were very common *amusements* at the time the New Testament was written." Here we see the sense in which A. uses the word dancing, viz: it was an *amusement*, yea, a very "common" one; as if it was used for no other purpose but

amusement. In this sense and in the following words he speaks of it: "We refer the reader to the parable of the prodigal son." How does he know that the prodigal's father used, or suffered it to be used in his house, for this purpose, or as an amusement? Answer. I suppose in no other possible way but by that repudiated doctrine of inference. But, behold, what an unfair and forced inference! From the whole scope of the parable, *I* was simple enough to consider it a *figure* expressive of joy and gladness, as the *ring* expresses one of honor—the fatted calf a figure of the abundant provisions and privileges of God's house and family. A. refers next to "that beautiful passage," "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced," as an allusion to the same "amusement." But I ask, how he knows our Saviour spoke in reference to this "*common amusement*" of dancing, and not to dancing as a religious exercise? Here is that same inference he so pertinaciously rejects, yet uses overly often. But, says A., Christ here mentions dancing without reproof. I answer, he used it as a figure for *illustration*,

not the *condemnation* of it, as a moral wrong, which was not the object of its introduction. Such was his custom in regard to many figures borrowed from customs and habits, in themselves morally wrong, yet he uses them without reprobation at the time, and without pronouncing upon their sinfulness or lawfulness. It is unnecessary here to repeat instances. I will only ask on this, if Christ approbated the moral character of the five foolish virgins, whom he merely used as a figure of graceless professors of religion? As to "the various commentaries and histories of Oriental nations," mentioned by A., they furnish a sad account of that same old heathen "*amusement*," whose moral turpitude, as well as prevalence, they uniformly dip in colors of crimson red, like sins of scarlet hue. Even a profane author, whose very name is but another word for profligacy—I mean the much admired, yet licentious Horace, says—"it is a species of moral corruption, also a proof and incentive of such corruption." Speaking of the corruptions of the Theatre, he introduces *this* among others requiring reformation, "The *festive*

dance to luxury the chorus added." A. thus proceeds with his suppositions: "The Saviour witnessed dancing on every side." Of course he means as a worldly "amusement," seeing he does not change the sense. Does A. *infer* again, and draw his inference from the charge of Christ's enemies, "He receiveth sinners and eateth with them," or this, "A friend of publicans and sinners," or from his having attended one wedding by particular request? If so, the question recurs, How does A. know there was dancing in the sense of a worldly "amusement," when He was present, or that He did not condemn but rather sanctioned it? Will he fly again to that much abused inference, and inconsistently *infer* that the "holy, harmless, and undefiled Saviour, who was separate from sinners, encouraged and countenanced, by his awful sanction, that "*amusement*," as *many* of his pretended followers now do—and some even participate on Saturday night, and then on Sabbath, in Church, sing Psalms, and say prayers, with as much ostentation and less gravity than the Jewish hypocrites of old? "The Apostles saw it,"

says A., "they read of it in the Old Testament; yet, in the whole compass of their dispensation, they mention it not, except in such connection as *seems* to sanction rather than condemn." Well, now, is it not marvellous that A. should know *every thing* the Apostles wrote and spoke? Or does he suppose that every thing they wrote and spoke has come down to us in the "Acts of the Apostles," and their short letters to the Churches? But they *did* mention it, says he; I ask, *where*? He answers, "We think, then, that we may affirm that the New Testament is silent upon the subject of dancing." Where, then, is the sanction? He answers, "in such connection." I ask what connection? He answers, *silent* connection. Pitiful cause *that*, which requires such shifts and shuffling! "The Apostles were not afraid to attack any sin, nor were they negligent in the performance of duty." How does he know this? Do *they*, or any *others* say so, in so many words? I think not. If they have spoken directly or positively to this effect, I ask, *where*? Will A. say, as before, "I think we may affirm, they are silent

upon this subject, and yet *infer* what he says from the only true record of their acts and teachings, not from "commentaries and histories of Oriental nations," with which he has nothing to do in his queries or the discussion of their subject matter? *I*, too, *infer* that they were not afraid to attack any sin, dancing, as an "amusement," not excepted; nor were they negligent in the performance of duty with regard to this matter, as I shall presently endeavor to show, even clearly and satisfactorily, though by "*implication*"—*implication* strong and conclusive.

HONESTUS.

From Honestus.

According to promise, I am to prove, by *implication*, that dancing, as an *amusement*, is morally wrong or sinful; that is, opposed to the Word of God; in other words, it is *virtually* or *impliedly* forbidden therein.

To implicate is to entangle, entwine, to wrap up, as in a cloth, to catch, as in a net, to circumvent, to hamper or include, to cover up or enshroud. Implication is the act of concealing or hiding one thing under or by another, as words clothe our ideas, as the body contains and covers or conceals the soul. For example further, a shadow indicates a substance, an effect a cause, though invisible, a type an anti-type. An argument by implication is a process of demonstration, by which we reach a conclusion, or learn something not directly stated, from what is stated. Now, although we do not learn the thing implied directly and declaratively by positive plain revelation, yet we rest in the conclusion as securely as if we drew it from the immediate and direct testi-

mony of the senses or personal testimony. In this way we learn the existence of God. The Scriptures do not expressly declare the existence of God; yet we infer it therefrom, and him who denies it, God calls a fool. The heavens declare, imply the existence of a God. Works imply a workman, and circumstances prove and establish facts. And we might go on thus to almost any length, in the way of illustration, which, in many instances, is so striking and convincing as to carry irresistible conviction to the mind. Now for the application of this principle and mode of reasoning to the deduction of moral or religious truth from the Bible, upon which principle I have placed the argument in favor of the position that dancing, in the sense of an amusement, is sinful, yet I have as strong evidence of its moral wrong as of many other sins which are *nominally* forbidden. For instance, we are not taught in the Bible not to fish, to hunt, to travel, or to cook, on Sunday; yet we know these employments, on that day, to be sinful, because the general command, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," distin-

guishes them and similar desecrations from a holy observance. We are not commanded to cultivate and improve the mind in so many words; yet, who doubts or neglects the duty of so doing, but the slothful and *wicked* servant? We are not commanded to refrain from converting grain to whiskey and selling it for gain in the manufacture of drunkards; yet, none but the morally and willfully blind doubt the sin of this great curse. The sin of cruelty is not forbidden by name; but while it is written, "the righteous man is merciful to his beast," and "blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," we shall *infer* that the cruel man is a sinner. I believe the lover of filthy lucre and needless self-indulgence alone will justify, upon moral principles, the practice of making liquor and tobacco, at an expense of time and strength which might be employed far more advantageously otherwise; but the lover of man and God will *infer* clearly the sin of that expense, though it be not expressly denounced by God in his Word. But as to dancing for *amusement*, we have implied cautions against it of the strongest kind, nearly

approaching, if not amounting to positive interdictions. A positive prohibition of some *general* sin by name, includes a direct and explicit denunciation of all the specific sins included or implied in that general name. Such an explicit and direct denunciation we have in Scripture against dancing, under the general name of revellings and riotings. These revellings are called the works of the flesh, of which St. Paul says, and he is chief of the apostles, who will speak for the rest, and himself too, they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. v. 21.) Revellings, in a Scriptural sense, consist of luxurious feasting, drinking wine, with music and dancing, all which are expressly forbidden under the general name of revellings, which word, being in the plural, signifies several particulars, one of which is dancing. The Greek word for revellings is the same as signifies, in Latin, *Comus*—the God of Revelry. The Greek word is from the Hebrew, *Chemosh*, the abomination of the Moabites and Amorites. The religious services performed to this idol, as to Baal-Peor, consisted in feasting, drunk-

eness, obscenity and impurities of the gross-est kinds. In this sense the Greek word for revellings is used by profane authors. In Wisdom xiv. 23, the idolaters are described as making mad revellings; and in Maccabees vi. 4, we are told that, during the persecution of Antiochus, the Temple was filled with riot and revellings. From the Greek verb, *χωμαζειν*, which signifies to revel, the Latin, *comissor*, comes, which is of the same import, and signifies to make good cheer, to junket, to feast, to revel, dance, to banquet after supper. Here, then, we have a *word*, which includes dancing, under which word, as a general name, that specific sin of dancing is forbidden. It is needless to multiply quotations, one on this subject being as good as a thousand.

In reference to this specific sin of idolatry among the Israelites, "the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play," doubtless meaning to dance, God speaks in terms of reprobation. Idolatry has been represented and treated as the most heinous of sins, unless we except the sin against the Holy Ghost. But what is idolatry but the worship of idols?

And what does this worship consist in, if not in feasting, drinking, music and dancing in honor of the idol? All revellings are abominable idolatries, and dancing is a prominent part of these revellings or idolatries. The worship of the true God, as well as idols, has been celebrated by dances. We have endeavored to show, in the case of divine worship conducted by Miriam at the Red Sea, it was morally right: in the case of the idolatrous Israelites, dancing in revelry around the golden calf was a great sin. If idolaters got the practice from God's people, it became the perversion of a divinely instituted religious rite, and that perversion was a sinful desecration. If God's people took it from the heathen, God's authority converted this idolatrous exercise to a hallowed purpose. If the institution of it was the Devil's, its nature and use were diabolical. If God was the originator, 'twas right, and He giveth no account of his ways to man. Christ spoke directly or impliedly against idolatry and all its obscene, impure, lascivious and festive rites, dancing among the rest, when he said, "Thou shalt worship the

Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Thus He spake in the Old, and thus in the New, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength." As a cause involves an effect, though they are known by different names, a prohibition of one is an implied prohibition of the other, as the one includes the other. To apply this theory to practice, as feasting and drinking—I mean excessive—generally produce or include dancing, and the former are positively forbidden by Christ, the latter—I mean the effect—which is dancing, is necessarily and even positively forbidden, though not under its own peculiar name. See Luke xxi. 34: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be over-charged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." In the New Testament, by our Saviour and his Apostles, rioting, which implicates dancing, is mentioned in "*such* connection" as not only "seems" to condemn, but actually carries with it the force of demonstration, and even the fearful weight of a positive malediction.

The idea of rioting, conveyed by the Greek word for it, is that of waste, *ασῶτια*, which is compounded of *alpha* and *σωζω*. The former signifies absence or want, the latter means to save or reserve, or economize, to be frugal. The compound signifies a waste of time and substance. This is the idea our Saviour gives of its meaning in its application to the prodigal son, a character he uses to represent a sinner wasting his soul and body, time and substance in feasting and drinking and making merry. Christ says, "The prodigal went into a far country, and there wasted his substance in riotous living," devoured his father's living with harlots, feasting, drinking and dancing, with songs and music, all which is intended as a counterpart to those spiritual and hallowed exercises, which inspire the Christian with true happiness and delight. Josephus uses the phrase, "to live riotously," in the sense of such carnal pleasures as those above. Ant. book xii. ch. 4, s. 8. St. Paul uses the same word in the same sense, (Eph. v. 18): "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is riot, *ασῶτια*." Our translation has it *excess*, that is, extravagance

or prodigality, waste of health, time and substance. In Titus i. 6, he declares a candidate for the ministry must not be accused of riot, where the same word is used to signify expensive sensual indulgence. St. Peter, in his first Epistle, iv. 3, 4, uses the word in the sense of wasteful revelry, where he says that the Gentiles who walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings and abominable idolatries, thought it strange that the Christians ran not with them to the same excess of riot—meaning by excess here a *profusion*, pool or lake of riot; in a figurative sense, a *sink* or *gulf* of vice or debauchery. Moreover, read 2 Peter ii. 12, 15, inclusive, where he speaks of the same description of persons, who counted it pleasure to *riot*, that is, feasted, drank, danced, played and sang, even in the day time, with shameless impudence, and brazen boldness. Such things are not carried to the same pitch of extravagance now, under the restraining influence of Christianity; but, as human nature is the same in every age, take away that influence, and the present limited indulgences of party feasting, drinking and

dancing, with songs and music, would grow to the same degree of riot as above depicted. Indeed, I am not sure that similar excesses are absent from some of our largest cities and filthy sinks of crime and moral pollution, as we have heard and read of such. Is it not *expedient*, yea, morally necessary, to avoid those places, and companies, and exercises, that exert such a contaminating influence upon morals, and lead certainly, though gradually, to the utter ruin of soul and body for time and eternity? A moral inexpediency is an impropriety for a rational moral agent, what does not comport with his dignity, and conduce to his happiness. An act is morally *inexpedient*, when that act, though lawful in itself, becomes sinful when performed under circumstances and without a proper regard to consequences, which make it injurious to ourselves and others. To eat meat was lawful for St. Paul; but, says he, if eating meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no more while the world stands. All things are lawful for me, he says, that is, all kinds of food, but all things are not expedient. Under some circumstances, it is morally

right to perform an act, which, under other circumstances, would be morally wrong. This difference is seen between dancing now and dancing as a religious exercise among the Israelites, sanctioned by God. Yet I may put the exercise of modern dancing upon the strong, broad ground of a forbidden, wicked act, sanctioned by no divine authority, and no advantages that are not more than counter-balanced by those of religion. If half the colds and consumptions, dissipation and duels, extravagances and waste of time and substance; above all, deaths to virtue and sobriety, ruin to soul and body, occasioned by balls and parties of amusement and pleasure, had been occasioned by religious camp-meetings and other protracted meetings, they would have been broken up and laid aside long ago. Harken to this command, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." But dancing is not done to the glory of God, as I can prove by thousands of witnesses among the religious and irreligious, (demand them if you will); hence, my position is established, viz: dancing is morally

unfit or *inexpedient* for man, (I speak in the sense of a *worldly amusement*,) yea, it is a *gross* sin, as I have proved from the Scriptures. It now remains only to address a few remarks on this subject to men of reason and religion.

HONESTUS.

From the same.

ADDRESS TO MEN OF REASON AND RELIGION
ON THE VAIN AMUSEMENT OF DANCING.

What is the *cause* of dancing? What is the motive which prompts the lovers of it to engage in an exercise, not only irrational and undignified, but idolatrous and dangerous in general, and ruinous in some instances? I call it irrational and undignified, because, when used by the fashionable world, it has nothing in itself, or object or effects, worthy the dignity and interest of a rational and immortal being. But to the question, "What is the cause or motive of it?" I answer, the same from which all other amusements and sports of a similar nature proceed. It is that deficiency of happiness, which sinners feel in themselves, that impels them to seek it in things exterior to themselves, and constantly elicits the interrogation from an aching, restless heart, "Who will show us any good?" or this, "What shall we eat, what shall we

drink," wherewithal shall we be amused, and filled with pleasurable sensations or exhilarating emotions? They want something of a carnal nature as food for anticipation, present enjoyment in the enactment of the delectable scene, and a topic subsequently for diverting thought and conversation. As a young lady, once travelling in a stage-coach, in company with several gentlemen, one of whom was a distinguished minister, was dilating very complacently on the pleasures connected with dancing parties, having gained the absorbed attention of all, particularly that of the minister, and having passed through the pleasures of anticipation, the immediate delights of the passing scene, and the subsequent pleasure derived from the contemplation and discourse thereof, she came at length to a terminus, which all earthly pleasures must inevitably and interminably have; then, said the man of God, one other pleasure, Madam, you've forgotten. What, Sir, is that? was the prompt and anxious reply. The pleasure, Madam, of reflecting on all at death. Startled and confounded, she became speechless for a while,

but not thoughtless ; she had never thought of that before. But now she thinks and thinks again ; there can be no pleasure then in thinking and talking about that vain amusement I have loved, and sought and indulged so much. Henceforth, she sought and found a higher, an eternal good. O, wondrous good, alone worthy the immortal mind, the pearl of great price, a pearl beyond all price ! A young lady, in the blackness and horror of despair, by her request or that of her friends, I once visited—her gloom and wretchedness were unutterable. She wanted relief from the torture that raged within. How to obtain it she knew not. She had hoped for salvation in the mercy of God. Hope had fled, and sullen, raven despair had seized and convulsed her once hopeful spirit. What is the matter ? said I to the horror-stricken, phrenzied maiden. My day of grace is gone, said she, with glare of eyes, both wild and frantic. How did it happen ? said I. Her answer was, I *was*, till lately, greatly devoted to the pleasure of dancing parties and fashionable balls. The last time I was invited to one, the Spirit of

God mightily strove with me, and my inclination strove. The Spirit again and again suggested, "go not," but my inclination triumphed. Still, the Spirit, loth to give me up, repeated and urged again, and yet again, "go not;" but, said she to herself, even angrily and audibly, "I'll go this time, if I am damned for it." Instantly the grieved and quenched Spirit fled and left her in the bitter anguish of despair, from which, if she recovered, I have never heard. Perhaps, she learned, when quite too late, by sad and fatal experience, the lesson God had often taught her in these words, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." The above two cases are witnesses of danger, with which the love of dancing parties is fraught. The case of another I will give, whose conscience, when a sinner, told her 'twas wrong to visit such scenes of merriment and hilarity as the ball-room. She used to say her prayers by night and day, but yet, whenever she went to one, on her return home, her tender, though guilty conscience would not let her pray, in view of such hypocritical, if not blasphemous inconsistency, as

would have lain between the sin of dancing and the exercise of prayer. Such was the view of one without the converting grace of God. Of one more sinner I will speak, in connection with my awful theme. A lady, of whose dancing propensities I heard from my devoted mother's lips, was once, and this became the last invitation she received—I say, was once more invited to visit the usual scene of mirthful festivity; she dreamed of having gone, and becoming sick upon the dancing floor; she also dreamed of being assisted to a certain arm-chair, standing in that room, in which she died, or from which she was taken home and died. The dream made a solemn impression on her mind; her friends advised her not to go, but go she would, and as she dreamed, so it was all a sad reality; but this reality came, and found her oft-admonished spirit unprepared to stand before her Judge. Who, then, will pray, O Lord, let me die that silly woman's death? Who will say she was not warned sufficiently, yet fearfully overcome by the fatal love of worldly gaieties and pleasures of amusement? Many, yea, very many

cases equally tragical have happened, but these will suffice, as ensamples, to illustrate, *in a measure*, the great sin and danger of the disappointment of those, who, under the influence of a morbid and superlative fondness for the beggarly and unsatisfying *inventions* of men, neglect the only source of happiness adequate to the unbounded demands and desires of our immortal nature. Such inventions serve only to fill the blanks of idle life, and leave a sting the world can never extract. For a moment they may lull, in part, the painful, aching sense of their total want of substantial enjoyment. They tend to drown or divert such reflections, on disagreeable subjects, as would plague and haunt them incessantly without such unwise and aggravating expedients. Now, if such diversions as that of dancing were really calculated to supply the want of happiness in men, and adequately fill their capacious moral powers, and fully gratify their endless and immense desires, then might we confidently assert they had found the chief or real good of man, and should rest quietly and contentedly in the enjoyment of it. But if

such exercises and indulgences as the revelry of dancing are no more than a momentary suspension of our restlessness, and calculated to afford no permanent, much less an adequate supply of satisfaction, then do they fall infinitely below our desires and conceptions of true and solid joy, and hence altogether unworthy of our practical attention and pursuit. Is it not abundantly evident to every man, at all acquainted with the character and wants of the human mind, that *nothing* of an earthly nature, nor all the attainable riches and honors, and carnal pleasures of the world combined, can possibly gratify its immense desires and capacities? Yet there must be something adapted to the full supply of its wants and the consummation of its wishes. There must be something in which we *can* find the satisfaction, which is the object of universal inquiry and pursuit, something from which we may obtain, either here or hereafter, that infinite delight that is equal to our most enlarged cravings and capacities. But this something must be spiritual and eternal, because the soul

of man is immaterial and immortal. It would be as possible to satisfy the bodily appetites with spiritual sustenance, as to satisfy the soul with corporeal food—the truck, the traffic and the trash of this combustible and inconstant world. Every man, who reflects upon the operations of his own heart, will surely find in himself a perpetual bounding forward to the future from present scenes and circumstances, however comfortable they may be. However rich his present pleasures; however improved his worldly condition, and elevated the culture and position of his intellectual nature; however reputable his moral character, and extensive his usefulness and consequent popularity and plaudits in social life; he is universally anticipating a more enlarged and refined felicity in the future enchanting distance, which shows convincingly that no change of situation for the better here, no amount of temporal good, even the gain of the whole world, can satisfy its possessor. The more we have on earth, the more we feel the want of *more*—the more we feel

and mourn our poverty, and the emptiness of all around us. Some are happier far with little, than others are with much.

These facts prove conclusively, 'tis not in the power of worldly substance, or its most exquisite enjoyment, to content or beatify the human mind. "Tis true, the little which the happiest have, is not the source of their felicity, though comparatively small; but much of the misery the rich endure, is from the *much* of earthly treasure they possess. To what, then, shall we ascribe the meagre joys by men possessed, but the *want* of some real good, which is capable of filling our hearts with *cheerful contentment* under all circumstances, whether straitened or affluent? Suppose these circumstances never so affluent, unspeakably disquieted we should be in the want of that eternal and all-sufficient good, which forever fills the soul's necessities. The happiness of men, in time, depends not on fortune or on fame, however broad and long, connected with an immortality of degradation, or the belief of annihilation, but perpetual communion with the source and fountain of all

good, both in the world below and that above. Even an admitted possibility of returning to original nothingness, or the fear of a miserable doom beyond this contracted state of being, would greatly mar our present peace, and change the cup of pleasure to the bitter dregs of deadly poison. Take from us the desire of a more exalted rank in the scale of being than we enjoy here, and the belief of a future state, still we should be afflicted more or less in this imperfect life; hence, not satisfied with our present lot; but constituted as we are, nothing can satisfy us which has no connection with a better world, or does not serve to prepare us for it. What, then, is the proper use of all we now enjoy? Certainly not the consumption thereof in the transient gratifications of a dancing party, which do not promote useful knowledge, or peace of mind, or solid comfort: gratifications by no means suited to the taste or faculties or aspirations of the wise, the noble and the truly great; but the employment of it in such a way as to enhance most effectually the happiness of ourselves and others. Any other position on this

subject would necessarily involve us in the gross absurdity of our being placed by our Maker upon a level with the irrational brute. Even brutes were not created for the temporary enjoyment of their animal pleasures, but for the accommodation of man and the glory of their Creator. What, therefore, we enjoy on earth, in a sensual manner, must have a prospective bearing on our future condition and destiny. The base and low philosophy, or rather infidelity, which confines our toils, our sufferings, our pleasures and our being to the present world, is false and unreasonable, and utterly unworthy Him who made man, and all things else for him. Seeing we depend on Him for our being, and derive from Him all we enjoy, or *hope* to enjoy, all the power we have to enjoy and suffer here and in futurity, should we not every folly lay aside, and our hearts apply to wisdom's ways? But is it wise for man to dance away his time and strength, to dissipate his thoughts, his health, his wealth, in honor of nothing, or his Epicurean God? No one, I presume, who follows the amusement of dancing, does it in refer-

ence to present usefulness, or his future happiness; but entirely for present pleasure, sordid, momentary, sinful, injurious and unsatisfying. Here many questions now arise to be settled at the bar of reason and conscience, also at the more tremendous bar of the future, final and eternal judgment. Is the time spent in revellings employed for the glory of God, the good of the soul, or even the health and comfort of the body? Is not all we have and are the property of God; time, health, strength, money and all? Are we not His stewards, responsible to Him for the proper use of all? Have we any spare time to squander or murder in rioting and dissipation? Have we any money we can call our own—any which does not belong to God or men, which we can innocently spend for no real nor substantial advantage? Have we received our strength from God to be exhausted for nothing, yea, vastly worse than nothing? Is health given to be hazarded or wasted? Is dancing in the sin of idolatry an example worthy to be followed by the wise and good? Have we any command or license to dance? Does it

make us more intelligent, more dutiful, more submissive unto God? What does not answer these purposes cannot be reasonable or consistent with piety, unless it has become a vain thing to serve the Lord, and carnal pleasure is the chief good of man, and the time has come for dismissing our reason, abolishing religion, and adopting this maxim and motto, "Let us eat and drink and rise up to play, for to-morrow or soon we must die." Do ladies and gentlemen, on dancing occasions, meet as rational and immortal beings to do and get good, or to pass off and kill time—to take their fill of talking, jesting and playing, in a manner beneath the dignity of wise men, and the high destination and hopes of a Christian man? Have not duels been occasioned by dancing parties, envy, jealousy and pride excited and fostered, to say nothing of the baser feelings of the human breast? What is wrong for parents, in this unholy and ungodly exercise, is wrong for their children. "Bring them up in the way they should go." Christianity is the best education, graceful refinement, and accomplished polish they can have. Having

this, they will have the best of manners, the best adornment in the world. Without this, their vain accomplishments are vanity and splendid folly, accomplished wretchedness, educated poverty, polished and graceful blindness.

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THE END.

