

No. 491.

DANCING,

AS

A SOCIAL AMUSEMENT

BY

PROFESSED CHRISTIANS,

OR

THEIR CHILDREN.

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SHALL CHRISTIANS DANCE?

WHY not *Christians*, if anybody? We would not advise a *sinner* to dance. A sinner is an enemy to God; and shall he dance? A sinner must repent, or perish; and shall he dance? A sinner is on the way to hell, and may be there in an hour: shall he dance? There is something supremely shocking in the idea of a dancing sinner. What fearful declarations are those of Job! "They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave." Job 21:11, 13.

But a Christian is a redeemed sinner. "He is bought with a price." "He is washed, he is sanctified, he is justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." He is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The Christian is the image of Christ, and is to show to the world that he has been with Jesus, and has learned of him. The Christian is "crucified to the world," and is in a little while to be in heaven, beholding and enjoying, and for ever to enjoy the glory of God. Let him sing for joy, and dance too before the Lord, as David did, if such an exercise be suited to his present condition, and adapted to promote the glory of God and the salvation of men. For this is the apostolic exhortation: "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Shall Christians dance? Then they must have a *time* to dance. At what point of time shall it be? just before, or just after, they sit down at the table of the Lord? Is it the kind of preparation which fits them for that scene which Calvary beheld? Will the dance help them to "examine themselves?" Will it enable them to deny themselves as they should, after they have been anew to see Christ crucified? Can they, at the dance, think in-

tensely upon the scenes in the garden; in the palace of the high-priest; in the hall of Pilate; on the way to Calvary; at the nailing of the victim; and at the innocent sufferer's cry of agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This cry, under almighty wrath crushing him to death for our sins, makes the ears of Christians tingle. How can they forget it, so as to find a *time* to dance?

Shall Christians dance? Then they must have *leisure* to dance. "Wist ye not," said Jesus, "that I must be about my Father's business?" He began early, and continued to the end to be about his Father's business; so that in the end he could say to his Father, "I have glorified thee upon the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Then he was ready to depart, and with his last breath cried, "It is finished." Duty and suffering were completed. Are Christians, the followers of such a Saviour, at leisure, so that their work is done long before their sun is set? Do they understand God's word so well, that they need study it no more? Are all their duties to God in the closet, in the family, and in his house, diligently and faithfully performed? Do they perform all that is needful for the young, for the aged, for the church, for the world, and then find leisure to unite with gay companions in moving to the sound of the viol, amid the mazes of pleasurable dissipation? Is the soul duly cared for? And from the dance can they return home to commune with God; to pray for all saints and the ministers of Christ, with all prayer, and without ceasing? Can they "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep themselves unspotted from the world?"

Shall Christians dance? Then they must have *money* to maintain the dance. They are God's stewards, and he claims all they have, as well as all they are. The gold—"it is mine." The silver—"it is mine." Does he require Christians, as his stewards, to take his silver and his

gold, and use them to decorate their persons; to furnish room and equipage and music and refreshments for the dance? His poor must have food and raiment and shelter out of his silver and gold. The institutions of religion must be sustained; the word of God must be put into every family of man; the ministry must be furnished for every creature: and all this must come out of his treasures. And when millions are needed more than are obtained—when the cry is wafted to Christian ears on every breeze, “Come over and help us”—where is the money to be found to maintain the dance?

Shall Christians dance? Then they must be *imitated* by others. Allowing that Christians have *time, leisure,* and *money* for the dance, and that it may be proper for them to dance, still a question remains—Is it expedient? If it be lawful in the sight of God, does it tend to edification? Is it attended with no danger to others? Will the gay and the thoughtless be likely to derive benefit from such examples of Christians? Did the apostle Paul say, “If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend?” Should not we also look to the welfare of others? If it be not perilous to ourselves, yet if it be to others, charity requires us to abstain. If we would not advise sinners to dance, we certainly should not set the example. If but one member of a church be found in a ballroom, who will not know it? Will not every eye be fixed on that individual? Will not some be ready to say in heart, Did not I see thee *at the Lord's table*? Will it not be reported the next day? And will not the echo fly among the circles of the lovers of pleasure? Will not the thoughtless urge this example, as a plea for the indulgence which conscience forbids? And will not many be emboldened, not only near by, but far off, to do what no sinner should venture to do, as it must be at the peril of his soul? And will not those gay companions of yours despise you for your vain indulgence?

E. Y.

DANCING,

AS

A SOCIAL AMUSEMENT.

“GOOD-WILL towards men” is the distinctive and loveliest feature of the gospel. Its original is far back in the bosom of eternal love. Its brightest illustration was seen in the life and death of Him who “is the image of the invisible God.” Its impress is upon every Christian heart, and that alone is truly a Christian life which exhibits it.

Natural religion, or pagan philosophy even, may require and forbid, to a limited extent, the same as the gospel. But from this, their highest common level, rises clear and shining, as the golden tower from the dark, massive wall, the distinctive trait of our religion. A peculiar tenderness of regard to the welfare of others distinguishes the religion of the gospel from all other religions, and the true from the false disciple. When this feature is seen, the glory of the gospel appears. When it is obscured, our religion, shorn of its peculiar excellence, sinks undistinguished in the darkness of false religions. Hence the frequency and earnestness with which the precepts of the gospel harmonizing with this peculiarity are urged.

“*Abstain from all appearance of evil,*” is one of them. Other religions may enjoin abstinence from evil: the gospel, in the fulness of its “good-will towards men,” requires us to abstain from the *appearance* of it. Actual evil will injure ourselves; the appearance of it may injure others. Selfishness may restrain from self-injury; but in the self-denial of avoiding what might otherwise be proper, lest the appearance may injure another, is the purest benevolence. And the moment the Christian life fails to exhibit

this, it is lowered from its heavenly elevation to that of the mere moralist; the brightest gem is struck from the Saviour's crown, and the gospel is presented to the world stripped of its distinguishing excellence.

"*Giving no offence in any thing,*" is a connected precept, pointing only to another development of "good-will towards men." But it is one of the most lovely and important. So close is the sympathy between Christian hearts, so pure and delicate the bonds which unite them, that he who touches them rudely, feels the vibration of sadness in his own bosom. No appeal so tests the genuineness of a Christian spirit as that which comes from a brother beloved yet grieved by us. And in no way is the religion of the gospel exhibited in its surpassing excellence more than by the carefulness it enjoins to avoid "*offence in any thing.*" Though "it must needs be that offences come," yet Christ sealed up the history of a false disciple by the solemn denunciation, "Woe to him by whom the offence cometh."

"*Let your light so shine,*" is another gospel precept laid along the whole Christian life, touching it at every point. So perversely susceptible is the impenitent heart to impressions against religion, so easily are its prejudices against those who profess it awakened, that the life cannot be too carefully guarded. Every eye is fixed upon it. As he who holds a torch is distinctly seen by the crowd who stand at a distance in darkness, so in him who is robed in a luminous profession every movement is noticed. By it irreligious men will be drawn to Christ, or repelled from him. Hence the earnest injunction, "*Let your light so shine before men.*" It is for the good of those who behold. Every ray of it is to be directed to this single result, that they may "*glorify your Father which is in heaven.*"

What these precepts require is, just what the spirit of this world will not do. It will seek its own. Nothing save the spirit of Christ, in himself, or in the renewed

heart, will breathe such tender and self-denying regard for the feelings and welfare of others. But how brightly it shone in him. Never did he offend the pious sensibilities of the humblest disciple. Never did his example lead astray, or peril the soul even of his bitterest enemy.

How the same spirit illumined the life of Paul. When the question of eating things offered to idols arose, yielding personal rights, convenience, and gratification, how promptly did he say, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth." Though it was not, in his estimation, in itself sinful, yet like his Master, "he pleased not himself," lest he should "hinder the gospel of Christ." He would "abstain from the appearance of evil," would give "no offence in any thing;" and would and did let his "light so shine before men," as to evince the sincerity of his "heart's desire and prayer to God," that they might be saved.

Fellow-Christian, will you ponder these precepts of the religion you profess, and then follow me in the inquiry, whether the practice of DANCING by CHURCH-MEMBERS is consistent with the life of "holy conversation and godliness" they require.

1. Has it the "*appearance of evil*?" To this there can be but one honest reply. There is a remarkable confession made by those who advocate the amusement of dancing, when they plead that it is not *in itself* evil. That it has the appearance of it, is virtually admitted in the very plea that it is in *appearance* only. Let this then, its main defence, be admitted to the full; still does there not remain unjustified the very thing which the spirit and letter of the gospel precept forbids? Why do Christians feel misgivings in the indulgence? Why shrink from the public gaze? Is there not herein the unspoken confession of an apparent inconsistency?

Take God's word in your hand as you go and read,

“Be not conformed to this world.” Then enter the low haunt of revelry, or the private dancing-party, or the ball-room of the giddy and godless. Then suppose a number of devout and living Christians mingle in the dissipating scene you behold. Stop, and muse a while. Think of the holy calling, the professed godly life of some you see there. Look upon those called the sons and the daughters of the Lord Almighty. Remember that they have solemnly promised to “walk worthy of God,” who hath called them to his kingdom and glory. Take with you the most consistent Christian you know, or the most candid impenitent man. As you stand with them at the entrance to these scenes, will not the Christian be shocked, and the impenitent man ask, “What do ye more than others?” And can you shake off the conviction from your own conscience that there is at least the “appearance of evil;” and as such, that it is most expressly and solemnly forbidden by the religion you profess?

2. Does it *give offence to Christian brethren?* Without an inquiry of them, we might safely reply. But we have their own full testimony. Were it only the few, and these the weakest of the flock, who are grieved, still it would indicate the mind of Christ and our duty, as those possessing “the same mind.” Hear his own words: “Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” But not to the few merely is the offence. “A voice as the sound of many waters,” is heard in reply. The great mass of the most worthy and devoted ministers and private Christians believe dancing to be utterly inconsistent with a profession of the religion of the gospel. They are grieved, deeply grieved, that a few continue it.

The appeal is full of tenderness. It comes from those who mourn over the reproach of Zion. It comes from

broken-hearted parents, whose children have been drawn away from the fold of Christ. It comes from pastors, weeping over many a ruined lamb of the flock, the first step in whose downward course was taken in the ballroom or private dancing-party. Had the same appeal been made to Paul, what would he have done? If no evil, save in appearance only, yet, knowing the offence to Christian brethren, would he not have instantly resolved not to repeat it "while the world standeth?" And on what principle can any Christian do otherwise? Can that be a renewed heart on which the appeal falls powerless, and from which the loved indulgence repels it?

3. Does it *prevent the light of a Christian life from so shining as to lead men to glorify God?* God is glorified when the power and excellence of his grace appear. The artist is honored by every perfect specimen of his skill, and disgraced by that which is marred or tarnished. Every professed Christian is before the world as an illustration of what God's grace can do. If presented in a false light, He is dishonored. "Do all to the glory of God," is the grand direction of the renewed heart and life. Is this the design of dancing? Does the grace of God shine forth in the ballroom? Do its gayety and dissipation "show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light?"

God is glorified when, by a blameless example, fellow-Christians are kept from temptation, and led up to higher attainments in piety. It shows his own workmanship more perfect and lovely. But is such the influence upon those who follow you to the ballroom? If safe for you, may not the weaker or the younger fall into sin, started in their course by your example? This is a view of great solemnity. No man goes wrong in this matter alone. He draws others with him, and they are generally those who need all the power of a better influence. Many a pastor's

heart bleeds to-day over the young and the inexperienced thus fallen into the wiles of the destroyer.

God is glorified when wicked men are forced to confess the great difference between a truly Christian life and their own. The sentiment is utterly false, that partial conformity will secure the favor of the world. Men love consistency, and full well they know that no other life is conformed to the gospel but that which is kept "unspotted from the world." Captain Wilson, of missionary memory, after his conversion still lingered with his gay and wicked associates. He hoped, by partial indulgence in their pleasures, to conciliate their favor towards religion. But he soon learned his mistake. In the experiment he had offended God, and perilled his own soul; and what was the result? His associates only laughed him to scorn as a hypocrite, and despised his religion. "I see Christians most forward and eager in amusements," said a youth, as he lingered on the brink of apostasy. Hardened and repelled by the view, he plunged into the dark gulf—a specimen of many similar sad results from the same cause.

Irreligious men do indeed love to meet the Christian where his inconsistency will most fully appear. Every artifice is employed to draw him there. Great esteem towards himself, and an unusual tenderness of regard for his religion, are sometimes expressed. It is feared that his influence will be diminished, or that religion will be thought gloomy, if he declines what they call innocent recreation. But like the traitor kiss, all is deceptive. The moment he yields they exult over him as fallen. His light becomes darkness. Their diseased eyes are no longer pained by it. Conscience is quieted, prejudices strengthened, souls are ruined.

Fellow-Christian, in view of these results, you will not, you cannot hesitate for a moment as to your duty. You have bound your soul to God, by a solemn oath, to conform your life to the precepts of the gospel. Can you do it as

you indulge in that which all confess has the "*appearance of evil*?" Can you do it by continuing a practice which Christian brethren "have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping," offends and most deeply grieves them, and by which your light can never "*so shine before men,*" as to lead them to "*glorify your Father which is in heaven?*"

To complete the view only a single point remains to be noticed. A duty we owe to God, and expressly enjoined by him, is to be done, however it may be viewed by others, or whatever the probable results. Peter was to visit the centurion of Cesarea, though his brethren were offended that he went "*in to men uncircumcised.*" Abraham was to take the child of promise to mount Moriah, though it appeared so unnatural, and the consequences so ruinous to the hope of Israel and the kingdom of the Messiah. But in these and all similar cases a duty was enjoined. God expressly commanded. The neglect would have been sin. Is then dancing a duty God expressly requires? Is there sin in neglecting it?

Two kinds of dancing are mentioned in the Bible. One was a *religious act*, expressive of grateful joy for some signal deliverance, and in the performance of which the sexes did not unite. See Exod. 15:20; Judg. 11:34; 1 Sam. 18:6; 2 Sam. 6:14; Psa. 30:11, and Jer. 31:4. The other was a *social amusement*, to which a religious service had been perverted; and those were deemed vile and impious who indulged in it. Three instances are mentioned. The "*vain fellows*" and shameless, to whom Michal alludes, 2 Sam. 6:20. The irreligious families whose "*children dance,*" and who are represented as saying to God, "*Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.*" Job 21:7-14. And finally, that scene of impieties which commenced with the dancing of Herodias' daughter, and ended with the rash promise of Herod, and the murder of John the Baptist. Matt. 14:6.

If then "a time to dance" is any thing more than a simple expression of joy in contrast with "a time to mourn," to which of these kinds of dancing does it refer? If to the first, it has no application to our inquiry. We are considering not a religious service, but a social amusement. If it refers to the second, it cannot imply either a command or permission even; but is simply a declaration of what is done by men. It no more implies commendation than the declaration, "a time to lose," does of the gambler's hazards, by which he loses all. But the very opposite is true. For the only instances of social dancing to which the Bible alludes are so mentioned as never to indicate approval, but usually distinct disapproval. The propriety of it is left as little doubtful as that of Noah's drunkenness, or the causing a son or daughter "to pass through the fire to Moloch."

Instead of permitting, therefore, God's word pointedly condemns dancing as a *social amusement*. But if it were not so, one thing all confess: it is not a Christian duty, *the neglect* of which would be sin. That God does not forbid it is the most for which any contend. And in this very plea there is the implied confession, that he does not require it. And if there is no sin in *not doing* what so obviously violates the precepts of the gospel, and is so connected with evil results to others, must there not be sin in *doing* it?

By the performance of duty a certain effect is produced upon the feelings of the Christian heart. By sinful indulgence a different effect is produced. Tell me, my brother, which of these effects follows from dancing? Have you returned from the place of

"Revelry and dance and frantic song,"

with a heart light and full of sweet confidence in God? Have you then bowed in your closet devotions, assured of his approving smile? Or have you neglected or hurried through them, as if conscious of the solemn mockery?

Has your heart shrunk from approaching God, until the vividness of the scenes in which you have just mingled has passed away? Have you found that "the end of mirth is heaviness?" Has any such effect resulted from abstaining from the indulgence? Which then is duty? Which injures, which benefits your own soul?

Chosen pleasures reveal the state of the heart. "Only let me be assured that one is truly religious," said an eminent divine, "and I will not object to his dancing;" so confident was he that a real Christian would have no heart for it. And is it possible that one who abides in Christ, and is with him "crucified to the world," can indulge in that which is so hostile to the life of God in the soul? Like the fabled flower of antiquity, it may cause pleasant laughter upon the lips, but is at the same time conveying deadly poison to the vitals. It checks the current of the spiritual life, chills the affections, and tears the heart away from Christ. Oh, is it possible that one in the robes of heaven should plunge down so low; that one who has tasted the joys of the redeemed should ever again relish the frivolity and empty pleasures of the ballroom; that one who professes to labor "together with God" in the salvation of perishing souls, should do what is so hazardous to his own soul, and so certainly injurious to others?

Let us inquire now if it is consistent for Christians to teach THEIR CHILDREN that which is so inconsistent for themselves? The precepts of the gospel are here also to be our guide. They are binding, not only in some relations, but in every relation you sustain. And not in a part merely, but in all these relations you are connected with the church of Christ. As a *Christian parent* you are bound to Christ. In this very relation you are in covenant with Christian brethren. And not only is the church deeply interested in the spiritual welfare of your children, but the dearest interests of other Christian families will be

vitally affected by the manner in which you train your own. It is clear then,

1. That what has the "appearance of evil" in yourself will have the same appearance when allowed to your children. Although the indulgence be not your own, the approval of it is. If there is evil in the one case, there is in the other. For approval of sin is sin. So it appears to Christian brethren. So it appears to their children. So it appears to other parents who profess to be bound by no such holy precepts as you acknowledge. Some of them fear to follow with their children where you lead yours. They cannot believe that dancing is any part of "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Oh think, Christian parent. Pause, and pray long and earnestly, and you will never consent that a child of yours shall be seen in the ballroom. "*Their children dance*" is a characteristic, not of Christian families, but of those asking, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?"

2. Brethren are grieved when you teach your children that which grieves them when done by yourself. It may affect them even more deeply. Their families may be influenced more by the example of your children than by your own. What can inflict a deeper wound upon a Christian father's heart than your allowance of sinful amusements to your family? His children point to it in their importunity. They tell him that you are a church-member. He must yield, or by refusing, be compelled to seem severe and bigoted. He must be silent, or reply that your example is unworthy a Christian parent. This is the torturing dilemma into which you bring other parents. Some have yielded, and fallen into sin. Others have stood firm, while their children have broken away from parental control to follow yours, and been ruined.

Oh could all the sorrows of a single mother's heart be whispered in your ear, or could you follow a single youth,

led thus into temptation, entering this outer edge of the whirlpool, to be borne in narrower and swifter circles, until he plunges down the boiling centre, and disappears for ever, you would understand why a parent's heart so pleads with you now.

3. That which prevents the light of a Christian life from so shining in you as to glorify God, will do the same when taught to your children. Your example is to be not only that of a Christian, but that of a *Christian parent*. Training your household in the fear of God should be one of the brightest rays of that light which is to "shine before men." In nothing does the grace of God more distinctly appear. In nothing can it be more easily obscured. Through you it is to shine for the guidance of other parents and households. But is dancing any part of the "nurture and admonition" the grace of God teacheth? Does not the most thoughtless trifler with things divine know the ballroom to be a place preëminently "without God?" Do not its scenes glare out upon the world as destitute of any thing Christian as the most godless could wish?

But when all this is admitted, one plea remains. It is said, that when more privately done, the evils of dancing are avoided. Were this true, can it be so done? However privately begun, can it be kept so? Are not its outward tendencies sure? The flame may be concealed when first kindled, but it will burst forth unless speedily extinguished. Set up a theatre in your own dwelling, and will not your children, true to the vitiated taste you have nourished, seek more public gratification? Indulge them in the social glass at home, and will they not seek it elsewhere? So the social dancing-party is the private entrance to all the dissipation of the ballroom. How often, by this deceptive process, do parents draw forth a passion they cannot control, and which, "when it is finished, bringeth forth death." When will they learn that the *end* over which they mourn is but the

natural consequence of the *beginning* they approved. It is like giving your children poison, and then weeping in bitterness over them as they are seen sick and dying.

How many are pained that their children are so thoughtless of God. But why should they not be thoughtless? What are the influences thrown around the youthful heart just when there is most hope of its being drawn to Christ, and yet most danger of its being hopelessly hardened? How are all the thoughts engrossed in preparation for the gay assembly. What feverish excitement while in it. When it is passed, how is the heart sealed against serious reflection. By a succession of these scenes, though separated by long intervals, the choicest years of youth are wasted. The soul is ruined; for how often their probation and dances end together. By parental, but cruel indulgence, the process was commenced. The entrance was flowery, the end shrouded in eternal darkness. A parent who does this seems like the heathen mother pleasing her infant with flowers, that she may drop it a smiling, and therefore a more acceptable sacrifice, into the arms of the monster opening a fiery furnace within to consume it.

Christian parent, you know not what you do when you draw out the latent passion of your child for this amusement. It may soon spurn all control or persuasion. That of the gambler is not more insatiate.

"I was once called," says an aged pastor, "to visit a young lady who was said to be *in despair*. She had at some time previous been serious, and had, it was hoped, resolutely set her face Zionward. In an evil hour some of her former associates called on her to accompany them to a ball. She refused to go. The occasion, the company, the parade and gayety, were all utterly dissonant from her present feelings. With characteristic levity and thoughtlessness they employed persuasion and ridicule; and finally so far prevailed, that with a desperate effort to shake off her

convictions and regain her former security, she exclaimed, 'Well, I will go, if I am damned for it!' God took her at her word. The blessed Spirit immediately withdrew his influences, and instead of the anxious sigh, and longing desire to be freed from the body of sin and death, succeeded, by turns, the calmness and the horrors of despair.

"The wretched victim knew that the Spirit had taken his final leave: no compunctions for sin, no tears of penitence, no inquiries after God, no eager seeking of the 'place where Christians love to meet,' now occupied the tedious hours. Instead of the bloom and freshness of health, there came the paleness and haggardness of decay. The wan and sunken cheek, the ghastly, glaring eye, the emaciated limb, the sure precursors of approaching dissolution, were there. The caresses of friends, the suggestions of affection, were all unheeded. The consolations of piety, the last resource of the miserable, were to her but the bitterness of death. In this state of mind I was called to visit her. When I entered the room, and beheld her pale and emaciated, and reflected that the ravages of her form *without* but faintly shadowed forth the wreck and desolation *within*, I was almost overpowered. Never had I conceived so vivid an idea of the woe and misery of those who have 'quenched the Spirit.'

"I proposed prayer. The word threw her into an agony. She utterly refused. No entreaties of friends, no arguments drawn from the love of God, or from the fulness and freeness of atoning blood, could prevail to shake her resolution. I left her without being able to find a single avenue to her heart, or to dart one ray of comfort into the dark bosom, which, to all human view, was soon to be enveloped in the blackness of darkness for ever. Never shall I forget the dreadful expression of that ghastly countenance, the tones of that despairing voice. The impression is as vivid as though it had been but yesterday. Oh that all the young, gay, thoughtless ones, who stifle the convictions of con-

science and repress the rising sigh, and *dance* along the brink of utter reprobation and despair, would read, and lay to heart the warning." Oh that every parent would ponder the awful results of cherishing a passion in the youthful bosom which may be used by Satan and wicked associates so fearfully to ruin the soul.

An eminent divine, of great experience in the work of God's grace, was accustomed to regard *the use of ardent spirits and dancing* as two of the influences most hostile to the soul. With great solemnity he used to allude to the case of a young man, a leader in the ballroom. To shield himself from the influence of a revival, at the time in progress, he sought to multiply dancing-assemblies, and to draw others into them. But he could not escape God's *judgments*, if he could his *mercies*. He was suddenly laid upon a bed of sickness. Death seemed near. In awful distress he begged for the mercy he had before despised. When thus borne down, hopeless of recovery, he seemed penitent, became exceeding joyful, and earnestly and solemnly warned his associates; and it was thought by pious friends a most remarkable case of death-bed conversion.

But unexpectedly he recovered. With returning health his religion so rapidly disappeared, that the first thing he did was to persuade his associates to make arrangements for another ball. Godless as they were, they were shocked at the proposal. But his persuasion overcame their scruples. The evening came, and in the midst of the glare and revelry of its scenes, he fell to the floor as if touched by the finger of an offended God, was borne a raving maniac to his home, which he had scarcely reached, when death sealed up his history for the final judgment. The passion for dancing held firm yet concealed possession of his soul, even when death stood by, and friends supposed he had forsaken all. It had been cherished in early youth, had grown with his growth, and strengthened with his

strength. Oh with what agony would parental hearts have answered our inquiry, bleeding at that hour over a ruined child! Reader, may God in infinite mercy spare you from such experience; but *will he*, if you allow your children in that which produced it?

Had that youth died when joyful in a false hope, his passion would have been developed in eternity, beyond our sight. But God spared him, that it might be done here—a solemn warning to parents who cruelly allow a passion to be cherished in their children, which first deceives, and then throws its chains of darkness around the soul for ever.

Now, professed disciples of Jesus, our appeal is to you. The religion you profess has, for its distinctive feature, a tender regard for the good of others. As such, you are to exhibit it to the world by abstaining from the “appearance of evil,” by giving “no offence” to Christian brethren, and by the light of a holy example, *so* shining that God may be glorified. This you can never do by mingling with the world in an amusement which you must confess has the “appearance of evil,” which your brethren assure you, with tears, most deeply grieves them, and which so certainly is *not* done “to the glory of God.” It cannot be among things indifferent. If not a positive duty, the neglect of which would be sin, then the indulgence must be guilty, deeply and dreadfully so.

Beloved brethren, “be not deceived.” Review the considerations which have been suggested in your closet. Pray that God will direct you. If dancing be a duty, implore his grace to aid you in its faithful performance. Do you hesitate? Why? Is conscience in conflict with your desires? Are there misgivings in your heart? Oh pause, reflect. Will you deliberately do that in which you *cannot* ask God to bless you? Wait not until the temptation comes. But now, alone with God, before you turn your eye from this appeal, *decide*. Let it be now fixed, change-

less—a decision which will give present peace, and which shall come up in joyful remembrance at a dying hour.

Christian parent, let the heart of a parent plead with you. All the reasons for abandoning the sinful indulgence yourself, are equally clear in showing that you cannot allow it to your children, and be blameless. There is a higher and holier than natural affection. What more dear to us than the souls of our children? What responsibility like this? The soul of your beloved child seems laid upon your own. With what sacred, guardian care should it be protected from every poisonous influence. The young know not the danger of slight beginnings. We do. And shall we cruelly leave them to wind around themselves the soft and silken web, which may harden into bonds of iron upon the soul?

But you hope it will not end thus with *your* children. So have others hoped, who are now bowed down beneath parental sorrows. Will you then lead your children into temptation, in the presumptuous hope that God will save them from it? Oh plant not thus your dying pillow with thorns. Will you, as you are dying, regret that your children have been no more faithfully trained to the dance or ballroom? Or, as you close the eyes of a beloved child in death, will you have bitter reflection in the remembrance that he has been guarded from all these ruinous influences? Oh say, will not all your *sorrows* have a different source, and your sweetest consolation come from this? Oh then be wise, wise for *yourself*, and wise for your *children*. Let your authority and affection as a parent encircle them. Herein is a saving influence God has intrusted to your hands. Be faithful to your children now. They will hereafter rise up and call you blessed for it; and your decision to-day may be among your most precious remembrances, when Christ shall present them, with you, “faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.”

Dancing, as a Social Amusement by Professed Christians, or Their Children. American Tract Society, 1847. Nineteenth Century Collections Online, link.gale.com/apps/doc/CUFMOB756890113/NCCO?u=coloboulder&sid=gale_marc. Accessed 27 Mar. 2026.