The Dance of Death

Should Christians Indulge?

BY

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Are the modern dances a sign of degeneracy in the human race?

Are they a serious menace, physically, mentally, and morally to the rising generation?

Should the church today relax its attitude of opposition to such worldly indulgences?

Was the action of the American Association of Dancing Masters in naming one of the new dances, "The Wesleyan," an insult to the entire Christian brotherhood?

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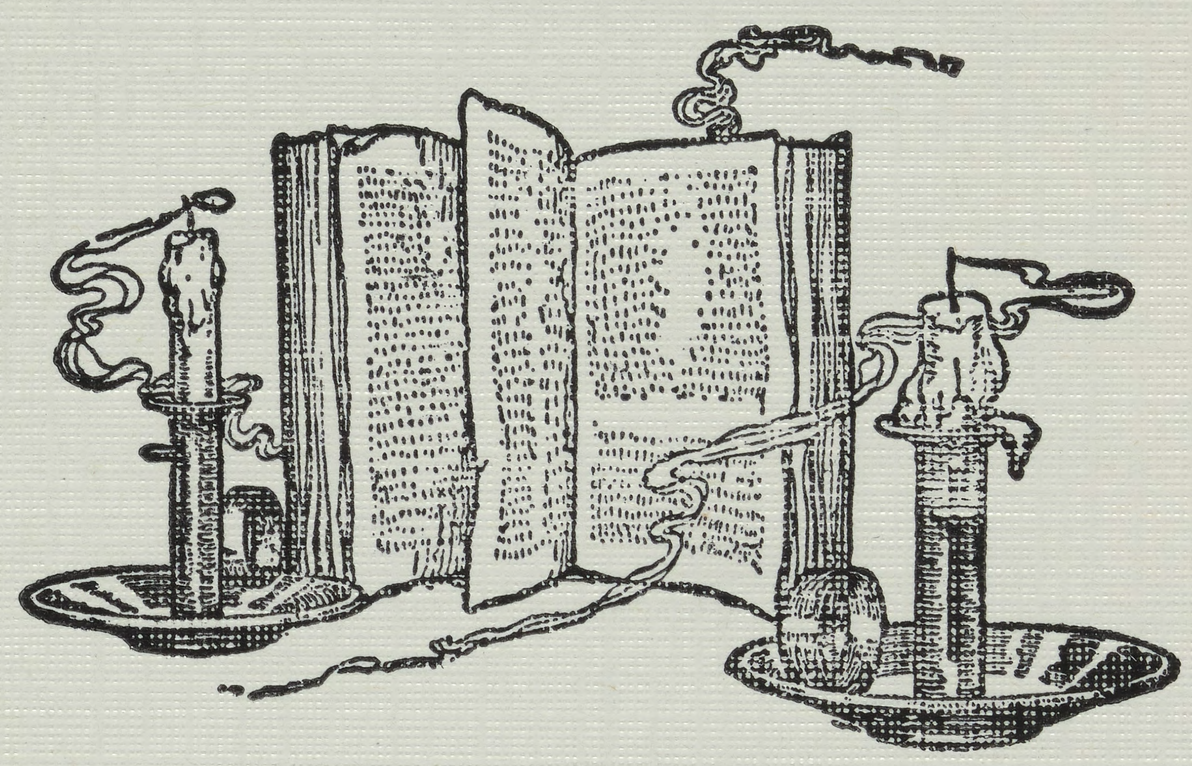

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FOREWORD

In September, the American Association of Dancing Masters held their annual convention in New York City. During this convention, they announced the adoption of a new dance, which they called "The Wesleyan," after John and Charles Wesley. Feeling that this action was an outrage and an insult to the Christian world, I preached a sermon on the modern dance, in which I denounced the dancing masters for thus coupling up the names of these great heroes and saints of the church with a frivolous worldly amusement. This sermon was reported quite fully in the New York papers, and was sent out by the Associated Press to other papers throughout the country.

The dancing masters of Montreal, Canada, took exception to what I had said as reported in the papers, about the dance and the action of the Dancing Masters Association, and they sent me a telegram, followed by letters, announcing a suit for $10,000 damages unless, within two weeks, I made a public retraction of the statements which had been quoted from my sermon in the papers.

I ignored this threat, but in response to questions from the newspapers as to what I proposed doing, I stated that if the Christian forces of Montreal should invite me to come to that city, I would accept such an invitation as an opportunity to tell those dancing masters, in their own home town, what I thought of their business.

A little while later, an urgent invitation came from the Christian Endeavor Union, of Montreal, representing all of the protestant churches of that city.

The following address was delivered at their annual

convention to an audience that packed the largest auditorium in Montreal to the doors, thousands, according to the papers, being turned away who could not gain admittance.

The religious leaders who were present at that meeting urged the printing of the address, and it is given, therefore, just as it was delivered there. I have not altered its oratorical form, because I have felt that perhaps it might be more effective in that form than if I recast it in the form of an essay. I make no apologies for the plain terms employed in this address because I have but scant patience with the silly prudery and the mock modesty which are not willing to hear these evils discussed in understandable terms but are willing to tolerate them in guilty and cowardly silence. If it is shocking to have these things described and discussed in order that our youth may be warned against them, how much more shocking to allow the things themselves, to continue, unchecked and unchanged.

The address is sent out with the prayerful and earnest hope that it may accomplish good by helping to stem the tide of worldliness and frivolity that is running so high and strong everywhere today.

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THE DANCE OF DEATH

SHOULD CHRISTIANS INDULGE?

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Mr. Chairman, and Friends: When I say that it is always a genuine pleasure for me to visit Canada, I voice something more than a mere word of conventional courtesy, which the amenities of such an occasion as this require.

I have long rejoiced in the splendid spirit of mutual understanding and comradeship which exists between Canada and the United States. While the statesmanship of the nations is groping, it would seem almost blindly, for some basis for promoting peace and harmony among the countries of the earth, it is strange that they do not turn their eyes and profit by the example of these two sister countries, standing here side by side,—friendly harmonious and happy, without a cannon or a fort along three thousand miles of frontier, and each rejoicing in the prosperity of the other.

May such a practical illustration of the way out from present disorders and dangers so influence the other nations of the earth that they will come to learn that "more excellent way," of which the Christian apostle spoke; and may the beautiful Stars and Stripes and the glorious old Union Jack ever float side by side in the free airs of heaven, as a demonstration of the unity and harmony of the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race!

I also have some personal ties with Canada that have

deepened my esteem for this beautiful land. My father was a subject of the British Empire before he moved to America, having been born and reared at historic Bannockburn, in Scotland. The superintendent of our Sunday School in New York is a Canadian, and I regard him as the finest Sunday School superintendent in America. The treasurer of my church is also a distinguished son of Canada, and the preacher, of necessity, needs to be on good terms with his treasurer. During my former pastorate in the city of Baltimore, Maryland, a noble Canadian was a brother pastor at one of the other leading Baptist churches of that city. He had but recently turned back to the pastorate from the presidency of McMaster University, of Toronto. During those years, my fellowship with him ripened into one of the most precious friendships of my life; and there is no man now living whom I more truly respect or more deeply love. I refer to our honored brother, Dr. O. C. S. Wallace, who is now pastor of the West Mount Baptist Church of this city, and in whose hospitable home my wife and I are guests on this visit.

The Dancing Master's $10,000 Suit For Damages.

There are yet other things that have recently made me interested in Canada. There has been an exchange of pleasantries between some of the dancing masters of this city and myself. I hold in my hand here a telegram from these gentlemen, which arrived some months ago. In this telegram, and letters which followed, they threatened to sue me for $10,000 unless, within two weeks, I retracted certain statements which I had made about the modern dance. Though I appreciated their generosity in giving me two weeks in which to repent, I did not reply to this telegram, or take other notice of it, as I have a rather keen sense of humor, and was anxious to see

just what direction the proposed suit for damages would take. I felt like the little boy who was reprimanded by his mother for having said a bad word. She told him that if he used such language as that the "Bad Man" would come and get him. A little while later, she heard him in the next room again indulging in a series of perfectly terrible words. In horror she rushed into the room, and exclaimed, "Johnnie, what on earth do you mean? Why are you using such awful language as this?" "Well," he said, "Mother, I want to see the Bad Man."

The mere thought that a preacher would have as much as $10,000 was in itself very humorous; but the added thought that a group of dancing masters, living in far-away Canada, could extract the said $10,000, even if he had it, from an American preacher of Scotch ancestry, was still more amusing. Surely, these gentlemen did not remember that the Scotch are canny and exceedingly careful about money matters. They must have forgotten that incident in which a friend was asked to define a "salesman." He replied: "A salesman is an Irishman who can buy something from a Jew, and then sell it to a Scotchman at a profit."

I could not understand, either, why these gentlemen, if they wanted balm for their ruffled and bruised spirits, did not sue the Montreal Star and Gazette, which printed what I had to say, and which, therefore, were particeps criminis in my awful misbehavior in having frankly denounced the modern dance. Why did not these gentlemen go after the proprietors of these papers, who are right here at home, and who certainly must be more resourceful in finances than a plain parson?

The humor of the situation further appealed to me because of the fact that the dancing masters of Montreal should have taken up the cudgels with the purpose of belaboring the head of a preacher living in another coun-

try, hundreds of miles away. Why did they not leave the needed chastisement to their brethren—the proprietors of dance halls of my own city of New York,—whose places I visited in person and denounced openly from my pulpit and in the papers? **These New York proprietors of dancing halls not only did not sue me because of what I had said about them and the dance, but one of them was convinced in open court, and not only sentenced to pay a fine, but was put into jail to serve a jail sentence because of the lawlessness and the unspeakable rottenness of his place, which I exposed; and another one whose place I exposed is now under indictment, awaiting trial.**

Hope to Help the Dancing Masters.

I wish to make it perfectly clear, however, that I have no personal feeling of animosity toward the dancing masters of Montreal, despite their late excursion into the field of humor. I will pay them also this compliment, that while, since I am a stranger in this community, I do not know as to the exact conditions surrounding their dance halls, nevertheless I must commend them as most astute and skillful advertisers!

After giving you some introductory facts, which I wish to present, I shall have something further to say about this matter, and will repeat the statements at which they took umbrage, and because of which they threatened suit.

For the present, however, I pass this by, with an expression of my appreciation for the great compliment they have paid me in imagining that I had $10,000 available to assist them in putting a firmer foundation beneath their dance halls. I feel, in this connection, like the old negro down in Dixie, who was asked to change a ten dollar bill. With his face blank

with amazement, he looked at the white man, who made the request, but his expression then softened into a pleased grin, as he said, "Boss, I ain't got it; but I shore does thank you for de compliment!"

More seriously, however, I have a word to say to the dancing masters and their friends, who have threatened these dire reprisals upon me if I did not recant the heresies contained in my denunciation of the dance, and promise henceforth to be good. **I wish to say that my presence in this city and upon this platform is my answer to their threat of a suit for damages.**

Yet I protest that I have a most earnest and sincere desire to help and not to hurt these men. I trust that the facts which I shall give in this address may convince them of the truthfulness of my contentions, and lead at least some of them to a change of occupation. There is so much that is vital and noble to challenge the strength and effort of red-blooded men in the tremendous times in which we now live, that it would seem a waste of good energy for grown-up men to invest their strength and talents in teaching people to "bunny-hug" and "turkey-trot" and canter like a cat!

Should Like a "Good Time."

Coming now more directly to the consideration of the subject of the evening, may I say, in the beginning, that no one loves a good time, or believes in bright and innocent joy, more than I do. I am sure that I have as much fun as anybody, certainly as anybody who lives in New York. I delight also to see other people, especially the young, enjoying themselves.

But there are certain amusements today which have been commercialized, and that are full of deadly dan-

ger, because they are not the spontaneous expression of the people's desire for play, but are rather forms of amusement that have been hit upon by profiteers, to cater to the lower instincts of the race, that thereby their promoters may make more money.

Chief among these harmful commercialized amusements of today is the modern dance. From the earliest times, dancing has been associated with the vices that tear down and destroy the human race, and the influence of the dance has never been more harmful than today.

We no longer have the simple and stately square dances of a former generation, and we do not enter here into a discussion as to whether they had a place or whether they were right; but, beyond any question, I for one believe that the dances of this day are an expression of degeneration in human society. These dances take their very names and movements largely from the lower animals; and the amazing thing about it is, that there seems to be so little conscience on this question among Christian people. Well does that thoughtful and highly talented Englishman, Harold Begbie, in his book, "The Crisis of Morals," exclaim:

> "Think what it means that these filthy and lascivious dances are tolerated in private houses, and that they are laughed at and caricatured in the newspapers as though they were merely an absurdity of fashion."

It is encouraging, however, to see that some secular papers, even, are at last waking up to the enormity of these ills and the reality of these dangers. I have been glad to see that both religious and secular papers, far and near, commend the stand which I have taken in opposition to the dance.

"The Hartford Courant" said:

"Methodists and ministers the country over, following the lead of Rev. Dr. John Roach Straton of Calvary Baptist Church, New York City, have been aroused by the action of the recent dancing masters' convention in naming one of the new dances after the founders of the Methodist Church —John and Charles Wesley."

The "Times-Picayune," of New Orleans, in an editorial said:

"The trouble with questionable dancing is that there is nothing questionable about it—it is unquestionably bad! There has been a gradual undermining of the sensitive feelings of a large element of the public, until today actions are tolerated and moralities accepted in connection with social functions which until recently, would have subjected those who gave them to instant ostracism. The characteristic, as we see it, of the present period of dance degradation is that it attacks most virulently the very young. **It is striking at our boys and girls, our young women and men, and thus at the very roots of our future society."**

Even "Broadway Brevities," the New York amusement magazine, gives unexpected support. The editor wrote me a personal letter thanking me for my fight in the dance, and in the course of a long editorial in this magazine, among their strong and striking things, he said of the dance:

"Dr. Straton might have gone on to say that its licentious insipidities must, sooner or later, react on our civilization, and undermine and annihilate it. To get down to copper tacks—its mad devotees regard dancing principally as a medium for 'landing' chickens. Dancing, therefore, not

only is a fraud but a social menace of the most frightful magnitude. Brevities is continually in receipt of complaints against the dancing halls, especially since Dr. Straton made his memorable visit. **We do not fear to state that in our opinion most of these places are notorious incubators of vice.** Young girls are in profusion among the patrons, often unaccompanied, and thereby exposed to the tender mercies of cubs to whom neither virtue nor pocketbooks are sacred. It is not our desire to pose as a moral censor, but some sympathy is certainly due to the mothers of these silly creatures, decoyed into these maelstroms of hoofers and hop-eaters."

This is enough to show that dancing is a real issue today.

The Foundation of Our Civilization.

Now we will never get anywhere in our thinking upon any of these questions until we recognize that God has a right to instruct us upon all such issues, and until we admit that the Bible is God's word, and that there we can find the guidance needful.

I confess, in the beginning, that I am old-fashioned. I believe profoundly in the Bible. It is the foundation of all that is decent and right in our civilization. Queen Victoria was once asked, by a visitor, the secret of the greatness of the British Empire. She lifted an open Bible from her table and said: "Here it is!" The real harm of today, my friends, has come from abandoning its precepts and principles.

I am not ashamed, therefore, of the position which I take upon the dance. I am steering my individual life and my pastoral work by an old chart and compass, namely, the eternal word of God. On that, to change the figure, we can build individual character

and a social structure that will stand the storms of life and the ravages of time. Apart from that, there is no foundation; and the trouble with us today is that we are trying to erect our mighty structure of materialism upon nothing more stable and substantial than shifting sand.

The Bible on Dancing.

Very well, then, what does the Bible teach about dancing? Let that be the foundation of all that I have to say! Some have taken the position that because the Bible says that there is "a time to dance" (Ecc. 3:4), therefore, the Bible furnishes ground or justification for the modern dance. Such a position is founded upon misunderstanding of the particular text quoted, and it is also a complete perversion of the entire trend of Scripture teaching. In the Bible the only sort of dancing which receives any countenance is the dance of religious joy, **indulged in by individuals, or groups of men and women, but never with the sexes dancing together.**

When Miriam, for example, saw that God had delivered her people and had destroyed their enemies with the over-whelming floods of the Red Sea, she was so thrilled with joy that she took her timbrel and led forth the maidens of Israel in a dance to celebrate the victory.

David also, we are told, "danced before the Lord with all his might." This was when he saw the Ark of the Covenant returning from its captivity. He was so happy over the deliverance of this sacred symbol that he danced with joy.

The daughter of Jeptha looked down the road, and saw her father returning with the trophies of victory, and she expressed her joy by going forth to meet him with timbrels and dances.

The women of Israel celebrated David's victories over the Philistines with songs and dances.

The return of the prodigal son of the parable was celebrated with music and dancing.

The Psalmist exhorts us to praise God with the timbrel and dance; and Jeremiah, looking down the ages, prophesied that when Israel shall be restored to her own land and the kingdom of God is set up, "they shall not sorrow any more at all," and "then shall the **virgins** rejoice in the dance."

It is evident, therefore, as **Ecclesiastes** says, that there is a "time to dance," but as set forth in the Bible, that time is when we are filled with religious joy.

Such dancing as this is all right. A religion that makes a man dance for joy is better than a religion that freezes him to his seat with frigid conventionalism. Of this Biblical dance, Dr. Lyman Beecher gives a summary. He says:

> (1) "Dancing was a religious act, both of the true and also of idol worship. (2) It was practiced exclusively on joyous occasions, such as festivals or great victories. (3) It was performed by maidens only. (4) It was performed only in day-time in the open air, in highways, fields or groves. (5) Men who perverted dancing from a sacred use to purposes of amusement were deemed infamous."

Evil Dances of the Bible.

The Bible, however, has a record of some other dances, and it makes plain the fact that when dancing was perverted from its original and God-given purpose, simply as an expression of religious fervor and joy—and especially when it was indulged in between

the sexes—it went straight into moral degeneration and unspeakable vice.

When Moses, for example, came down from the mountain where he had received the Ten Commandments, he heard music and dancing in the camp of Israel. He found that the people were worshipping, **men and women together,** before the golden calf which Aaron had made. The record of it in the Bible says: "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Eminent commentators agree with Adam Clark in declaring that the word "play" carried with it loathsome lewdness and abominable practices. The Israelites had not only turned to idols, but had adopted the unspeakable horrors which went with promiscuous dancing in the calf worship of Egypt, which made the so-called "sacred groves" the plague spots of the world.

In connection with the feast of Belshazzar, which preceded the fall of Babylon, there was dancing. Between the tables, laden with their sumptuous viands, hundreds of Oriental, half-nude dancing girls wiggled and squirmed, much as do our degenerate dancers of today; and the revelry and Godlessness continued until suddenly the handwriting appeared upon the wall, before the startled vision of the King and his drunken court, announcing that he had been weighed in the balance and found wanting, and that his kingdom would be taken from him and given to another. And then Cyrus, with his great army, marched into Babylon, and the degenerate, drunken Babylonians were overthrown and the king was slain.

Again the patriarch Job gives us, in very striking words, a picture of the wicked, worldly classes of his day—what we would call now the "smart set." He says of them:

"They send forth their little ones like a flock, **and their children dance.** They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, 'Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?'" (Job 21: 11-15.)

The teaching of this Scripture is that a dancing, dissipated life leads men to rebel against God because they desire not the knowledge of His ways, to despise the Almighty and refuse to serve Him, and to give up praying because they see no profit in it. Such a life today, as in the time of Job, goes easily with rebellion, blasphemy, and prayerlessness.

John the Baptist Beheaded.

One of the most terrible tragedies recorded in the Bible, and one of the most horrible crimes of all history, was connected with licentious dancing. In the early years of Christ's ministry, Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great, took his brother's wife, the beautiful Herodias, and was living in open adultery with her. John the Baptist was the only prophet of God in that day who dared to tell this wicked couple that they were sinners. Because of his merciless rebuke, Herodias, the guilty woman in the case, hated him as only a vile woman knows how to hate. During a birthday banquet of Herod, the daughter of Herodias, Salome, danced before the king and the other banqueteers. Accompanied by voluptuous music, and with the vile and suggestive gestures and pantomine to which the dance has always run, she stirred the

king and his drunken court to a pitch of wild enthusiasm. The king, in his egotism and his drunken folly, promised to give her anything that she wanted, "even to the half of his kingdom." Prompted by her mother, Salome asked him for the head of John the Baptist on a charger. And the king had John murdered, and his head was brought in and delivered to Salome, and she carried it to her mother.

See that gruesome picture! The drunken king, stirred with his maudlin passion; the leering face of Herodias in the background; the simpering, half-nude Salome holding above her the platter upon which lies the noble head of the friend and fore-runner of the Christ! See those raven locks now clotted with his blood! See that fearless forehead now pale and cold! See those eyes that flashed like the eagles now sunken and closed! See those lips that proclaimed the "Lamb of God," and that dared to rebuke the wickedness of a king, now silenced forever by the hand of hate! See that, and get the Bible's picture of what the dance is associated with! No wonder that Charles H. Spurgeon exclaimed:

> "When I hear of the modern dance, I have an uncomfortable feeling about the throat, as I recall that a dance cost the head of the great preacher and prophet, John the Baptist!"

It is a sign, too, my friends, of a relapse into pagan shamelessness, when just such entertainments as Herod indulged in, and in which the daughter of Herodias danced for the amusement of the company, are now furnished after Sunday dinners in high class hotels, and sometimes, even, in so-called Christian homes, in the presence of both men and women!

The Bible is thoroughly consistent, therefore, with its moral teaching at other points, in what it has to

say in regard to the dance. Not only do the references above given demonstrate clearly that the Bible is utterly against the dance, but the general trend of teaching in the Scriptures is all the other way. The Bible says that we are not to live for selfish indulgence, but for service; and above all, it teaches that our lives should honor and glorify God in all things. Its message is: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." It teaches also that those who are really children of God may not indulge even in things that are harmless in themselves, if thereby others who are weaker, are caused to stumble and fall. Paul said in this connection, when referring to eating meat that had been offered to idols, "If eating meat causes my brother to stumble, I will eat no meat while the world stands."

Now, society suffers always when it departs from the Bible standards of morality, and when it disregards the ideals which the Word of God erects. This is particularly true in connection with the dance and its subtle temptation and dangers.

The Dance of Death.

I charge now, specifically, not only in the light of Bible truth, but in the light of practical experience, that the dance today is a dance of death.

First of all, it is harmful physically. The modern dance violates the universal laws of health. Perry Wayland Sinks, in his book on "Popular Amusements," truly says:

"The dance was not originated for the promotion of health. It was never designed to be, and in fact never has been, promotive of health. Viewed as an exercise, as at present conducted, it is in violation of the soundest hygienic laws."

Then he goes on to show how the whole setting of the modern dance, with its night hours and everything about it, is abnormal and unwholesome.

Dr. H. C. Haydn, in his valuable treatise, says forcefully upon this aspect of the question:

"Proverbially, the dance seeks the cover of the night. Dancing assemblies are seldom well under way till it is time they were dispersed, and often do not end till the small hours of the morning. The simple fact that dancing assemblies seek, not recreation with a due regard to freshness and vigor the next day, but satiety, ignoring the laws of health and rest ordained for us by the Creator, ranks dancing, as ordinarily pursued, among the dissipations which both the moralist and the physician are bound to prescribe."

Dr. William A. McKeever said:

"The new social dance is a dance of death. Young 15-year-old striplings are forced by the dance into an intense sexual development instead of experiencing the normal, slowly awakening sex consciousness."

And it is a well-known physiological fact that such abnormal sex development reacts most harmfully upon the health of the young. One thoughtful observer has declared that a young girl who is thus stimulated in sex consciousness will either finally lose her virtue through these things, or she will lose her health.

Speaking on the subject of Dancing and the Public Schools, Bishop Mathew S. Hughes said:

"Our public schools should conserve the health and vigor of our young people; the modern dance is destructive of health and wasteful of the vital forces. We need recreations that will encourage health and vigor instead of producing dissipation and exhaustion."

I do not enter here into a discussion of the fact that the deadly social diseases of today, which, according to the United States Health authorities, and the New York City Health authorities, have infected 60% of the men—I do not, I say, enter into a discussion of this part of the question, though it is undoubtedly true that the dance today, especially in connection with the public dance halls, tends to increase vice and thus spread these terrible diseases that are a menace to the health and safety of every man, woman and child in the community.

I pass from this part of the subject, simply with the remark that there are specific cases on record of where actual death has supervened as a result of the excessive exercise and the abnormal conditions of a night at the dance. Dr. J. M. Buckley, for example, one of the greatest soldiers of the Cross of modern times, stated that a New York girl, returning home from a masquerade ball, said to her mother: "Mother, I am awfully tired. Please do not wake me till noon." She has never awakened in this life and never will. Her mother found her dead in bed. The physician said death was due to heart affection, brought on by excessive exercise.

Mentally Harmful.

Again I charge that the modern dance is the dance of death because it is injurious mentally. Even the pagans of antiquity recognized these evils. Bernard, in his "History of Education," says:

"Plato, Aristotle and Livy believed the dance not only productive of moral evils, but as indicating a lower grade of character and limited mental vision and capabilities."

The modern dance is far worse than the ancient

dance which these worthies of antiquity deplored. It leaves but little room for conversation, especially of any worthwhile sort, and it contributes directly to the emptiness, aimlessness and silliness which characterize so much of the social life of our times. The dance of today calls more for the education of the feet than it does for the education of the head. If the evolutionary development of the human race faithfully records the influences of present tendencies, we are moving steadily forward to a generation with very small heads and very big feet.

Though the dancing mania has swept many modern educators off their feet, it is reassuring to see that there are some signs of a reaction toward saintly, and some great educators have spoken out in no uncertain terms on the ruinous influences of the dance upon students.

Prof. Stanley G. Hall was led to declare from his observation:

"We have in the dance of the modern ballroom only a degenerate relic, with at best but a very insignificant cultural value, and too often stained with bad associations."

Prof. Hugo Musterberg, Harvard's noted psychologist, said:

"The modern dance is erotic and sex-inciting. The love of excitement expresses itself in the dance and the dance heightens the love of excitement."

Dr. H. M. Tenney says:

"The testimony of one of our college presidents is, that of the students under his instruction the poorest scholars of the class have been the dancing scholars, and those students who have occasioned him the most trouble in the discipline

of the college, have uniformly come from dancing communities. The tendency of these amusements is always and everywhere to create a distaste for mental application and honest work in those who love them; to make idle and frivolous and brainless men and women."

Mr. T. A. Faulkner, who was for many years a prominent dancing master, and who was president of the Dancing Masters Association of the Pacific Coast, finally was converted and wrote a book, in the light of his observations, in which he brought a terrific arraignment against the modern dance. The title of his book was, "From the Ballroom to Hell." After this man was converted to God, he spoke out strongly against his former business. While a question has been raised as to his attitude later in life, nothing can alter the force of the facts he gave while he was fighting the dance.

In speaking of the influence of the dance on students, Mr. Faulkner said:

"Instead of keeping their minds on their studies as they should, they are thinking of the fun they will have at the next dance. You cannot mix study and dancing. It simply will not work."

The Dance and Immorality.

Again I believe that the facts overwhelmingly justify the charge that the modern dance is the dance of death because it is most harmful to morals.

Dr. Howard Crosby said:

"The foundation for the vast amount of domestic misery and domestic crime, which startles us often in its public outcroppings, was

laid when parents allowed the sacredness of their daughters' persons and the purity of their maiden instincts to be rudely shocked in the waltz."

Bishop W. F. Mallallieu said:

"Dancing in the public schools in Boston is responsible for conditions of immorality that are almost as bad as the white slave traffic. There ought to be a State law against dancing in any public school."

Dr. Frank C. Richardson, of Boston, created a sensation in dancing circles when he said:

"The dance hall is the nursery of the divorce courts, the training ship of prostitution, and the graduation school of infamy. The various steps and poses of the dances are contributed with 'devilish ingenuity' to excite the instincts of sex."

Now, I do not know what conditions exist in the dance halls of Montreal, but I do know something about the conditions in my own city of New York. I had heard that conditions were pretty bad, and I knew that some of my own young people were in deadly danger from these plausible and subtle temptations of today. That I might not be accused of speaking from mere hearsay, I selected some well-posted young men to accompany me, and went incognito upon a round of investigation of the dance halls.

I cannot begin to tell you, my friends, what I saw and heard in those places, all of which were supposed to be "respectable." I can give you only the faintest idea in this address. In one dance hall, which had been formerly a great skating rink, we saw between 5,000 and 6,000 young men and women, on Saturday night, where they danced until Sunday morning. They were crowded in closely together, and were surging

up and down the great dance hall floor, locked tightly in each other's embrace, in many cases with the cheek of the girl against the cheek of the man, as they went gliding across the floor, to the sensuous strains of oriental music, varied, from time to time, by the clanging discords of a jazz band, their bodies vibrating together and often coming into postures that were positively indecent. And all of this in an atmosphere that was strongly tainted by cigarette smoke and the fumes of whiskey, which was being sold in cold-blooded violation of the Constitution of the United States.

We saw tipsy girls, as well as men, in all of the halls visited; and in one place, we saw young women who were raving drunk, some of them surging out of the hall on to the street outside, with their loud talking.

We were solicited again and again in these places by the "instructors" or "dancing partners," as they are called. Though they had these plausible titles, they were nothing more than women of the town, though, as I have said before, these places were all supposed to be "respectable" places, and many decent young people dropped into them, merely for an evening of recreation.

Now the tragic part of it all is that we saw in these places many young girls, some of them mere children **in short dresses,** whom their foolish mothers had allowed to go out, as they thought, for an evening of "innocent amusement;" and such girls, of course, did not know that they were rubbing up on every side with professional prostitutes and male pimps and procurers, who make an evil livelihood by the seduction of innocent girls and the overthrow of virtue.

Following these investigations, I went into my pulpit on Easter Sunday night, and preached a sermon

on the subject, "New York's Need of a Moral Resurrection." I felt then, and I feel now, the utter absurdity of spinning theological theories and propounding pious platitudes and reeling off rhetorical bouquets, when the very fires of hell are raging right at our churches, and when a thousand young men and women are being destroyed by these vicious conditions, for every one that our self-complacent churches reach!

A Capacity for Moral Indignation.

And let no man find fault with me, or with any other prophet of God, for speaking the truth and sparing not. The time for soft speech is not this day of blood and moral decline. **One trouble with us today is that we have all but lost the capacity for moral indignation.** We were shocked and horrified so often by the war events, that our understanding became flabby and our moral sense was dulled and our sensitiveness to iniquities was stupefied.

But, oh, my friends, we need to throw off this moral lethargy, and face the facts and conditions of today as they are! Every war is followed by immorality and the greatest war of all time is being followed by the widest wave of immorality in the history of the race; and much of it heads up and expresses itself in the abominations of the modern dance.

Let no one, therefore, I say, find fault with me because, from the very housetops, I cry aloud a word of warning. **I would hate and loathe myself if I could stand in the presence of such sights as I saw in the dance halls and not find myself stirred with wrath, and if my cheeks did not glow with hot shame, not merely that the human race had fallen so low in its tastes, but that men, for the sake of dirty gain, should be thus**

permitted to prostitute youth and to put a mortgage of immorality upon the coming generations!

Oh, yes, I will confess to you that I am old-fashioned in my views; but God knows we need a return to the old-fashion rather than longer to follow the degenerate new fashion which is sapping the moral integrity of the race. I am charged with being a Puritan. I acknowledge the epithet, and wear it as a badge of honor; for God knows, again, that we need today in place of the imPuritanism which is leading toward a moral quagmire, a return to that austere and splendid integrity of the old Puritans which made our fathers great and our mothers good!

Varieties of Hugging.

Yes, though I am not advanced in years, I confess that I am old-fashioned. I am so old-fashioned that my mind cannot discriminate between a young man hugging a young woman sitting upon a sofa, or hugging her upon the dance hall floor. And if the demands of modesty, and the requirements of sound social custom prohibit such a practice in the one case, I cannot see why they should not prohibit it in the other. For surely, my friends, if there is any choice between the two things, the odds are all in favor of the hugging on the sofa, as the dance is hugging set to music, and music always has an exciting effect.

In the case of the dance, the two bodies are in closer proximity; they are in rhythmical motion, one against the other, and the stimulus of music, as well as bodily contact, is there to heighten the danger of wreck and ruin.

Fossilized Octogenarians.

It may be that a fossilized octogenarian, or a self-complacent mollycoddle with ice-water in his veins, or a dandified dude, or a society sissy, or a pleasure-cloyed Don Jaun, or a vitiated fop, who doesn't know whether he is a man or a woman—such a character as one of these, I say, may be able in the dance to hold in his arms a throbbing, beautiful young woman, with about half of her body exposed—and the other half clothed largely with good intentions!—such a man may be able to hold a girl under such circumstances and still maintain a philosophical calm, and experience only saintly emotions, and have nothing stronger than Sunday School maxims running through his mind, but I do not believe that any real man, any youth with red blood in his veins and with the elemental forces of nature operating in him, could pass through such an experience without the natural reaction which heredity and every masculine instinct demands from such conditions.

When a man tells me that he can put his arm around a radiant woman and draw her body to his own, with her red cheek against his cheek, and her breasts pressed to his bosom, and her limbs intertwined with his, and the aroma of her hair in his nostrils, and the sparkle of her eye close to his own—when a man tells me that he can take such a position as that, and then go swinging across the dance room floor in rhythmic motion, and still say that he has no improper thoughts, and that his God-given procreative powers are not unduly excited, then I say to him: "I do not dispute you. I do not question your veracity or your morals, neither do I look to see if angels' wings are sprouting under your coat. I simply say, God pity you, my friend,

you are not a man!—and of all the creatures on God's green earth most deserving of pity, it is that creature who has the form and fashion of manhood, but who has not the mighty powers of his sex!

Wreck and Ruin Unavoidable.

Ah, my friends, when we stop to think clearly and frankly about these matters, how utterly absurd is the assertion that there is "no harm in the dance!" The Bible teaches that God made them male and female, giving to each sex its appropriate and necessary powers; and the long experience of the race has developed certain social customs through which the sexes are to find their mates. And these are not ugly relationships, but they are beautiful and holy, when they move along the lines that a God of love has laid down. But the Heavenly Father never designed or expected any such abnormal and unwholesome stirring of the passions as the modern dance makes inevitable.

These things are not necessary to women for them to secure their mates. With our imperious passions, we need rather constraint and the cultivation of control; and the dance of today is destructive of those barriers of maidenly modesty and womanly reserve, on the one side, and those reins of masculine restraint on the other, which alone guarantee the moral integrity of the race.

Statistical Facts.

Not only, therefore, do the opinions of these men from whom I have quoted, and these experiences which I have frankly related to you, prove the deadly dangers of the dance, but concrete facts establish

this contention beyond the peradventure of a doubt.

A former famous chief of police in New York City, quoted in the New York Journal of Education, declared, in the light of his experiences, that "three-fourths of the abondoned girls in this city are ruined by dancing."

I received, just a few days ago, a strong letter from my dear friend, Mrs. E. M. Whittemore, the founder of the "Door of Hope" in New York. This noble woman for over a generation now has mothered all of the fallen girls of the city whom she could reach, and has literally loved many of them back to a right life. She wrote commending me for the out-spoken and aggressive stand which I have taken upon these questions, and in the course of her letter, she declared to me that I had underestimated rather than over-estimated the proportion of girls who come to their moral ruin through the dance. She said that, through her experience for over thirty years in the "Door of Hope" homes which she has founded in New York and other cities, she believed that **seven out of ten of the fallen girls came to their moral ruin either directly or indirectly through the dance.**

I wish to quote again from Mr. Faulkner's book, "From the Ballroom to Hell." In speaking of the influences which destroy virtue, he says, "The tendency of the dance in its influences to lead young women astray stands at the head of the list."

He continues:

"I have for several months been working in a mission in Los Angeles, and where I have before seen **causes** at work (in the dance halls), I have now had ample opportunity of seeing the **effects;**

and I have heard some of those unfortunate ones cry out in bitter anguish, 'Would to God I had never entered a dancing school.' The following were two hundred cases of girls who are today inmates of the brothel, whom I talked with personally. They were frank to answer my question in regard to the direct cause of their downfall, and I gathered that these were ruined by:

Dancing School and Ball Room	163
Drink given by parents	20
Wilful Choice	10
Poverty and abuse	7
Total	200

Heart-Breaking Instances.

Just what these cold statistics mean when they are translated into individual human experience is illustrated in heart-breaking fashion by the instance which Dr. W. W. Hall relates of the young man and young woman who, while attending a mask ball, fell into sin with each other, and when their masks were torn from their faces found that they were brother and sister. One of them went into eternity by the route of a morphine bottle, and the other at the end of a smoking revolver.

These things were illustrated again by a case which I can verify, where a married man became enamored with a young woman during the dance, made arrangements for her to go to his rooms, and through an accident with the gas, both were asphyxiated. He managed to get a window open, and was hanging over the window sill when found by a passing policeman. The door was broken open and the doctors worked with

the young woman, who regained consciousness long enough to stare about her and exclaim: "My God, what have I done?" And then she died.

Just what these things mean is illustrated again by Harry W. von Bruch, when he says:

> "When in Binghamton, N. Y., a young woman gave birth to a fatherless child with but snow for a pillow and the sky for a covering, in an open field, crying, "Oh, if I had only known! Oh, if I had only known!"

In my own pastoral experience, I have known of case after case of moral wreck and ruin in the lives of young girls through the pernicious influences of the dance halls. During my pastorate in Baltimore, I knew of two girls of fourteen and sixteen, who had only an aged grandmother to watch over them. In their innocense, they were caught by a smooth tongued villian connected with one of the dance halls of that city, and when the poor distracted old grandmother found them two days later, they had come to moral ruin, and in their fear and despair, did not know which way to turn, and would have been swept permanently down into the underworld if they had not been discovered just in the nick of time.

That these same pernicious influences still surround the modern dance is proved not only by what I saw personally on my visit to the dance halls of New York, but it is proved by the letters which I have received from broken-hearted mothers and wives, since the present discussion started. If time permitted, I would read some of these letters.

The papers that carried the news story about the action of the dancing masters' convention in getting up "The Wesleyan" dance, gave an account of the fact that the Children's Society had just had one of these

New York dancing masters arrested on a charge of impairing the morals of four children at his "School of Classical Dancing." You notice they all have high sounding names!

In support of his affidavit charging violation of section 483 of the Penal Code, the agent of the Children's Society said that he watched through a keyhole of this man's school-room and saw him in company with four girls, of about twelve years of age, who were very scantily clad; and the misconduct was so glaring that the agent broke in the door and placed the man under arrest.

The principal of one of the great public schools of New York told me recently of a beautiful girl who gave birth to an illegitimate child because of her fall in the school dances.

Many a poor girl, disillusioned and destroyed, has had to say because of these things:

"Once I was pure as the snow, but I fell,
Fell, like the snowflake, from Heaven to hell;
Fell, to be trampled as filth in the street,
Fell, to be scoffed at, be spit on and beat.
Pleading, cursing, dreading to die,
Selling my soul to whoever would buy;
Dealing in shame for a morsel of bread,
Hating the living, and fearing the dead,
Merciful God! have I fallen so low?
And yet I was once like the beautiful snow!"

The Christian Church on the Dance.

Because, then, of these ruinous influences that flow out of the dance, is it any wonder that the overwhelming sentiment of the church has always been against the dance in all its forms? From the beginning its harmful tendencies were noted by Godly men. Ter-

tullian, who lived A. D. 150-230, said: "If Christians are found in the assemblies of the dancers, it proves them to be no longer Christians."

It is only in these later days of the churches' apostasy, when many church members have surrendered to worldliness and selfish indulgences, that the dance has received much countenance.

The scandal of the modern church today is that the dividing line between the church and the world has almost been wiped entirely out, but wherever churches are true to the ideals of Jesus Christ, the dance has been strongly opposed, and safer and more wholesome forms of recreation have been recommended for the young.

The Presbyterians.

Several years ago, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church put itself on record in these words: "We regard the promiscuous round dancing by members of the church as a mournful inconsistency, and the giving of parties for such dancing on the part of the heads of families as tending to compromise their religious profession, and the sending of children of Christian parents to the dancing school as a sad error in family discipline."

Rev. Albert Barnes, the great Presbyterian divine, and commentator, said: "Dancing, balls, and parties lead to forgetfulness of God. They nourish passion and sensual desires. They often lead to the seduction and ruin of the innocent. No child dances into Heaven, but many a one dances into Hell."

The Methodists and Others.

Among the "General Rules" of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, its members are called upon to abstain

from "all such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus," and this has always been interpreted as including dancing.

The vow that every Episcopalian takes at confirmation, if conscientiously kept, would keep every member of that church from the ballroom and lead them to censure the modern dance. Eminent bishops of that church have spoken on the subject in the strongest terms.

Bishop Hopkins of Vermont said:

"In the period of youthful education I have shown that dancing is chargeable with waste of time, the interruption of useful study, and indulgence of personal vanity and display, and the premature excitement of the passions. No argument can make it consistent with baptism."

Bishop Meade of Virginia said:

"The only line I would draw is entire exclusion."

He declared that "it is renounced in baptism, its renunciation is ratified in confirmation and professed in every participation of the Lord's Supper."

Bishop Coxe of Western New York, in a Lenten pastoral said:

"The enormities of theatrical exhibitions and the lasciviousness of dances are so disgraceful to the age and so irreconciliable with the Gospel of Christ that I feel it my duty to the souls of my flock to warn those who run with the world 'to the excess of riot' in these things that they presume not to come to the holy table. Classes preparing for confirmation are informed that I will not lay hands knowingly on any one who is not prepared to renounce such things, with other abominations of the world, the flesh and the devil."

The General Association of the Congregational Church in the State of Iowa passed the following resolution a few years ago:

"Resolved, That in the opinion of this Association, the practice of dancing by the members of our churches is inconsistent with the profession of religion, and ought to be made a subject of discipline."

Rev. Benjamin Franklin, a recognized authority in the Disciple Church of Christ, in one of his published sermons, said:

"The view of most generally is that people of the world—young and thoughtless people, and lovers of pleasure, of amusements and entertainments,—the irreligious, may dance, but religious persons, who profess Godliness, who have been partakers of the divine nature and are led by the Spirit and have the mind of Christ do not dance."

The Roman Catholics and The Baptists.

The Roman Catholic Church has spoken out strongly upon this question. At the Plenary Council of their church, held in the city of Baltimore, some years ago, a pastoral letter was issued by the arch-bishops and bishops, which said:

"We consider it to be our duty to warn our people against those amusements which may easily become to them an occasion to sin, and especially against the fashionable dances, which, as at present carried on, are revolting to every feeling of delicacy and propriety, and are fraught with the greatest dangers to morals."

While Baptist Churches have no set rules governing

the amusement question, nevertheless the overwhelming sentiment of our people has always been in strong opposition to dancing. Many Baptist churches expel dancers from their membership.

Dr. Wilkinson, in his book, "The Dance of Modern Society," says:

> "My accusation is that the dance consists substantially of a system of means contrived with more than human ingenuity to excite the instincts of sex to action, however subtle and disguised at the moment, in its sequel the most bestial and degrading. I charge that here and not elsewhere, in the anatomy of that illusive fascination which belongs so peculiarly to the dance the scalpel is laid upon the quivering secret of life. Passion—passion transformed if you please never so much, subsisting in no matter how many finely contrasted degrees of sensuality—passion, and nothing else is the true basis of the popularity of the dance."

Dr. Russell H. Conwell, one of the most popular of our preachers, and most beloved, especially by the young people, a man who loves life and every innocent joy of life, nevertheless in a sermon on dancing, delivered in his great church, the Baptist Temple, of Philadelphia, said:

> "Every lady has in her possession a certain natural degree of aloofness, of modesty, of retirement, yet some of our modern dancers are endeavoring to break that all down, and doing it in the loosest and roughest way. Men and women act now in public, because they call it "dancing," in a manner which would never be allowed in the parlor in the home. Such action never would be allowed anywhere else, because it must arouse a

dangerous, wicked appetite that brings about criminal results. There is no young woman who hears me speak who would wish to destroy a young man's character or his hope for everlasting life, and yet she does it by dancing with him in the too intimate manner of these modern dances. She does not know. I have looked in at some of these balls, and I can say to you now, young women, that you are doing the most wicked thing this side of murder when you dance with young men in places like that, under those circumstances, embraced as you are in the modern dances. Beware! God will hold you responsible for the temptations you put into his way!"

In addition to these individual expressions, if time permitted, I could give resolutions from Baptist Ministerial Associations and other bodies, as well as cases of individual discipline, proving that our denomination with the other great denominations is overwhelmingly opposed to the dance, as indeed it ought to be.

It is evident, therefore, that the overwhelming sentiment of all Christian denominations and sects is against the dance.

Parlor Dancing.

Nor is it sufficient, my friends, to say that these things apply perhaps to the public dance halls, but that they do not apply to private dancing, or what we call, parlor dancing. Well does Rev. H. C. Morrison say:

"The 'parlor' does not make the dance a proper pastime or indulgence for Christians. We often hear people talk about the decent 'parlor' dance. People who love the Lord Jesus and enjoy communion with Him, do not need the dance, but de-

vout young people may frequently be drawn into this whirlpool of worldliness and swept away from their moorings."

Let me quote Ex-Dancing Master T. A. Faulkner in this connection also. He says:

"Some of the lowest and most disgusting deeds of which I have had any knowledge, have occurred at, or in connection with, the most fashionable parlor dances. Where did the majority of drunkards take their first drink? Let me answer: the first drink of the drunkard was just a social glass; the first game of the gambler was just a social game, and three fourths of the outcasts had a man's arm around them for the first time when they were young girls at a social dance."

A newspaper man who has had wide experience with the dance in many lands finally had a revulsion of horror against the whole thing, when it dawned upon him at last just how ruinous dancing as a social custom, even in so-called "polite society" really is. He wrote a little book on the subject, so much stirred has he been by these evils. I have been in correspondence with this man recently, and here are some of his first hand experiences and observations. In speaking of a "parlor dance" where a married woman danced often with a single young man, this observant and well-trained newspaper man says:

"It was plain that the choice was mutual and the dancing passionate. After each dance the woman sat in meditative mood, lost to all except her own emotions. Danger in it? Well, we attended a community hall dance where we quickly ascertained that a certain young man was jealous of and intensely interested in a certain young married woman. He danced with a flushed pas-

sionate countenance and when the dance ended, left her standing on the floor while he dragged himself to the nearest seat, to hide his shame."

He tells further "of a young man becoming so interested in a young married woman at first acquaintance that they danced almost every set together in animated conversation, and he called on her privately in her own home shortly afterward."

He tells of another instance in which he "saw a married man and another man's wife become so infatuated in the dance that the delirious woman clung to him after the music stopped. Finally she sank to the floor from his arms in what was modestly called a faint."

Plain Talk.

Now this is plain talk, but, my friends, the time has come for plain talk, because these ruinous influences are destroying moral character on every side. The mere fact, therefore, that a dance is in a parlor does not alter its dangerous character nor remove its moral wrong. For you to find another man taking attitudes with your wife in your own home that you allow to be taken upon the dance floor would give you grounds for belief in her infidelity. If you should kick him out of your house into the street, the public would applaud you. Yet men go to the dance and turn their wives over to whomsoever the occasion may demand seemingly without the least hesitancy. Women likewise turn their husbands over to the smooth enchantress, perfumed and painted and nudely dressed; to embrace her and catch her insinuating eye as they glide over the waxed maple.

If all this is true about married men and women, it is all the more true with reference to the unmarried.

The most sacred treasure any young woman can have is to hold her person inviolate. When once a young woman gives her person over to the promiscuous embrace of the dance, she has broken down many powers by which she has been endowed by nature for the protection of her virtue, and this occurs whether she is in a parlor or a public hall.

Professor Amos R. Wells, a name that is a household word throughout the Christian world, says:

> "Dancing, like all Gaul, is divided into three parts. One third is esthetic, one third is physical exercise, and one third is sensual. Any honest investigator of the dance as now practiced in America, will agree that the third part into which this heathen Gaul is divided, is the stronghold of the Province."

The Offensive "Wesleyan" Dance.

In the face, now, of all these facts, I wish to ask what should we think of the audacity of the dancing masters in naming one of these modern dances after leaders in the church of God?

At its convention held in New York, early this fall, the American National Association of Dancing Masters, according to reports in the papers, created this new dance, which they called "The Wesleyan." They gave the dance this religious name, according to reports, in the hope that by thus "honoring" the founder of the Methodist Church, they would so impress the bishops of that church that the next conference would amend the church's discipline so as to permit "The Wesleyan" to be danced.

Though not a member of the Methodist Church my-

self, I expressed the earnest hope that that great and noble brotherhood would not lower its standard of separation from the world.

I know that there has been a movement within the Methodist Church—as in all other churches—to relax the rigor of their discipline at the behest of some of their worldly minded members. But it is to be devoutly hoped that all of these tendencies will be resisted.

The Methodist Church, in the past, has been a bulwark of moral integrity and social safety, by its consistent and noble stand on worldliness and selfish indulgences. It would be a distinct catastrophe to the entire Christian world if this great brotherhood, that has been so noted for the holiness of its people, for their evangelistic fervor, and their zeal and success in soul-winning, should now strike their colors and surrender to the spirit of worldliness and selfish indulgence that is so rampant everywhere.

Insult to Christian World.

The action of these dancing masters, when rightly viewed, as I said in my New York sermon, was an insult to the entire Christian world. John and Charles Wesley were two of the greatest saints of God who have lived since Paul and Peter labored... They do not belong to the Methodists only. They belong to the entire Christian brotherhood; and the whole protest of their lives was against the worldliness and lack of soul-winning zeal and spiritual power in the church of their day. To name a modern dance, therefore, with its sensuous and shameful heredity, coming as it does through the tango, the shimmy-shake, and the other abominations that have done so much to destroy the moral ideals of the people—to name a dance after these holy men was, I say, nothing short of an outrage on decency and a distinct insult to us all.

The plea that these dancing masters make that they desire to "purify the dance" and make it safe, is idle and entirely beside the mark. You cannot purify a pole cat! You cannot denature a smallpox epidemic! You cannot make a rattlesnake respectable. The only thing to do with a rattlesnake is to chop off its head, and the only thing to do with the entire dancing mania, which has done more to corrupt the morals of this age than any other single force, is to destroy it root and branch!

These modern dances have come up, for the most part, from the underworld of Paris, Chicago, San Francisco, New Orleans, New York and the Oriental cities where dens of unspeakable iniquity exist.

Just look for a moment at the succession that the new dance—"The Wesleyan"—finds itself in. We have had now the French Can-Can, Argentine Tango, Boston Dip, Bear Cat, Rocking Horse Gallop, Fox Trot, Turkey Trot, Bunny Hug, Hug-me-tight, San Francisco Glide, Rocker Waltz, Skunk Waltz, Castle Waltz, Dip Glide, Whirling Swing, Gaby Glide, Wriggly Worm, Kitchen Sink, Jazz, Shimmy Shivers, Cigarette Dance, the Cheek-to-Cheek and the Grizzly Grapple!

And now, as the culmination of this slimy, silly, sensuous stream of moral infamy, we have a dance named for these great saints and heroes of the modern church!

It will doubtless be amended in practice and name, and soon be turned into "The Wesleyan Wiggle.' Then next, I suppose, we will have "The Episcopal Embrace," "The Congregational Canter," "The Presbyterian Promenade," and "The John the Baptist Bounce!"

This, then, is what I said and what I here repeat

about the modern dance, and if the dancing masters of Montreal can make me pay them $10,000 for saying these things as a servant of God Almighty, and one of the moulders of the moral ideals of the people, then, I say, let them help themselves!

Dancing Corpses.

The saddest aspect of this whole matter, however, my friends, is that some preachers and churches of to-day have weakened on this question, and **the action of a small minority within the Christian ranks is compromising and hurting the church universal and the cause of true religion everywhere.**

The weak excuses which some church people make in justification of the dance are indeed idle. Some say that we ought to dance for the sake of "grace." But the very idea of anybody developing grace by learning to bounce like a bunny and trot like a fox and gallop like a goose and grapple like a grizzly bear and shake like a plate of gelatine with the St. Vitus dance!

I am well aware that some church members of to-day dance. I am persuaded, however, this is because they have never really stopped to think of this issue. Very earnestly and very humbly, therefore, I wish to raise the issue in the minds of all such people. Again and again, I have had church members say to me following the presentation of the thoughts contained in this address: "I had never considered it at all in that light, and I shall never dance again."

I know that many who dance are good people, but I must bear this testimony tonight that my observation throughout my entire pastoral experience has been that dancing has a chilling and paralyzing influence upon the spiritual life. Even in cases where no direct harm comes to individuals of strong morals

from the dance, nevertheless it tends to destroy their spiritual enthusiasm and consequently their usefulness in the church.

No! **The only grace in the modern dance is the disgrace of it,** and especially as applied to church members. I have never yet seen a dancing church member who was a soul winner. Spiritually speaking, **dancing Christians are dancing corpses!** The dance, therefore, so far as Christians are concerned, does not need regulation but strangulation. May God have mercy upon the poorly informed or worldly pastor and church whose interpretation of the teachings of Christ drops to the low level of sanctioning indulgence in the modern dance.

"But," you say, "why raise any issue over these things? What good will it do?" Well, a faithful fight always does good, and all right thinking Christians should protest in most earnest and emphatic manner against the prostitution of religion by tying it up with these forces of worldliness and sin. I take this opportunity to raise the standard of God's truth and holiness in opposition to all of these things. At least the modern world ought to know that there is another standard,—the standard of a pure church, the standard of a holy religion, the standard of a regenerate heart, the standard of victory over sin and the world, instead of weak-kneed and cowardly surrender to them! We Christians are here in the world to "tear down the strongholds of Satan," and not to effect a complete offensive and defensive alliance with him!

Fighting the Devil with Fire.

"But," some one else says, "ought we not to make some concessions to hold the young people? Does not

the end justify the means?" No, it does not! and no sound, safe system of morals can be founded upon any such idle sophistry! No good can be reached by evil means, because Jesus said, "An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit." Some say that the only way to hold the young people to the churches is to bring in dancing and theatricals and all of that. **They say that we must "fight the devil with fire." But the trouble is that the devil has more fire than we have, and he can always beat us at that game.**

Wherever the church tries to capture the world by "fighting the devil with fire," she herself gets captured and scorched! The devil's specialty is fire!

Furthermore, and most emphatically, every right-minded young man and woman today will resent the implication that they can only be won and held to the church by pandering to the giddy and fleshly side of their natures. No! Christianity means heroic self-renunciation, or it means nothing at all. The only way that the church can really win and hold the young, who are worth the winning, is by the beauty of holiness and the joy of service.

Not to get something upon the low level of fleshly enjoyment, but to give something upon the superb heights of the spirit, is what Christianity really stands for.

Self-sacrifice has in it far more attractive power than selfish indulgence. God hasten the day when the leaders of our churches, and our religious forces everywhere, will come to understand this truth again, and will turn from the folly of compromising with sin and of surrendering to the world!

The church had better have Gideon's little three hundred, if only they know how to pray and love souls and are set for the service of God and man in the spirit

of self-sacrifice, than to have all of her teeming thousands of spoiled and pampered worldlians, who are compromising God's truth and dragging the white standard of Jesus Christ in the very mud and mire of self-indulgence and shame!

Responsibility of the Strong.

The stronger elements of our society are facing a tremendous responsibility today in that many of them are setting a wrong example in these matters. I wish that I had time to tell you about the now famous "Bal Blue" Ball held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel by the social leaders of New York a short time ago. It was a so-called "charity" ball, and was advertised in great, full-page display announcements in all the newspapers as being under distinctively religious auspices. Yet they not only had all the usual objectionable features of a ball, but they had a group of girls come over from one of the theatrical "Mid Night Frolics," and dance a ballet. And all of this—the ball itself and these things from the most sensuous and frivolous side of the modern theater advertised and given in the holy name of religion!*

That keen observer of our modern life, Mr. Sisley Huddleston, writing in a recent issue of "The Atlantic Monthly" scathingly denounces these abuses of the rich and strong. He says:

"The new rich constitute a rottenness in the marrow of civilization, and the rottenness must affect all the members." And how callous are individuals within the ranks of the so-called stronger elements of our society, to these heartbreaking conditions, and of their selfish

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*For a full description and discussion of this "Bal Blue" Ball and kindred evil things, get Dr. Straton's notable book on "The Menace of Immorality In Church and State." See advertisement on last page of this booklet.

and sinful luxuries and self indulgences, even in the face of the needs of a dying world, he says:

"I stand looking on at the brilliant scene in the ballroom of one of the most fashionable Continental hotels. The dresses are dazzling; they are violently vivid, flaring colors, sumptuous stuffs, shining satin, rich velvet, gold and silver brocades,—with flaunting feathers, scintillating jewels, white flesh, all turning, turning; a kaleidoscopic confusion which more nearly resembles a futurist picture than anything I have seen. The unprecedented display of wealth shamelessly contrasts with the deep misery of masses of people. The whirl of pleasure, repeated in every quarter on a larger or smaler scale, makes us forget common duties. It was so at Berlin, where the mark was valueless; it was so even in starving Vienna; London and Paris were full of dancing-halls, high and little. At Paris indeed it was necessary to turn the theatres into ballrooms. There was dancing at tea-time, dancing at dinner, dancing throughout the long evening."

At another time in European history, when as now there was awful suffering among the masses of the people, and the same callous indifference which we see today within the ranks of the upper classes, and when a terrible tragedy had startled the world, Voltaire, with scathing sarcasm, said, "Lisbon burns but Paris dances!"

A Dirty Bride.

The Christian Church, in its early years, at least approximated the ideals of Jesus. Cyprian, who was bishop of Carthage, in the 3rd century A. D., used the following words, which give us a suggestive glimpse into the holiness and beauty of the church as it ex-

isted in his age. He says in writing to his friend Donatus:

"This is a cheerful world as I see it from my garden, under the shadow of my vines. But if I could ascend some high mountain, and look out over the wide lands, you know very well what I should see; brigands on the highways, pirates on the seas, armies fighting, cities burning; in the amphitheatres, men murdered to please applauding crowds, selfishness and cruelty and misery and despair under all roofs. It is a bad world, Donatus, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a thousand times better than any of the pleasures of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people, Donatus, are the Christians—and I am one of them."

What a beautiful picture of a true and holy church in the midst of an evil world! Some of us today remember how pure and noble the churches were even in the time of our fathers and mothers, and what spiritual and unworldly lives the church members of that day lived.

The church of today must divorce itself absolutely from the sinful world. The command is "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God."

Again it is written, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." (II Cor. 6:17.)

And once more it is written:

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful

works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." (Ephesians 5:11-12.)

The church is called in the Bible, "the Bride" of Christ. It is called "the Lamb's wife;" and we are told that when Christ comes again to take His own unto Himself, there is to be a wedding in heaven between Him, as the "Bridegroom," and the church as "the Bride."

Has not Christ, therefore, the right to expect that His bride shall come to Him pure and clean? Think of a bride coming to the marriage altar slouchy and smirched and dirty! The very thought is shocking. And how will Christ feel if, when He comes to the marriage altar, He finds that His church—His Bride—has been a harlot, and that her garments are all dirty and stained by worldliness? A bride should be the purest, sweetest, freshest thing upon God's green earth; and surely the Bride of Christ cannot fall below this ideal!

Jesus and the Sirens.

The real secret of overcoming power in all of these things is to love Christ so well and to serve Him so actively that these false pleasures will lose their charm.

One of our own young women, in New York,—one who has become very active in church work and soul-saving efforts,—said to me recently: "I have always had a conscience on the subject of going to the theater, the dance, etc., because every time I attended, the question would come to my mind, 'Could I have invited Jesus here with me? Would I feel entirely comfortable if He were by my side as my guest?' And sometimes a tingle of shame would come to my cheek

because of something I was seeing or hearing, and the conviction would come to my heart that Jesus would not feel at home and that I would have felt terribly embarrassed if He had been with me as my guest." Then she added, "So, pastor, I have given it up. I have no time for those things. I have found something better to do." This young woman then expressed to the pastor her willingness to give her life to the service of Christ, as a missionary.

You have doubtless heard of the island where the sirens sang so sweetly that all who passed in ships were charmed by their music, lost control of themselves and the ship, and the vessels were thus dashed to pieces on the rocks. One vessel came near and the officer put wax in the sailors' ears, then had them bind him to the masts, and although he struggled to be free no one would release him as the sirens sang. That is one way to overcome the fascinations of the so-called popular amusements of the day. Some say, "Make hard and fast rules, and if the people break them turn them out of the church." But I am sure this is not the best solution for the problem. We can reach the highest possible to our characters only by freely desiring and doing the better things of life. In the story of the sirens, we are told that another vessel came near, and though the sirens sang their sweetest music, the sailors never turned their heads to listen. They really did not know they were near the island, and all because they had Orpheus on board and Orpheus sang a sweeter song than the sirens ever knew. When we take Jesus on board, He will give us overcoming power against all worldliness and sin!

Oh, the beauty of Jesus, and the joy of fellowship with Him!

I appeal to you, young men and women of the

yourselves wholly to your blessed Lord.

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And I appeal to you, oh, unsaved friend, if you are here, that you surrender your heart to Jesus as your Saviour, and through Him find that peace that the world does not give, and that the world, thank God! can never take away!

Yes, the world can never satisfy the capacities, the demands and the longings of your immortal souls! "Thou hast made us for Thyself and restless are our souls, till they rest, Oh God, in Thee."

None of these things which are eclipsing the Saviour today can really satisfy the soul and give it salvation, joy and peace. You may worship at the altar of pleasure until its incense rises to the sky; you may fill the social cup with the red wine of good fellowship until it sparkles in beauty to the very brim; you may thrill with ecstasy in the rythmic fascination of the gliding dance; you may surrender to the wierd and deadly hypnotism of the gambling table; you may give yourself to the seductive charms of impure beauty; you may feast upon the rarest viands that wealth can purchase or skill prepare; you may revel in the power of social prestige or public position; you may devote your talents to the amassing of golden treasure, until your wealth eclipses the fame of Croesus and surpasses the dreams of avarice, but still you will be unsatisfied. Never until you look away from the things of this world, and behold upon Calvary's cross that pale Sufferer dying there in agony and blood for your sins—never until you too come to "the place called Golgotha," and accept Christ as your Saviour and Lord, will you come into the deeper meaning of your destiny, or find those divine and heavenly ideals, which constitute, at last, the true life of man!

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