

*N. H. Historical Society*

# *Dancing Exploded.*

*Copy of* *The N. H. Historical Society*  
*1873.*

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# S E R M O N,

S H E W I N G

The Unlawfulness, Sinfulness, and bad  
Consequences of Balls, Assemblies, and  
Dances in general.

DELIVERED in CHARLESTOWN, SOUTH-CAROLINA,  
March 22, 1778.

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By OLIVER HART, A. M.

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*Rejoice, O young Man, in thy Youth, and  
let thine Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy  
Youth, and walk in the Ways of thine Heart,  
and in the Sight of thine Eyes: But know thou,  
that for all these Things, God will bring thee  
into Judgment. ECCLES. xi. 9.*

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CHARLESTOWN,  
SOUTH-CAROLINA: Printed by DAVID BRUCE.  
M.DCC.LXXVIII

## P R E F A C E.

*THE following sermon was first delivered to the people of my charge, at an evening lecture, upwards of nineteen years ago. Many earnest solicitations that it might be printed, have been withstood; and it would have still slept in oblivion, had not the practice inveighed against been revived, and attended to, in a frantick manner, at a time when every thing in Providence is calling us to different exercises. The judgments of God are now spread over our land, and the inhabitants ought to learn righteousness. The alarm of war---the clangor of arms---the garments rolled in blood---the sufferings of our brethren in the Northern States, and of others in a state of captivity; together with the late dreadful conflagration in this town, are so many loud calls to repentance, reformation of life, and prayer, that the wrath of God may be turned away from us: Instead of which, we are swallowed up in pleasure and dissipation. It will hardly be credited, that the fire was scarce extinguished in Charlestown, before we had Balls, Assemblies and Dances in every quarter: and even in some of those houses which miraculously escaped the flames. And who can believe that our youth are now taught to act plays publicly on the stage, while the theatre is crowded with spectators? Is it thus we require*

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*the Lord for our deliverance? The monumental ruins of this town, will rise up in judgment against the inhabitants, and condemn them for such impieties. The sons and daughters of pleasure may scoff at such serious hints, but God will not be mocked. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet, and yet will venture to predict, that other, and perhaps greater judgments will yet light upon us, unless we repent.*

*With regard to the following discourse, I have only to say, that it is presented to publick view, at the desire of many friends, and the call of Providence; and that I have thereby borne my testimony against what I look upon as a sinful diversion: and shall now submit it to the blessing of God, and the candor of those who may read it.*

*But I cannot conclude without expressing the grateful sense I feel, of my obligations to the many Gentlemen, who, without my knowledge, or request, have so liberally contributed towards defraying the expence of this publication; that little or nothing is left for me to do, save preparing the copy for the press. They may be assured that their benevolence and generosity will not be forgotten by*

*Their obliged friend,*

*(An unworthy servant of Christ)*

O L I V E R H A R T.

Charlestown, S. Carolina,

April 15th, 1778.

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S E R M O N.

JOB xxi. 11. *Their Children dance.*

THE bare reading of my text hath, I doubt not, occasioned a strange emotion of spirits in many of my hearers ; by some I may be pitied for my folly, by others, despised and ridiculed. Be this as it may, it gives me little or no concern. If I had not been willing to endure the scoff of the world, I should never have made an open profession of the religion of Jesus ; much less should I have become a preacher of his much-despised gospel. He, however, who ventures to attack vice, in a public manner, ought to be possessed of some degree of fortitude and resolution ; for sin is a monster of more than a thousand heads ; should he slay some, there will be many yet remaining, and he may expect to be attacked on every side ; especially if he should dare to level at some popular darling vice ; one that hath been much caressed, and that too by the more polite part  
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of the world: in this case, there will be a mighty uproar among the people. The whole city, or country, will be filled with wrath, as *Demetrius* and his associates were, when they cried out, “Great is *Diana* of the *Ephesians*.” Or, as *Micah*, when stripped of his idols, and exclaimed, “Ye have taken away  
“ my gods, and what have I more ?”

However, leaving the event to God, I am determined, in faithfulness to my trust, to maintain an open and vigorous war with all the vices and sinful diversions of the age. Were I to act otherwise, my own conscience would condemn me, and the world might justly reproach me, for my unfaithfulness. This therefore may justify me, for entering on such a subject; which I shall introduce by making some remarks on the context; in which *Job* seems to be at a loss to account for the dispensations of divine Providence, with regard to the prosperity of the wicked. The friends of *Job* were far from comforting him, as they proposed, under his afflictions, and which they might have done by observing to him, that one event often happeneth to the righteous and to the wicked; so that no man can certainly judge of love or hatred, by all that is done under the sun; and that chastisements are so far from being positive tokens of divine wrath, they sometimes rather indicate love; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and rebuketh every son

for whom he receiveth. Such hints as these might have afforded *Job* some consolation, under his heavy trials. But his three friends took a contrary method, which wounded, instead of comforting him. The doctrine which they laid down, and endeavoured to maintain was this, that wicked men *only* are severely afflicted in this world. Hence, instead of comforting *Job*, as an afflicted saint, they censure him as a vile sinner, and an hypocrite. *Job* labours to refute their arguments, and maintain his own innocence. He affirms that the wicked often flourish, become rich and great in the world ; when the righteous, on the other hand, are greatly afflicted, and stripped of all their worldly possessions. He instances in his own case, and then proceeds to point out the prosperous circumstances of the wicked, together with their vain and impious practices.

*Mark me*, says *Job*, consider my present dolorous condition, *and be astonished*, at the dealings of God with me. Can you justly charge me with any gross and impious practices, which according to your hypothesis should bring down the judgments of God upon me ? You cannot ; therefore *lay your hand upon your mouth*. Try no more to vindicate your opinion, when you have a living instance, in opposition to it, before your eyes. As for my own part, *even when I remember* my former flourishing circumstances, and consider  
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how I am stripped naked and bare, and visited with the most painful and loathsome disorders, *I am afraid* of those judgments of the Almighty, *and trembling taketh hold on my flesh*; not being able to account for my being thus afflicted, while the wicked go on unpunished. Tell me, if you can, *wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?* How doth this coincide with your opinion, that God will surely take vengeance on the wicked, in this life? The reverse of this seems to be the case, for *their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them.* They are not afflicted, or plagued like other men. They swim in affluence and roll in pleasure; there is no end to their wealth. And with their riches, their families increase, so that they shall not want heirs. *Their seed is established in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes.* They live to see their childrens children, a numerous progeny, around them. So that *they send forth their little ones like a flock, for multitude; they going before them, like a shepherd; not to the house of God, to engage in solemn devotion; rather to balls, assemblies and the play-house, where they take the timbrel and harp, and such like instruments of music, with which they play, and their children dance.* Thus merrily they go on, regardless of a future state, or eternal judgment. *They spend their days in wealth, which they squander up-*

on their lusts and pleasures, in great abundance, although they can spare little or nothing for the poor, or any other pious purposes. After they have thus run their race--- *in a moment they go down to the pit.* Without any apprehension of danger. The wicked have no bands in their death. Their principal concern in life is to gratify their corrupt inclinations; *therefore they say unto God, depart from us: for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* The thoughts of God are disagreeable to them, and his ways, which are the ways of holiness, they cannot endure. Like *Pharaoh*, they know not the Lord, neither will they obey him. *What is the Almighty, say they, that we should serve him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?* Thus fullness of riches, honour and pleasure swell mens minds with pride, and beget in them mean, absurd and atheistical notions of the Deity. They look upon him as a mere idol, as nothing in the world; and therefore conclude that they can derive no advantage from praying unto him.

This is the character of the wicked, as drawn by *Job*; a perfect and upright man, who feared God and eschewed evil. In the midst of which description, and as a part of it, stands that very polite, and much esteemed practice of *dancing*. A diversion, which in all ages hath had its admirers and votaries. To oppose it, will be to incur the censure of



all the gay gentry ; and, with them however, to forfeit all pretensions to polite breeding, and good manners. I am willing to risque greater consequences than these, that I may maintain a conscience void of offence, towards God and towards man. Bear with me then, while I bear my testimony against a practice, which I look upon as sinful, and opposed to the christian character. And which *Job*, in our text, certainly speaks of as constituting part of the character of the wicked. *And their children dance.* Observe, it is *their* children, *i. e.* the children of such wicked parents as he was describing. By *children* we do not always understand children as to *age* ; sometimes it intends those who have descended from such or such parents, although they themselves may have arrived at mens or womens estate. And if we take the word *children* in our text, in this sense, the meaning of *Job* appears evidently to be this, that the families, or posterity of wicked parents, give into this practice. Would to God that none of the descendants of pious parents, ever imitated their bad example : and that it might never be said of any but wicked parents---*And their children dance.*

In treating on this uncommon subject, I design

I. To state the argument, by giving a scriptural definition of the word *dance*.

II. Prove, by various arguments, that dan-

dancing, according to the common mode, is absolutely sinful.

III. Reply to the most popular arguments used in favour of dancing.

IV. Conclude with a brief improvement.

I. I am to state the argument, by giving a scriptural definition of the word *dance*.

Dancing, according to the scripture account, is sometimes to be taken in a good sense ; and then it is expressive of the inward spiritual joy of the heart, which was commonly manifested by a comely motion of the body :---attended with songs of praise to God, for some deliverance obtained, or mercy received. Thus was dancing attended to, or practised by the good people of old, in a religious way. When their songs were spiritual, and the musick, as also the motion of their bodies, were suited thereto. Agreeable to which are the words in Psal. cxlix. 3. *Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and karp.* It was thus *David* danced before the ark, 2 Sam. vi. 16. And in this manner most of the dances, which the children of *Israel* had, were attended to ; as you may see by consulting the passages in Scripture, where they are recorded. As for instance, when the Lord had destroyed *Pharaoh* and his army in the Red sea, the *Israelitish* women sung and danced. See *Exod.* xv. 20, 21. And *Miriam* the prophetess, the sister of *Aaron*, took

*a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her, with timbrels and dances. And Miriam answered them, sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.*---Such a song as this becomes a rational mind, and is suitable to the taste of the greatest saint in the world. But it would not be so agreeable to our modern dancers; were it to be sung in their assemblies, it would be to them as smoke to the eyes, or vinegar to the teeth. Unto such musick and dancing our Lord alludes, in the parable of the prodigal son. Such kind of dancing was lawful and holy, and by no means to be condemned.

But there is another sort of dancing spoken of in scripture, which consists in a motion of the body, seemly, or unseemly, stirred up by natural or carnal joy, to please or satisfy ourselves or others: without any view to the glory of God, or the benefit of soul. Thus that fine young lady, the daughter of *Herodias*, danced, on *Herod's* birth day; it should seem that she opened the ball, and performed so well as to fill the king with raptures of joy; whereupon, in a courtly dialect, he promised the young lady whatsoever she should ask, even to the half of his kingdom. She, being afore instructed by her mother, very modestly asked no greater a reward, than the head of *John* the Baptist in a charger. Thus, as a reward for dancing, the harbin-

ger of Christ lost his life. Enough, one would think, to cause every serious person to abhor the practice for ever. It is this profane kind of dancing that is intended in our text; the same with what is now in vogue; and which, if it were set in a proper light, would not appear altogether such an innocent diversion as is generally imagined. I proceed therefore,

II. To prove that dancing, according to the common, modern mode, is absolutely sinful.

Some may be ready to think that this is a strange undertaking, and that I shall certainly fail in the attempt. It will be but fair, and therefore I have a right to expect, that you should suspend your judgment, until I have done; hear with candour, then weigh the arguments in the ballance of the sanctuary; and if they prove too light, or insufficient to prove the point, reject them.

I. Then, I argue that dancing, according to the modern mode is sinful, because it contributes nothing to the chief end of man, nay, is contrary to it. You know that the chief end of man is to glorify God. And this ought to be our principal aim in every thing we do.

*1 Cor. x. 31. Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* Now I would ask our advocates for dancing, what tendency that practice has to glorify God? Can you say that you have any view  
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to the glory of God in it? I am persuaded you will not dare thus to give your conscience the lie. And if it should be proved, as I presume it will, that dancing contributes rather to promote the interest of Satan than the glory of God, it follows that the practice is directly contrary to the chief end of man. Only give this one argument its proper scope, and due weight, and dancing will soon cease.

2. A corroborating argument may be drawn from *Rom. xiv. 23. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin*: but dancing is not of faith, therefore it is sin. But perhaps some may query, “What has this text to do with our diversions, or any of our trivial concerns?” I shall answer in the words of a learned Expositor. “This is a general rule, or axiom, which is not only applicable to the present case, but to any other, whether of a natural, civil, moral, or evangelic kind; whatever is not agreeable to the word and doctrine of faith ought not to be done; whatever is done without faith, or not in the exercise of it, is culpable, for without faith nothing can be pleasing to God.” Therefore, until it can be proved that dancing is of faith, you must excuse me if I insist that it is a sinful practice.

3. Whatever action in life we cannot pray for a blessing upon, must be unlawful and sinful; and such an one is dancing; therefore it ought to be avoided. Will any say “we are not bound to seek the blessing of  
God

God upon our ordinary concerns?" I will confront them with the words of *Solomon*. *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Prov. iii. 6.* Such universal piety may not indeed suit the taste of frolickers and dancers; but it well becomes the character of all the professed disciples of Jesus Christ. But should any query, "Why may we not pray for a blessing on our dances?" I answer, you may not, because God has never promised to give a blessing to such practices; therefore such a prayer would be sin. Nay, you cannot do it, because it would be a profanation of the deity, and your consciences will not admit of it.

4. The injunction which is laid upon us to redeem the time, prohibits our mispending it in such practices. Time is a precious jewel, put into our hands to improve for eternity; and those who trifle it away, are (in the scripture account) very fools. *Eph. v. 15, 16. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,---redeeming the time.* Can it with truth be said, that the time which is spent at balls, assemblies and dances is redeemed? No such thing. It is squandered away---it is murdered---it is consumed on our lusts; and how our dancers will be able to answer to God, for all the time they have thus shamefully misimproved, another day will determine.

5. It occasions an extravagant waste of money; with which great good might be done.

done. After enough hath been thrown away upon a child, at the dancing school, to have educated two or three poor children, then truly miss must be dressed cap-a-pee to make a shining figure at the ball; which expends enough to relieve a virtuous family in distress, or cloath half a dozen orphan children. If this is to be good stewards of our money, I confess I am very much mistaken. And *stewards* we certainly are, and *only* stewards of all we possess; and must be accountable unto God for the spending of our substance. I am apprehensive our dancers think but too little of this. Sirs, you would do well to consider, that in a little time the Lord will say, "Come, give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward."

6. The thoughts of having thus squandered our precious time, must occasion very uneasy reflections on a dying bed. Unless the conscience should then be asleep, which would avail but for a little while; for at death the illusion must vanish, and then it would be still more terrible to awake in hell. However, those diversions, which were so pleasing to the carnal mind, while in health and strength, can afford no comfortable reflections in a dying hour. The dancer will then be ready to say, "Wretch that I was, thus to squander away my precious time, my health, strength and estate upon my idle diversions! How much better might I have improved the blessings

sings which Providence bestowed upon me ? How much might I have done for God and my own soul ? But, alas, they were objects, too much neglected ! How ought I to have redeemed my time, in preparing for death and eternity ? But, fool that I was, I spent my life in vain mirth, and sinful pleasures. O, for those precious moments which I have lost ! But they are gone---they are lost for ever ; and I am afraid my God, my heaven, my soul are lost too ! Pity, and pray for me, O my friends ; and let my late repentance be a warning to you. O guard against those sinful diversions on which my poor soul hath been shipwrecked." Such a scene might affect one of our dancers, and for a little time make him serious. But how soon do such impressions wear off ? And then the libertine returns to his folly.

7. It behoves us to live each day and hour, as we would wish to die ; and not to engage in any thing that would alarm us, in case death should overtake us in the act. The truth and utility of this assertion none will deny. Let me then ask, would you be willing to meet with death at a ball, or a dance ? You would not. And how do you know, when you venture on the enchanted ground, that you shall come away alive ? And is this to hold yourselves in readiness ? Think, O my friends, how you would look---how you would feel, should this ever happen. Hor-



ror would fasten on your countenance,-----  
trembling seize every joint and nerve, and the  
convulsive pangs of conscience would be more  
intolerable than the tortures of the bloody in-  
quisition. You would probably use the lan-  
guage of a fair lady, in a dialogue with death,

“ I little thought you would have call'd  
so soon :

“ And must my morning sun go down at  
noon ?

O, dreadful ! To be cut off, in the midst of  
my pleasures---to be hurried from a ball to  
the bar---without any time to repent, or pre-  
pare for eternity ! But perhaps you will say,  
“ Would you have us always on our knees,  
waiting for death ? I answer, no. You may  
boldly meet death when engaged about your  
secular concerns, or any of the duties of life.  
I remember to have read, I think, in the life  
of Lord Chief Justice *Hale*, that at the time  
of sessions, while one of the attornies was  
pleading, there came on a most terrible thun-  
der storm, which silenced the attorney ; upon  
which the Judge said to him, Sir, why don't  
you go on ? Go on, my Lord, said the at-  
torney, don't you see how black the heavens  
are, and the lightning rolling on the ground,  
while the thunder roars as though the last day  
were come ?---And suppose it is, said his  
Lordship, are you not in the way of your  
duty ? I am here about my business, and I  
am as willing to go from hence to judgment,  
as

as I should if I were on my knees in my closet. The way of duty is the way of safety, and while thus engaged we have nothing to fear; but who could manifest such fortitude at a dance?

8. The conversation at dances is inconsistent with christianity; I will appeal to the conscience of those who frequent such places, whether or no flattery, lying, ribaldry and nonsense doth not abound there? Little, I fear, is to be heard, that hath any tendency to reform the manners, or improve the mind; much less, to minister grace to the hearers. There may be enough to corrupt the morals and viciate the taste of both sexes. Is it not from hence, at least in part, that we have so much obscene, vulgar and profane conversation amongst us? Our merry gentry, who delight so much in frolicking and dancing, would do well to consider how they will answer for all their filthiness, foolish talking, jesting and such like things; when they come to stand at the bar of God.

9. Again, Many dances are extremely immodest, and incentive to uncleanness. This is acknowledged by Mr. *Addison*, although an advocate for dancing. “As for country dancing, saith he, it must indeed be confessed, that the great familiarity between the two sexes on this occasion, may sometimes produce very dangerous consequences.” But modesty bids me be sparing here, otherwise

more might be said. My soul, come not thou into their secrets, and unto their assemblies, mine honour, be not thou united.

10. Farther, The musick which leads the dance, is often very obscene; the tunes being adapted to the most vulgar and filthy songs; which have a tendency to pollute the imagination, and to raise unchaste thoughts in the mind. Thus the heart becomes a sink of uncleanness---a cage of all manner of abominable and filthy lusts.

11. Moreover, The practice we are speaking of, cannot be endured in a minister. And why so? If there is no harm in it, and if it may be attended to with advantage, why must ministers be prohibited the practice? The thing speaks for itself: people are conscious that it is an evil, and therefore, although they will indulge themselves in it, they will not allow it in those who have the care of their souls. As for my own part, I think indeed a dancing parson, is an odd character; and a dancing christian, is not much better. And our advocates for dancing would do well to consider, that the Almighty hath no more allowed them a dispensation in this case, than their ministers.

12. Once more, This practice renders persons the most unlike to Christ, our great pattern and exemplar. Did Jesus ever indulge himself in mirth? No. Frequently did he mourn over such impieties, but never did he countenance them,

them, in any way whatever. The doctrines, precepts and examples of Christ, all prohibit vain mirth---idle and sinful diversions. Those who indulge themselves in these, act diametrically opposite to the religion of Jesus; which enjoins temperance, mortification, self-denial and the like virtues.

13. In fine, The greatest, and best of men have ever bore a testimony against the practice of dancing. I shall quote some passages from several authors, which I shall do in their own words; hoping that their sentiments may make some impression upon your minds. We shall begin with the observations of that truly great and good man, Mr. *Caryl*, upon our text and context.

*Their children dance, that is, saith Mr. Caryl, they are instructed and taught the art of musick and dancing; or there is rejoicing among them; this is proper to the age and state of children. Christ himself speaks as if this were the trade of children. Matt. xi. 16. Whereunto shall I liken this generation? They are like children sitting in the market place. What do they there? Are they buying or selling? Are they bargaining or trading? No, that is the business of men. What do the children there? They call to their fellows and say, We have piped to you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not lamented.--- They take the timbrel and the harp. They live in pleasure; hence observe, worldly men breed*

breed their children vainly. Here is a description of their education; they are sent forth as a flock in a dance, playing upon the timbrel, &c. Here is all the knowledge and literature they are brought up to; here is all their religion, all the catechism that they are taught. The Lord giveth this report of *Abraham*, who had a numerous family, *I know him that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.* Gen. xviii. 19. Abraham did not teach his to dance. Here was education in the fear of the Lord.

Thus far are the words of Mr. Caryl. The pious Mr. Henry, upon the place, saith,

They are merry and live a jovial life. They have their balls and musick meetings, at which *their children dance*; and dancing is fittest for children, who know not how better to spend their time, and whose innocence guards them against the mischiefs which commonly attend it. Their children do not pray, or say their catechism, but dance and sing, *and rejoice at the sound of the organ.* Sensual pleasures are all the delights of carnal people; and as men are themselves so they breed their children.

I shall add the words of the learned and judicious Dr. Gill, in his exposition of the text.

*And their children dance*, either in an inartificial way, skip and frisk, and play like calves and lambs, and so are very diverting  
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to their parents, as well as shews them to be in good health; which adds to their parents happiness and pleasure: or in an artificial way, being taught to dance; and it should be observed, it is *their* children, the children of the wicked, and not of the godly, that are thus brought up; so *Abraham* did not train up his children, nor *Job* his; no instance can be given of the children of good men being trained up in this manner, or of their children dancing in an irreligious way.

This is the testimony of the great *Dr. Gill*. *Mr. Baxter* speaking of dancings, revellings and idle diversions, interrogates thus,

Dost thou not know that thou hast higher delights to mind? And are these toys be-  
seeming a noble soul, that hath holy and heavenly matters to delight in? Dost thou not feel what a plague the very pleasure is to thy affections? How it bewitcheth thee, and be-  
fooleth thee, and maketh thee out of love with holiness, and unfit for any thing that is good? Again, Is it sport that thou needest? Dost thou not more need Christ, and grace, and pardon, and preparation for death and judgment, and assurance of salvation? Why then are not these thy business? Farther, Hast thou not a God to obey and serve? And doth he not always see thee? And will he not judge thee? Alas! thou knowest not how soon. Though thou be merry in thy youth, and thy heart cheer thee, and thou walk in the ways  
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of thy heart, and the sight of thine eyes, yet know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

I shall conclude this head with a passage from *Moreland's* history of the evangelical churches of the vallies of *Piedmont*. Here I would observe, that these were the only pure churches in the world, for several centuries. When the world wandered after the beast, these people adhered strictly to the religion of Jesus. They were remarkable for piety, and endured the most cruel persecutions for the cause of Christ. In the tenth article of their discipline, which treats of balls and dances, they say,

A ball is the devil's procession, and whosoever entereth there, entereth into his procession. The devil is the leader, the middle, and the end of the dance. So many paces as a man maketh in a ball, so many leaps he maketh towards hell. They sin in dancing sundry ways, first, in walking, for all their paces are numbered; they sin in touching, in their ornaments, in hearing and seeing, in speaking, in singing, in lies and vanities. A ball is nothing but misery, sin and vanity.

They observe that the dancing of a damsel, caused *John* the Baptist's head to be cut off; and that the dancing of the children of *Israel*, caused *Moses* to break the two tables of the law. They also prove that the ten commandments are violated by balls. They  
cite

cite a passage from St. *Augustine*, wherein he saith, "The miserable dancer, knoweth not, that so many paces as he maketh at a ball, by so many leaps he draweth nearer to hell."

Thus have I offered some reasons and arguments, which have determined me against dancing; which I have enforced by the testimony of several great and good men; whether or no the whole hath sufficient force to prove the unlawfulness and sinfulness of the practice, must be left to the candor of serious minds.

After all, it may be thought that my work is but half done, unless I can answer whatever may be brought in support of this favourite, and falsely called, polite diversion. And this brings me,

III. To reply to the most popular arguments used in favour of dancing.

1. One of the most popular arguments (or rather excuses) for this practice is, "I can see no harm in it, therefore it can be no crime in me." Poor creature.---You can *see* no harm in it,---This is of as much force, as if a blind man was to tell us that he could neither distinguish colours, nor see the light. We may pity your unhappiness, but cannot give you eyes. But you conclude, it cannot be a crime in you, because you do not view it in that light. If we are not cognizable for sins of ignorance, *Saul* was not chargeable with guilt, when he persecuted the church,



and yet, for this reason he accounted himself the chief of sinners. But it may be you are wilfully blind. You might be better instructed, if you would. Let me therefore advise you to pray to God for instruction, in this matter; laying yourself open to conviction; and I am persuaded you will soon see an evil in dancing, for which you must be accountable to God.

2. It may be said, "Dancing is a part of good breeding, without which we are not qualified for company, but shall appear singular and be laughed at."

Perhaps custom may have induced the world to look upon dancing as a branch of good breeding, rather than any excellency in itself. However, to give this plea all its force, I will grant that some advantages might be derived from the dancing school, if properly managed; and possibly may as it is, so far as it teaches a graceful mien, an easy carriage and a genteel behaviour. But these advantages will by no means compensate for the disadvantages which attend it. For first, miss who is educated at the dancing school, soon swells with pride and self-importance, looks down, with an air of disdain, on those who are not as well accomplished, as herself, and but too much copies the description in *Isai.* iii. 16. *The daughters of Zion are naughty, and walk with stretched forth necks, and wanton eyes, walking, and mincing as they go.*  
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However, the young lady's fine acquirements, are not to be buried, in those avocations which industry inspires; therefore in the next place, immense sums are expended to equip her for public view. And so, rustling in her silks, powdered a-la mode and studded with brilliants, she makes her appearance at the ball; where she is introduced into fine company---gets a taste for pleasure and dissipation, which often ends in the destruction of soul and body. *The woman who liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth.* 1 Tim. v. 6.

And now, suppose you are not qualified for such company, what is the loss? *The friendship of the world, is enmity with God.* James iv. 4. And our greatest danger lies in our becoming too familiar with it. But you say that you shall be singular and laughed at. This indeed may be mortifying; but are you as careful not to be singular in religious society? Perhaps when there, you have nothing to say, yet this gives you no concern. As to your being laughed at, it need give you no pain; for if you will shun vice and pursue piety, you shall endure the laugh of the world, although you should behave ever so well.

3. To vindicate dancing, it is said that "it unbends the mind, and recreates the body."---This plea can suit none but such as live a studious, sedentary life; and there are many exercises, less exposed to temptation, that will answer those salutary purposes, equally as well.

Walking, riding, or manual labour may be as profitable and efficacious. Besides, it doth not appear that dancing hath such a beneficent tendency, as alledged. Strange, that being deprived of natural rest---exposed to night damps and inclement air, in a profuse sweat, should be so salutary. The truth is, the reverse is the case; and many have danced themselves into eternity.

4. But perhaps we shall meet with some champion in the cause of dancing, who comes forth, *Goliab* like, bidding defiance to the armies of *Israel*, and hath the effrontery to assert, that “the lawfulness of dancing may be supported by scripture.” Can it indeed? If so, our business will be done for us, and we will promise to give up the point. Why, says this hero, “did not *David* dance?” Yes. We know, as well as he, that *David* danced; but then it was religiously, before the ark. I have already shewn in what sense we are to understand *David*’s dancing; and it is insolent, as well as perverting of scripture, to bring this passage to support our irreligious, modern dances. But, says this champion, “*Solomon* tells us *there is a time to dance.*” True, and *Solomon* tells us also, *there is a time to die.* If our dancers thought more of this, they would find less time for that. But let it be proved, if it can, that *Solomon* intends dancing according to the common mode: and suppose he should, all that can be drawn from

from hence is, that there is a time, in which numbers will be profane enough to dance.

5. Another plea for dancing, often made use of is this, "We may spend our time a great deal worse." I reply, it always indicates a bad cause when one vice is subjoined to vindicate another. Nothing therefore, need be said to shew the weakness of this excuse, only, that we may spend our time a great deal better, themselves being judges.

6. Some have endeavoured to plead for this practice, by quoting the example of professors, "There are such and such, say they, who are professors of religion, and whom we believe to be good people, who will go to heaven, and yet they can dance as well as any body."--More is the pity, that they should lay a stumbling block in the way of others. Often they are heartily despised by the people of the world, for their sinful compliances. However, all professors are not christians. Some who have *Jacob's* voice, have *Esau's* hands. And even the best are liable to err. Therefore follow none, unless they follow Christ. It will be no excuse in the day of judgment, that you saw professors go to balls and assemblies, and therefore you thought there could be no harm in such diversions.

Thus, having given a scriptural definition of the word dance; and proved that dancing, according to the modern mode, is sinful and  
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attended with bad consequences ; also replied to the most popular arguments, in favour of dancing ; I now come, in the last place,

IV. To make some improvement of the subject.

1. From what hath been said, we may see the folly of those parents who put their children to the dancing-school, and spend such immense sums of money, to bring them up in pride, gait and all the vanities of life. Is this to bring up our children in the fear of the Lord, as *Abraham* did ? Is it to train up a child in the way he should go, as *Solomon* directs ? Would it not be much better, to devote our money to pious and charitable uses ? Do such parents take as much care of their childrens souls ? Do they instruct them in the principles of the christian religion, and warn them against sin and vanity ? I fear they do not. Look to it parents ; you have the charge of your childrens souls, as well as of their bodies ; and a much weightier charge it is. Think, how dreadful it will be to have the blood of your dear childrens souls, crying against you, in the day of judgment. How awful would it be, to have a child thus to address you, on that day. “ Oh ! cruel parent ; you were the instrument of my being, or I should not have existed, to have been thus miserable. You cared indeed for my body, but why did not you care for my soul, and labour to make that happy ?

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You might, and you ought to have restrained me, when pursuing vanity and folly. But instead of that, you placed me in the way of temptation; yea, you went with me yourself, to the devil's seminaries; where I was taught to practise sinful pleasures. And now, alas! I am to reap the fruit of our doings, to all eternity." Is the thought shocking? O! give no occasion for the dolorous complaint.

2. What hath been said, reproves those who are attached to, and engaged in the practice of frolicking, dancing, and such like sinful diversions. I say, *such like* diversions; for you would do well to consider, that the arguments against dancing, will generally hold good against gaming, horse racing and all sinful diversions. My dear friends, you are highly reprovably; but I rather chuse to address you in soft language. Let the time past suffice you, to have gone on in sin and folly. Forsake the foolish and live, and walk in the way which leads to eternal life. You are surely making work for repentance. God grant that it may be in time.

If after all that hath been said, you still remain unconvinced, and can see no harm in these things,-- suffer me to advise you to pray earnestly, that you may be enabled to see things in a proper light; and particularly, that you may have a discovery of the wretchedness of your own wicked and deceitful hearts. Then seriously ask yourselves these  
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following questions.---For what was I made? Do I answer the end of my being? Is God glorified by all my actions? Is living in pleasure to live like a christian? Must I not shortly die, and give an account of my actions to God? Have I any time to spare from transacting business for eternity? If this advice were universally regarded, we should hear no more of balls, assemblies and dances; instead of which, our temple gates would be crowded, and the general cry would be, Lord, what shall I do to be saved? May God send us the happy day, and to his name shall be all praise. AMEN.

**F I N I S.**