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Recommended Citation

Young, M. Norvel, "What Is Wrong With Dancing?" (1950). *Stone-Campbell Books*. 295.
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What Is Wrong . . .
With Dancing?



by M. Norvel Young



A Sermon Delivered at the
Broadway Church of Christ
Lubbock, Texas

SINCE the origin of the dance devout men and women have opposed it as a Christian form of recreation. There must be some good reasons why so many devout people, even of widely differing faiths, have come to this conclusion. Jesus taught us that we should know a tree by its fruits and the fruits of the social dance have brought about this opposition. Those who have observed the fruit of the dance hall have seen that the dance has not produced more love of God, more devotion to the church, more respect for those of the opposite sex, more Bible reading, more prayer or a keener interest in worship, more unselfish service in the Kingdom.

More specifically, the primary thing that is wrong with dancing is that it encourages a familiarity between the sexes, a breaking down of the natural reserves of modesty, and frequently leads to intimacies and petting after the dance. Dr. Leta S. Hollingsworth, Professor of Education at Columbia University, stresses this point in an article in **defense** of the modern dance. She writes: "Dancing is an exciting and pleasurable recreation as it affords a partial satisfaction to the sex impulse." This is not to say that all who dance are conscious of this, but it is to say that the general influence upon those who dance is such that Christians should abstain, for their own good and for the sake of their influence upon others who may be more susceptible to the temptations of the dance.

In Galatians 5:19 Paul lists the works of the flesh as "fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, revellings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Webster's New International Dictionary defines "revel" as entertainment provided for feasts, etc., as dances, pageants, masques (festive dance where all wear masks, hence, a revel).

The Century Dictionary uses this sentence to illustrate its meaning: "We use always to have revels, which indeed is dancing." Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon describes it in these words: "A jovial festivity with music and dancing, a revel, carousal, merrymaking." For consecrated Christians whose first aim is to please the Lord and advance His kingdom this one scripture should answer this question.

Our Relationship to the World

When one is deciding this matter he should always consider it from the standpoint of what a Christian is to be in relation to the world. Jesus taught us that we were not in the world to simply enjoy ourselves or amuse ourselves, but to glorify God and serve our fellow man. Any form of recreation which does not contribute to our spiritual well-being is wrong. The line of distinction between Christians and the world is sharp. Paul says for Christians not to be "fashioned according to this world" but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. James defines pure religion as helping the widows and orphans and keeping oneself UNSPOTTED from the world. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world," and again He said, "I have given them thy word, and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:14). Christians by their virtuous life should gain the respect of honorable citizens of the world, but they must never compromise their loyalty to Christ to gain popularity with the world. We are pilgrims here on our journey to the eternal land.

Others Speak

Devout men of various faiths have spoken out against the modern dance. A Jewish Rabbi writes, "Modern dancing is popular, not because of its grace,

but because of its appeal to our lower nature." A Methodist Bishop writes: "I deem the modern dance an unmitigated evil, because in most of its forms it is vulgar and wars directly against the claims of the spiritual life." A Presbyterian preacher says: "Dancing, balls, and parties, lead to forgetfulness of God." Clovis Chappel, noted Methodist evangelist, states that "60,000 girls enter the underworld every year and three-fourths of them by the dance floor." Notice that it is not music that is objected to nor the movement of the body to music such as we do in marching or playing children's games. It is the fact that the fruits of the dance floor show that it "wars directly against the claims of the spiritual life," that it leads to "forgetfulness of God."

A prominent physician in Lubbock, a leader in civic affairs, made this statement: "As far as I am concerned, the children can stay home and twiddle their thumbs rather than go to dances, and others would feel the same way, too, if they could be in my office and see mothers come in with tears streaming down their faces, with their little girls begging for help and advice."

Why Not Wholesome Recreation Instead?

But it is not necessary to leave the children at home to twiddle their thumbs. Christian parents and Christian young people can devise innumerable means of wholesome recreation through outings, hikes, picnics, hobbies, hunting and fishing, athletic games, good reading and good music, and a host of other activities. The Christian home should not be content to oppose the forms of recreation which are harmful, but to provide through co-operation with other Christian homes the helpful types of recreation.

But some will ask if it is not possible to clean up the dance and place it under responsible supervision and thus make it better. Yes, it is undoubtedly possible to improve on the roadhouses, taverns, commercial dance-halls, honky-tonks, etc., where dancing is accompanied by drinking (legal or illegal), gambling, profanity, and often by organized vice. But in the home or under good supervision it still retains the objectionable feature of encouraging familiarity between the sexes and breaking down natural reserves of modesty. And what assurance does the Christian parent have that once he has encouraged the dance in the home and has taught his children to dance in the modern manner that they will not seek the same amusement in the roadhouse? Supervisors of college and high school dances report that one of their main problems is what happens after the students leave the supervised dance to stop at roadhouses, night clubs, etc. The Mormon church has attempted to solve the problem by building a dance hall beside the church house, but Otis Gatewood reports that he talked with hundreds of the young people and they said that soon the supervised dances were not different from the unsupervised. Where the supervision is strict the young people resort to the roadhouses, and in Salt Lake City, the capital of Mormonism, commercialized dance halls are numerous and the city claims the largest such hall in America, called the "Cocoanut Grove."

The Highest Call

The Christian has answered the highest call in the world, the call of the Master to consecrated service. He is a saint, a disciple of the perfect Man, the Son of God. He is to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world. He is to "abstain from the very appearance of evil" and "not to eat flesh nor drink wine, nor do

anything whereby thy brother stumbleth" (Romans 14:21). Even if one felt that he or she suffered no spiritual injury from dancing, the concern that he has for the welfare of others should cause him to abstain for the sake of his influence.

There is so much work to be done for Christ. God can do wonders with us if we will only surrender completely to Him. May God fill our lives so full with His love that we shall crowd out all fleshly desires and become more like Jesus every day. Let us find our joy in work and worship for Him.

This message comes to you from the
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