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1686

## An Arrow Against Profane and Promiscuous Dancing Drawn out of the Quiver of the Scriptures

Increase Mather

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# An Arrow

AGAINST

## *Profane and Promiscuous*

# DANCING.

*Drawn out of the Quiver of the*  
SCRIPTURES.

---

By the Ministers of Christ at Boston in New-England.

[*Increase Mather*]



An Arrow Against Profane and Promiscuous Dancing. Drawn out of the Quiver of the Scriptures. By the Ministers of Christ at Boston in New-England. 1685 [Increase Mather]

When a dancing master arrived in Boston in 1685 and offered lessons and classes for both sexes during times normally reserved for church meetings, the Puritan ministers went to court to suppress the practice. Increase Mather (1639-1723) took the leading part, writing and publishing this tract, which compiles arguments and precedents for the prohibition of “*Gynecandrical Dancing*, [i.e.] *Mixt or Promiscuous Dancing*, viz. of Men and Women ... together.” These justifications were certainly shared with the court, which found the dancing master guilty, fined him £100, and allowed him to skip town.

Mather’s tract on dancing is an overwhelming compendium of sources and authorities: from the Bible, classical authors, Christian Church Fathers, medieval philosophers, and Reformed theologians both Continental and English. None of them, it appears, approved of mixed dancing—because it leads to adultery and worse. The vilest sins and the direst disasters lie only a short step from the dance floor.

The *Arrow* is remarkable for two things (at least): for how much allusion and citation are packed into its brief 30 pages, and for how quickly it escalates the issue into life-or-death scenarios, all vividly painted to emphasize the mortal danger of men and women dancing together.

Cover illustration: Pierre Rameau, *Le Maître à Danser* (Paris, 1725).

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Lincoln

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AN ARROW AGAINST PROFANE AND  
PROMISCUOUS DANCING.  
DRAWN OUT OF THE QUIVER  
OF THE SCRIPTURES.

BY THE MINISTERS OF CHRIST AT  
BOSTON IN NEW-ENGLAND.

[Increase Mather]



Zea Books  
Lincoln, Nebraska 2021

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*Diabolus. Gulielm: Parisiensis.*

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Boston, *Printed by Samuel Green, and*  
*are to be Sold by Joseph Brunning.*

1684

# An Arrow

A G A I N S T

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*An Arrow against Mixt*

D A N C I N G.

**C**ONCERNING the Controversy about *Dancing*, the Question is not, whether all *Dancing* be in it self sinful. It is granted, that's *Pyrrhical* or *Polemical Saltation* : i. e. where men vault in their Armour, to shew their strength and activity, may be of use. Nor is the question, whether a sober and grave Dancing of Men with Men, or of Women with Women, be not allowable ; we make no doubt of that, where it may be done without offence, in due season, and with moderation. The Prince of Philosophers has observed truly, that *Dancing* or *Leaping*, is a natural expression of joy : So that there is no more Sin in it, than in laughter, or any outward expression of inward Rejoycing.

But our question is concerning *Gynecandrical Dancing*, or that which is commonly called *Mixt* or *Promiscuous Dancing*, viz. of Men and Women (be they elder or younger persons) together: Now this we affirm to be utterly unlawful, and that it cannot be tolerated in such a place as *New-England*, without great Sin. And that it may appear, that we are not transported by *Affection* without Judgment, let the following Arguments be weighed in the Ballance of the Sanctuary.

Arg. 1. *That which the Scripture condemns is sinful.* None but Atheists will deny this *Proposition* : But the Scripture condemns *Promiscuous Dancing*. This *Assumption* is proved, 1. *From the Seventh Commandment.* It is an Eternal Truth to be observed in expounding the Commandments, that whenever any sin is forbidden, not only the highest acts of that sin, but all degrees thereof, and all occasions leading thereto are prohibited. Now we cannot find one Orthodox and Judicious Divine, that writeth on the Commandments, but mentions *Promiscuous Dancing*, as a breach of the seventh Commandment, as being an

occasion, and an incentive to that which is evil in the sight of God. Yea, this is so manifest as that the *Assembly* in the *larger Catechism*, do expressly take notice of *Dancings*, as a violation of the Commandments. It is sad, that when in times of Reformation, Children have been taught in their Catechism, that such *Dancing* is against the Commandment of God, that now in *New-England* they should practically be learned the contrary. The unchast Touches and Gesticulations used by *Dancers*, have a palpable tendency to that which is evil. Whereas some object, that they are not sensible of any ill motions occasioned in them, by being Spectators or Actors in such *Saltations*; we are not bound to believe all which some pretend concerning their own Mortification. But suppose it were so, if there be other persons, who are by *Mixt Dancing* drawn into sin; that's enough against it. And that many are so, *Juvenal's* Verses are a sufficient proof

*Forsitan expectes ut [Gaditana] canoro  
Incipiat prurire choro, plausuq; probatæ.*

And that of *Horace*, *Motus doceri gaudet  
Jonicos Matura Virgo, & Fingitur Actibus, jam  
nunc & incestos amores, &c.*

2. Besides the seventh Commandment, *There are other Scriptures, which seem expressly and particularly to condemn the Dancing we plead against.* It is spoken of as the great sin of the Daughters of *Sion*, that they did walk with stretched-out necks, and with wanton eyes, *walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet*, Isa. 3. 16. Those great Interpreters *Junius*, and *Rivet*, and *Ravanellus*, conceive, that Scripture hath a special respect to those artificial and proud carriages which are learned in the *Dancing School*. And the holy Apostle *Paul* condemns *Rioting* as a vice, Rom. 13. 13. The original word Critical and Accurate Expositors Interpret, as reflecting on *Petulant Dancings*. And another Apostle speaks not only of *Excess in Wine*, but of *Revelling*, as a Sin which the Gentiles before their Conversion to Christ, were generally guilty of, 1 Pet. 4.3. The word translated *Revelling*, may be read *Dancing*. It is the same with that in

the *Romans*, which our translation calls *Rioting*. The learned *Aretius* comments thus upon it; By Κῶμος, *he intends wanton Dancing, and so it is fitly mentioned after that of Excess in Wine, because it was customary with the Gentiles, after they had been drinking to Excess, to fall to dancing and singing; and commonly their Songs were profane and obscene.* Thus he, And indeed, as *Ravanellus* and *Voetius* have well observed: the Greek word Κῶμος (which our Translators call *Rioting*, and in *Peter*, *Reverelling*) is by the most learned in the Greek Tongue, judged to intend *Dancing*. Thus *Hesychius* saith, that it is εἶδος ὀρχησεως. And it is evident, that *Pindar*, the Greek Poet, doth so use the word. He saith, Κωμάζε σὺν ὕμνῳ i. e. *Salta cum Hymno.* Vid. *Zuinger. Theatr. Vol. 2. lib. 5. p. 389.*

The summe is, that according to the judgment of the most profound and accurate Interpreters; the Scripture does expresly, and by name condemn *Dancing* as a vicious practice. The argument stands thus, Κῶμος are expresly condemned in the Scripture? But mixt Dancings are Κῶμος, Therefore they are expresly condemned in the Scripture.

Also under that of *Chambring, Wantonness, lasciviousness* Dancings are implied.

3. *There are many other Scriptures which do implicitly condemn them as sinful.* How often does the Scripture commend unto Christians, *Gravity* and *Sobriety*, in their behaviour at all times; and condemn all *Levity* in Carriage. When as *Dancing* is (as some have expressed it) a *Regular Madness*. That wise Prince *Alphon-sus*, after he had seen such things, the question being asked, What is the difference between a *Dancer* and a *Mad-man* ? Replied; *There was no other difference, but only this; that the person who is really Phrentick, is mad all the day long; when as the Dancer is only mad an hour in a day perhaps.* *Lud. Vives* tells a pleasant story of certain men, who coming out of *Asia* into *Spain*, when they saw the *Spaniards* dance, they were so affrighted, as to run away, supposing them to be possessed with some Spirit, or mad at least. And truly such affected *Levity*, and Antick Behaviour, when persons skip and fling about like *Bedlams*, as they say, *Dancers* are wont to do; is no way becoming the Gravity of a Christian. Moreover, the Scripture saith, *Whatsoever things are of*

*good report*, think of these, *Phil.* 4. 8. which implieth, that Christians ought to avoid things of evil report. But *Promiscuous Dancings* are so; & that not only amongst serious Christians, but even amongst the Gentiles. Their grave and wise men have branded that custom as vile, infamous, and abominable; whose words we shall hear anon. But therefore that Rule which saith, meddle not with things of bad report, forbids Christians to have any concernment with *Promiscuous Dancings*. Yet again the Scripture saith, *Give no offence, neither to the Jew, nor to the Gentile, nor to the Church of God*, 1 Cor. 10. 32. In indifferent things this precept takes place; but the impleaded Dancing is very offensive upon more accounts than one, as will afterwards appear.

Arg. 2. *If we consider, by whom this practice of Promiscuous Dancing was first invented by whom patronized, and by whom witnessed against, we may well conclude, that the admitting of it, in such a place as New-England, will be a thing pleasing to the Devil, but highly provoking to the Holy God.*

We design to write as comprehensively as we can; and have therefore in this Argument



put several things together, the particulars whereof we shall endeavour to clear.

1. *Who were the Inventors of Petulant Dancings ?* They had not their original amongst the People of God, but amongst the Heathen. Learned men have well observed, that the Devil was the first inventor of the impleaded *Dances*, and the Gentiles, who worshiped him, the first Practitioners in this Art. They did honour the Devils, whom they served in this way; their Festivals being for the most part spent in Play and Dances. And from them did the Apostatizing Idolatrous *Israelites* learn to behave themselves, as they did, when they worshipped the Golden Calf. *They sat down, to eat and drink, and rose up to play, or to dance.* 1 *Cor.* 10.7 Hence amongst the Greeks, Bacchus, was stiled θεος χορείος the God that loved Dancing. Their manner was, that a Company of Young Men and Women, with Musical Instruments, would Dance and Sing together, in honour of *Bacchus*; whom also they called by the name of Κῶμος which (as before was shewed) does from thence signifie *Dancing*. vid. *Alting Theol. Problem. Loc.* 10. p. 510. Nor

is it to be wondred that those miserably deluded Souls, who thought and taught, that their Gods were Adulterers, did suppose that they would be delighted with such Dances; as had a tendency that way, yea, the Gentiles took such pleasure in Dancing, that they learned some irrational Creatures that foolish Art. In special (as *Strabo in lib. 13.* relates) they taught *Apes* to Dance. When *Diana's* Festival was celebrated, *Dancing Apes* were brought forth to honour it. This is enough to make Christians, not only deride, but detest such Vanities; especially considering that the Scripture saith, *Learn not the way of the Heathen.* Jer. 10. 2. And that the Lords People may *not do after their manners*, nor imitate their Heathenish Customes, *Lev. 20. 23.* And that Christ came to redeem Believers from their *vain Conversation*, 1 Pet. 1. 18. And that they should not *be conformed to this world*, Rom. 12. 2.

A practice in use, only amongst the Heathen, but never known among the people of God, except in times of degeneracy, ought not to be taken up. But this is true of that practice, which we now testify against.

2. *By whom have Promiscuous Dances been patronized?* Truly, by the worst of the Heathen. *Caligula, Nero*, and such like Atheists and Epicures were delighted in them. *Lucius* (that infamous Apostate) hath written an Oration, in defence of profane and Promiscuous Dancings. Amongst the Papists, some of their more grave Writers, decry such a practice as a great Immorality. *Alexander Fabritius*, a Learned Man, though Popishly affected, was indeed clearly convinced of the great sin which is therein. His words are worthy our taking notice of them; he thus expresseth himself. *The entring into the Processions of Dances, hinders men from ingress into the heavenly Procession; and those who Dance, offend against the Sacraments of the Church. First, against Baptism; They break the Covenant which they made with God in Baptism; wherein they promised, to renounce the Devil and his Pomps; but when they enter into the Dance, they go in the Pompous Procession of the Devil.* Thus that Author: But generally, Popish Casuists justify it, as they do many other moral evils; so *Cajetan, Azorius, Silvester*, and other Papists: The corrupt Schoolmen makes a light matter

of it, calling it a *Venial Sin*: And therefore *Lavater* does justly upbraid the Popish Religion, in that their Writers do generally maintain the lawfulness of *Promiscuous Dancings*. So that the Patrons of this Practice are men not *sound in the Faith*.

3. *Who are they that have faithfully testified against this practice?* Ignorant and Profane Men say, no body is against it, but a few silly Precisians, who are more precise than wise. But we certainly know, that the wisest, and the learnedest, and the holiest men in the world have disliked it. *The Antient Doctors*, (Fathers as they are called) have thundred against this Sin. *Chrysostom* in his Sermons on *Genesis*, treating on *Jacob's* Marriage ; *Here* (saith he) *We read of a Wedding, but not a word of Dancing there*. Yea, he sticks not to call *Dancing* a *Diabolical Practice*. And in another of his Sermons; He saith, that *Wherever there is a Petulant Dance, the Devil is one of the Company*. And *Arnobius* does vehemently reprehend the Gentiles, because of their lascivious Dances. *Austin* doth severely tax this vice. *Ambrose* doth advise all Godly Parents, that would not have the Souls of their

Children corrupted and ruined, not to send them to the Dancing-School. And how often do the Fathers call the Dance a *Work of Satan, one of his Poms and Vanities, which all baptized persons are bound to renounce?* And not only Fathers, but whole *Councils* have born witness against them. So did the *Oecumenical Synod at Constantinople*. Also the Synod which met at *Laodicea*, and several others, absolutely prohibit all Promiscuous Dancings, not allowing them so much, as at Weddings. Thus it was with Christians, before the World did degenerate again into Paganish, Heathenish Customs. We have now heard the ordinance of Antiquity discharged against the impleaded Dancers. A Shower of Arrows are yet behind.

As for *the great Reformers of Religion, and Opposers of Antichristianism*, none have gone beyond them, in an Holy Zeal against Profane and Promiscuous Dancing. Let us in the first place, cite the *Waldenses* : They are in the Scripture, honoured with the name of *Saints*, Rev. 13. 7. These *Saints of God, and Martyrs of Jesus*, were haters of Mixt Dances. Because their words are Pathetical; we shall

here transcribe and insert them, as we find them mentioned by *Perrin*, in his History of the Doctrine and Discipline of the *Waldenses*, p. 63. They thus testify : *A Dance is the Devils Procession. He that enters into a Dance, enters into his Possession. The Devil is the Guide, the middle and the end of the Dance. A man sinneth in Dancing divers wayes; as in his Pace, for all his steps are numbred; in his Touch, in his Ornaments, in his Hearing, sight, Speech, and other Vanities. We will prove first from Scripture, and then by other Reasons, how wicked a thing it is to Dance.—He that Danceth, maintaineth the Devil's Pomp, and singeth his Mass. Again, In a Dance, a man breaks the Ten Commandments of God. The very motion of the Body, which is used in Dancing, giveth Testimony enough of evil. Austin saith, The miserable Dancer knoweth not, that as many Paces, as he makes in Dancing, so many steps he makes to Hell.* Thus (and much more to this purpose) do those faithful Witnesses of Christ, declare against this Profane Practice. Moreover, the Ministers of the *Reformed Churches in France*, did above an hundred years ago, (*viz. Anno 1581.*) concur in writing, and publishing a

Book, against the vice we are impleading. Also Venerable *Calvin*, *Marlorat*, *Lavater*, *Danoeus*, *Tilenus*, *Polanus*, *Zepperus* ; all condemn it as utterly unlawful. *Peter Martyr* and *Aretius* in their common places, do elaborately discourse about mixed Dancing, and prove it to be an unlawful Recreation. The Judicious *Rivet* saith, that such Dancings as teach wantonness in looks, or pride in behaviour, as he thinks almost all the *Saltations* do, which are now adayes Artificially learned in the *Dancing-Schools*, are breaches of the seventh Commandment, and ought not to be tolerated in any Christian Common-wealth. The great *Voetius* hath lately, and (according to his wonted manner) with very much learning and strength of reason, proved that such Exercises are very sinful. The like has been done by the Excellent *Altingius*, Amongst our *English* Divines there is a *cloud of Witnesses*. There are three *Bishops* who have written against Promiscuous *Dancing* as unlawful; so Dr. *Downham*, *Babington* and *Andrews*, and one *Arch-Bishop* (tho we confess a Puritanical one) *viz.* the incomparable *Usher*, hath given his Testimony against Vanities of this kind.

Besides these Dr. *Rainold*, Dr. *Ames*, Mr. *Perkins*. Mr. *Dod*, Mr. *Elton*, Mr. *Bolton*, Mr. *Brinsley*, Mr. *Durham* and others have abundantly proved it to be unlawful. Also Mr. *Prin* has in his *Histrion Mastix*, a large discourse on this subject. Whoso shall please to read him, will find that good men have been very severe in their censure on *Dancers*. He will there see it affirmed, that *mixed Dancing is a Recreation fitter for Pagans & whores & Drunkards than for Christians* : And that the Gate of Heaven is too strait for a *Chore* of impure *Dancers* to enter in thereat: & that such *Capring Goats* will not be found amongst Sheep at the last Day, with many the like severe expressions. So odious was this Practice in former times, when Debauchery and Atheism had not obtained that Credit which this Adulterous Generation has put upon it.

Arg. 3. *That Practice which the Graver sort of Heathen have condemned as unlawful, Christians may well look upon as Sinful*, Rom. 2. 14, 15. *But this is true concerning mixed Dancing* ; as shall by Testimony be made to appear.

*Macrobius* informs us, that amongst the Antient *Romans* skill in Dancing was reputed



an infamous thing. *Scipio Africanus* complains that some in his time would go with *impudent Dancers* (as he calls them) and learn to sing with them, Which practice their Ancestors looked upon as a disgrace to Gentlemen. He therefore speaks of it as a great degeneracy of that Age, that some being Persons of *Quality*, sent their Children to a Dancing-school, and that he had himself seen at one of their Schools, a Boy of twelve years old Dancing, which he thought was a fitter employment for a lewd and foolish serving-boy, than for the Son of a Gentleman. And *Salust* (that brave *Roman* Historian) layeth it as a Brand of Infamy upon *Sempronia*, that she had been taught to *Dance*, which he says was a sign of dishonesty; such a practice being *the instrument of Luxury*. And *Cicero* in his Oration *Pro Muroena* saith, that if a Man be as *Dancer*, he is doubtless either a Drunkard or a mad man. *Nemo saltat sobrius nisi forte insaniat*. He blames *Cato* for having such hard thoughts of *Muroena*, as to suppose him guilty of *Dancing*. For (saith he) if he be a *Dancer*, without doubt he is a bad man indeed, since that Vice never goeth alone. He saith of *Gabinus* and

*Antonius* that they must needs be vicious persons, because they were *Dancers*. *Seneca* bewails it, that in his time young Ones were corrupted with *Obscene Dances*; and that *Dancing-schools* were tolerated in the City, and that some when they were inflamed at the *Dance*, went from *the Dancing-school* to the *Brothel house*. *Priamus* severely reproved his sons because he understood they were ‘ορχηστᾱι i. e. *Dancers*, *Plutarch* in his Description of a Vertuous Woman, mentions this as a Negative qualification, that she must not be a *Dancer*. Understand him and the other Authors cited, as speaking of Promiscuous *Dances*. The Emperor *Tiberius* banished *Dancers*, not only from his Court, but out of the City of *Rome*.

Now then, shall the *Gentiles*, who had only the dark Light of Nature to shew them what things are good & what evil; condemn *Petulant dancings*? And shall Christians who have the Scriptures and the Glorious Light of the Gospel to illuminate them, practise or plead for such works of Darkness? And shall that *Abomination* be set up in *New-England* (the place where the Light of the Gospel has

shined so Gloriously) which *Moral Heathen* have detested? The Lord lay not this great sin to the charge of any, who have at all been guilty of it.

Arg. 4. *The practice which is not sanctified by Prayer, but is an Enemy to Religious Exercises, is surely an evil Practice. But this is true concerning mixt dancing.* It is a good Rule which *Practical and Casuistical* Divines are wont to give, *That work which a Man cannot pray over, let him not meddle with.* A Christian should do nothing wherein he cannot exercise Grace, or put a respect of Obedience to God on what he does. This in lawful Recreations may be done. 1 Cor. 10. 31 But who can seriously pray to the Holy God to be with him when he is going to a Promiscuous *dance* ? It is that which hinders Religious Exercises, especially for persons to go immediately from hearing a Sermon to a *Gunecandrical Dance*. It is an high degree of profaneness, an impudent contempt put upon the Gospel. The Devil thereby catcheth away the good seed of the Word, and the former Religious Exercise is rendered ineffectual. Some that write against

*dances*, observe, that many young persons who seemed to be hopeful, and to have some good beginnings of Piety in them, by falling into acquaintance with that unlawful Recreation, have in a little time utterly left all savour of good; it being just with God, when they have forsaken him to follow the Devils Poms and Vanities, to withdraw his Holy Spirit from them, and judicially give them up to mind nothing else but Folly. The Lord grant that none amongst our selves may find the observation true.

Arg. 5. *For Persons to Dance at a Time when God calls them to mourn, is certainly unlawful. But such is the case at this Day.* If the thing were in it self lawful (which the Arguments insisted on prove that it is not) yet to set upon such a practice at such a time, must needs be a great provocation to the sight of God. *Dancers* are wont to alledge that Scripture, *Eccl.* 3. 4. *There is a Time to Dance*, (though that does not speak a syllable for the Justification of such *Dancing* as we are writing against, nor indeed for any other *Dancing*, since the meaning of the place is not that there is a *lawful time*, but only a *limited time to Dance*.) But

they should consider that *There is a Time to mourn*. Now to set up *Dances* at a Time when Gods calls to mourn, is most certainly a provocation. There was a Time when God by his Prophet said, *Hear the Word of the Lord, O ye Women, and teach your daughters wailing, Jer. 9. 20.* And so does he speak by his providence at this day: But at a Time when God saith, *Teach your Daughters wailing*, shall we say *no, We will teach them Dancing*? There is a wo pronounced upon them that are at ease in Sion, and who at a season when they should be grieved for the Affliction of *Joseph*, are *Chanting to the sound of the Viol, Amos 6. 5.* Every body knows that it is a time of much Affliction with the Church of God in the World. They that begin a *Dance* now, give but a poor evidence of their belonging to the Mystical Body of Christ, when they do no more sympathize with its sorrow. Is this a Time for *Figs* and *Galiards*! Let us recommend to such persons the serious Consideration of that Scripture, *Isa. 22. 12, 13, 14. In that Day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping and to mourning. And behold Joy and Gladness, Let us Eat and Drink, for to morrow*

*we shall Die. It was revealed in mine Ears by the Lord of Hosts, surely this Iniquity shall not be purged from you till you Die, saith the Lord of Hosts.* The Judgments of God are abroad in the World, and hanging over our own heads too. *Should we then make Mirth? Ezek. 21. 10.* Blessed Mr. *Cotton*, tho he be dead (and hath been so 33. years) yet speaketh. He hath left behind him this Testimony (in his Book on *Eccl. 3. 4.*) *To Dance though at Marriages is unmeet, especially in N. E. And at such a Time as this, when the Churches are in Distress.* Should he rise out of his Tomb (which is here amongst us) how would his Holy Soul be grieved to behold such Degeneracy in this Boston.

Arg. 6. *That Practice against which the wrath of God hath been revealed from Heaven, may well be dreaded as unrighteous.* Rom. 1. 18. *But this is sadly true concerning mixt Dancings.* The Fruits and Effects thereof have been Tragical & Dismal. No doubt but that the *Promiscuous Dances* (for at their Sacrifices the Heathen used to do so) between the *Moabites* and the *Midianitish* Woman, proved a snare to the Children of Israel. But how terrible a Plague followed? *Rivet, Ravanellus* and others

conclude that *Dinah* went to see a *Dance* among the *Shechemites*; if her good Father had not indulged her that liberty, he had saved her from Ruine, and himself and Family from great Reproach. *Salome*, the Daughter of *Herodias* was notable at *Dancing* ! But what end did she come to? Nicephorus relates that falling under the Ice, her feet *Capered* under the water; and her Head being cut off by the Ice, it danced above water. The Story of that Bishop is famous, who having a Mixed Dance in his House, he and the female in his hand hapned to be crush'd to Death. Also in the City of *Magdeburg*. 24 Persons (Men and Women) were struck dead with the Lightnings as they were *Promiscuously Dancing*. See Dr. Beards *Theater of Judgments*, Chap. 36. Hereby may we understand that such Men have provoked the Lord, *Numb.* 16. 30. Histories have many other tragical stories confirming this Argument, which we forbear to mention. It is known from their own Confessions that amongst the *Indians* in this *America*, oftentimes at their *Dances* the Devil appears in bodily shape, and takes away one of them alive. In some places of this Wilderness there

are great heaps of Stones, which the *Indians* have laid together, as an horrid Remembrance of so hideous a fruit of their *Satanical Dances*. The Writer of *Magica de Spectris*, observes, That there was hardly any meeting betwixt the Devil and Witches wherein there was no *Dancing*.

But let us hear what the Patrons of Dances have to plead. *Produce your Cause, and bring forth your strong Reasons, saith the Lord*. Say all that you have to say.

Plea. 1. *We Read in the Scripture of Dances. Miriam Danced, and David Danced.*

*Answ.* 1. Those Instances are not at all to the purpose; for they were Religious *Dances*, accommodated to the State of the Old Testament-Church. They had also Musick in their worship, but such as have so in these dayes *Judaize* more than *Christians* ought to do, we should divert into another Question, should we speak to that.

2. Neither were those mentioned, *Mixed dancings*: It is said of *Miriam, The Woman went out after her with Dances, Exod. 15. 20.* But not that Men went out with them: Nor did *David* take a Woman by the hand to *Dance*



with him before the Ark. In one Word, there is not so much as one Example in the whole Book of God concerning *mixt dancing*, except it be the Instance of that accursed and damned Harlot the Daughter of *Herodias*.

Plea. 2. *The Design of Dancing is only to teach Children good Behaviour and decent Carriage.*

*Ans.* Religion is no Enemy to good Manners, to learn a due Poyse and Composure of Body is not unlawful, provided it be done without a provocation to Uncleaness, and be not a Nurse of Pride and Vanity. If therefore any be disposed to have their Children instructed in that which may be truly Ornamental, or a desireable Accomplishment in these respects, they may send them not to a Blasphemer, but to some Grave Person that will teach them Decency of Behaviour, not *Promiscuously*, but each Sex by themselves; so neither God nor Man will be offended.

This notwithstanding, Every thing is not *Good Carriage* ; which Light and Vain Persons shall call so. Why should *Pantomimical Gestures* be named good Carriage. There is a behaviour which Light Persons look upon as

an accomplishment; but such as are grave and solid, and wise (whose esteem is most to be valued) have other thoughts of it. If the Holy Prophet *Isaiah* were alive in these dayes, he would not call a *stretched forth neck, and wanton eye, a Mincing as they go*, by the name of good carriage. It is one of the Devil's Wiles to Guild over corrupt Practices with Golden Names, that men may the more easily swallow them. In this debauched Age; frequent *Osculations* amongst those that are not in any Conjugal Relation, is called good Breeding, Gentile behaviour, and the like. But Christians ought to hate such tendencies to *Nicolaitism*, for Christ hates them, *Rev. 2. 6.*

Plea 3. *Children are much pleased with this Exercise.* Ans. That we believe: But if it suit with their corrupt natures, that's a sign it is evil. No doubt but that if a Stage play were set up, many Children would be as much pleased with it, as now they are with the Dance. If a Blasphemer shall tell them, There's as good Divinity to be learned by a Play as by the Scripture it self, perhaps they may be debauched into the belief of it, if ever they should see Scripture-stories acted in a Play,

which indeed is a profane Practice common amongst the Papists, but prohibited in Reformed Churches under pain of the highest censure. The Lord saith, *Seek not after your own heart and your own wayes*, after which you use to go an whoring, *Numb. 15. 35.*

Plea. 4. *Such dancing is now become customary amongst Christians.* *Ans:* Which cannot be thought on without horror. A great and Learned Divine takes notice of it as a very sad thing, that all the profane Dances in use amongst the Lascivious Greeks of Old, have of late years been revived in the Christian World; yea, and in Places where the Reformed Religion has taught men better. But shall Christians follow the course of the World? They ought to swim against the stream, and to keep themselves pure from the sins of the Times of which this of *mixed dancing* is none of the least.

Plea. 5. *Some good men think it is lawful!* *Ans.* We are not to walk by the Opinion of this or that good Man, but by the Scriptures. *To the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to that there is no light in them.* Fearful Judgments have befallen a Professing

People for doing such things as some good Men through error of Judgment have approved of. We dare not deny, that there have been some good Men in the world, who have been so far misled as to justify Profanations of the Lords Day. And *Lutherans* have pleaded for Graven Images, contrary to the second Commandment. But should such things be tolerated in *N. E.* we have reason to believe that the hot displeasure of God would soon burn against us. Besides, it is more than we know, if one good man hath written in defence of mixt Dancings. One that hath written against Dancers, giveth his Book this Title, *The Church of ungodly Men and Women whose King is Lucifer*. But we cannot call to mind one Protestant Author who has been real for the interest of Reformation, that has set his Pen on work to plead for a practice so vile and infamous. This Objection turns upon Dancers thus, That practice with Holy Men in all ages have abhorred may well be suspected to be an evil practice: But it was shewed that this is true of promiscuous Dancing. We shall then conclude this Discourse with a double *Corollary*.

Corol. 1. *It is the Duty of Churches to exercise the Discipline of Christ towards such of their Members as shall offend in this matter.* The Rule is clear and written with the Beams of the Sun, 2 *Thes.* 3. 6. *We command you, Brethren, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw your selves from every Brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the Tradition which he received from us.* Now they that frequent Promiscuous Dancings, or that send their Children thereunto, walk disorderly, and contrary to the Apostles Doctrine. It has been proved that such a practice is a *Scandalous Immorality*, and therefore to be removed out of Churches by Discipline, which is the Broom of Christ, whereby he keeps his Churches clean. *Zepherus* and others observe that it was by this means, that Churches in the Primitive times were preserved from this corruption. And thus it hath been in the Reformed Churches. The National Synod held at *Dort*, Anno 1578. thus express themselves, *Because Dances are for the most part attended with a Levity unbecoming Christians, and are an offence to the Godly, especially when practised in a time of*

*common Danger and Calamity, they that go to Dances, shall be reprov'd, and if after divers Admonitions they persist therein, they are to be excluded from Communion.* And several Provincial Assemblies in *Holland*, have declared that the sword of Discipline ought to be brandished again such Offenders, as *Voe-tius* testifieth (*In Disput, de excelsis mundi*, p. 346, 347.) And the *Reforming Synods* in *Poland* above an hundred years ago, did absolutely prohibit these Dances, and prescribe the use of Discipline against that evil: Once more in the printed Discipline of the Reformed Churches in *France*, p. 45. They have this Article, *Dancing is to be suppressed, and those that take the liberty or custom to Dance after they have been several times Admonished shall be Excommunicated, when they shew themselves obstinate in their Rebellion. And the Consistories are exhorted well to put this Article into Execution, and to read the same publickly in the Name of God, and in the Authority of the Synods, and the said Synods and Conferences are exhorted to take heed of and warn those Consistories that therein do not their Duties, to censure the Offenders for it.*

And shall Churches in *N. E.* who have had a Name to be stricter and purer than other Churches, suffer such a scandalous evil amongst them? if all that are under Discipline be made sensible of this matter, we shall not be much or long infested with a *Choreutical Dæmon*.

*Corol. 2. Such Church-Members in N. E. as have sent their Children to be Practitioners or Spectators of mixt Dancing between young Men and Maidens, have cause to be deeply humbled. But stand still a while! what a word is here! Church-Members and their Children in N. E. at mixt Dances! Be astonished O ye Heavens! without doubt Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel knoweth us not. If our Fathers should rise out of their Graves, they would not own such Children. It has been observed by several learned & holy Men that Job giveth it as the Description and Character of ungodly ones: They send forth their little ones like a Flock, and their Children Dance, they take the Timbrel and Harp, and rejoyce at the sound of the Organs, Job 21. 11, 12. Mr. Caryl's note on those words is, That worldly men breed their Children vainly. This is all their Religion.*

The Catechism which Wicked men teach their Children is to Dance and to Sing. Not that Dancing, or Musick, or Singing are in themselves sinful: but if the Dancing Master be wicked they are commonly abused to lasciviousness, and that makes them to become abominable. But will you that are Professors of Religion have your Children to be thus taught? the Lord expects that you should give the Children who are Baptized into his Name another kind of Education, that you should bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord : And do you not hear the Lord Expostulating the case with you, and saying, you have taken my Children, the Children that were given unto me; the Children that were solemnly engaged to renounce the Poms of Satan; but is this a light matter that you have taken these my Children, and initiated them in the Poms and Vanities of the Wicked one, contrary to your Covenant? What will you say in the day of the Lords pleading with you? we have that charity for you as to believe that you have erred through Ignorance, and not wickedly: and we have therefore accounted it our Duty to inform



you in the Truth. If you resolve not on Reformation, you will be left inexcusable. However it shall be, we have now given our Testimony and delivered our own Souls. *Consider what we say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.*

FINIS.

## Notes

- iii.11-12 *Chorea est Circulus cujus Centrum est Diabolus*. Gulielm: Parisiensis. ] "The dance is a circle whose center is the Devil." William Perault (c. 1190 - 1271) of Paris, Dominican writer and preacher; his *Summa de virtutibus et vitiis* (Treatise of virtue and vices) was printed in 1497 and often re-issued.
- iii.15 1684 ] The date is erroneous. Judge Samuel Sewall's diary records the appearance of the tract on February 16, 1685/86 (at that time the new year 1686 began in March).
- 1.6-7 *Pyrrhical* or *Polemical Saltation* ] Pyrrhic dance was a war dance of the ancient Greeks, performed with weapons and practiced as a training for war. *Polemical*: of or relating to war; martial, military. (Obsolete.) *Saltation* means jumping, leaping, or dancing; from Latin "saltare," to leap.
- 1.14-15 The Prince of Philosophers ] Probably Aristotle, but the source of the quotation is unclear.
2. 16 *the Seventh Commandment* ] "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14).
- 3.21-24 *Juvenal's ... probatæ* ] Juvenal, Satires XI, ll. 162-63. "You may look perhaps for a troop of Spanish maidens to win applause by immodest dance and song."

- 4.1-3 *Horace ... amores, &c.* ] Odes III.6, ll. 21-23. "A grown up girl delights to be taught Ionian dancing, and is moulded in its techniques, already she also dreams of illicit love..."
- 4.12 *Junius* ] Franciscus Junius the Elder (1545-1602), Reformed Protestant scholar and theologian.
- 4.13 *Rivet* ] André Rivet (1572-1651) was a French Huguenot theologian.
- 4.13 *Ravanellus* ] Pierre Ravanel, author of *Bibliotheca sacra, seu Thesaurus scripturae canonicae amplissimus ...* (Genevae, 1650).
- 5.2 *Aretius* ] Benedictus Aretius (1505-1574), Swiss Protestant theologian, reformer and natural philosopher.
- 5.9 *Voetius* ] Gisbertus Voetius (Gijsbert Voet, 1589-1676) was a Dutch Calvinist theologian.
- 5.13-14 *Hesychius* ] of Alexandria was a grammarian and compiler of Greek words and phrases.
- 5.15 *Pindar* ] *Isthmian* 7, l. 26: κῶμαζ' ἔπειτεν ἁδυμελεῖ σὺν ὕμνῳ
- 5.17-18 *Zuinger. Theatr. Vol. 2. lib. 5. p. 389.* ] Theodor Zuinger (Zwinger), *Theatrum vitæ humanæ*, Basel, 5 vols. 1565-1604
- 6.1 *Chambring* ] Self-indulgence, dalliance, or sexual promiscuity (obsolete).
- 6.9-10 Prince *Alphonsus* ] Alphonso X of Castile (1221-1284), was known as the Wise. His statutory code, the *Siete Partidas*, was adapted by Alfonso de Cartagena (1384-1456) as *Doctrinal de Caballeros*.

- 6.16 *Lud. Vives* ] Juan Luis Vives March (1493-1540), Spanish (Valencian) scholar and Renaissance humanist, active in the Southern Netherlands.
- 6.23 *Bedlams* ] The Priory of Our Lady of Bethlehem was founded in 1247 as a charity hospital and alms collector. It was seized by the crown in the 1370s and ceded to the city of London in 1547. It began to house insane persons in the 14th century, and its corrupted name "Bethlem" or "Bedlam" came to denote madness and chaos.
- 7.5 the Gentiles ] Originally non-Jews, but used throughout to refer to non-Christians or non-Reformed Christians.
- 8.3 *Petulant* ] Immodest or forward in speech or behavior; wanton, lascivious (obsolete).
- 8.26 *Alting Theol. Problem. Loc. 10. p. 510.* ] Johann Heinrich Alting (1583-1644), German divine, author of *Theologia problematica nova* (Amsterdam, 1662).
- 9.8 *Strabo in lib. 13.* ] Strabo (64 BCE-24CE) was author of *Geographica*. William Haley reports the same story in *A Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Essay on Old Maids* (1785), but the actual source remains elusive.
- 10.3 *Caligula, Nero* ] Roman emperors, 37-41 and 54-68, who were infamous for treachery.
- 10.4-5 *Lucius* (that infamous Apostate) ] Lucian of Samosata (c. 125 - after 180), Greek writer and satirist, author of *Περὶ Ὁρχήσεως* (Latin:

*De Saltatione*), a defense of the Roman art of pantomime. He was the purported author of the *Philopatris*, a fourth-century dialogue considered an attack on Christianity.

- 10.9 *Alexander Fabritius* ] Fifteenth-century English writer Alexander Carpenter (Latinized as Fabricius or Fabritius), author of the *Destructorium Vitiorum* ("Destruction of Vices").
- 10.25 *Cajetan, Azorius, Silvester*, and other Papists ] Thomas de Vio, Cardinal Cajetan (1469-1534) led Catholic opposition to the teachings of Martin Luther. Juan Azor (1535-1603)—"Azorius"—was a Spanish philosopher and Jesuit priest. "Silvester" is probably Francesco Silvestri (c.1474-1526), Dominican theologian and author.
- 11.2 *Lavater* ] Ludwig Lavater (1527-1586), Swiss Reformed theologian
- 11.15 *Chrysostom* ] John Chrysostom (c.347-407), early Christian church father and Archbishop of Constantinople.
- 11.22 *Arnobius* ] (died c.330) early Christian apologist, author of *Adversus nationes* or *Adversus gentes* (Against the Heathens).
- 11.24 *Austin* ] Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430), major early Christian writer and theologian.
- 11.25 *Ambrose* ] Saint Ambrose of Milan (c.340-397), major 4th-century Christian leader and theologian, Bishop of Milan.

- 12.8 *Oecumenical Synod at Constantinople* ] The Sixth Ecumenical Council took place in Constantinople in 680-681, and is also known as the Third Council of Constantinople.
- 12.9 the Synod which met at *Laodicea* ] Assembled 363-364, it included canons enforcing modest behaviour of clerics and laypeople, including prohibitions for dancing and stage plays.
- 12.22 the *Waldenses* ] 12th-century reformist movement, originating in Lyon, France, led by Peter Waldo (1140-1205). They held many ideas later espoused by the Reformed Protestant churches. They were condemned as heretics by the Church and subjected to centuries of persecution and massacre.
- 13.2 Perrin ] French author of *Luthers fore-runners: or, A cloud of witnesses, deposing for the Protestant faith Gathered together in the historie of the Waldenses*, by I.P.P.L. [Jean Paul Perrin], trans. Samson Lennard (London 1624).
- 14.2 *Calvin* ] John Calvin (1509-1564), French theologian and reformer in Geneva.
- 14.2 *Marlorat* ] Augustin Marlorat du Pasquier (Augustinus Marloratus) (1506-1562), French Protestant reformer.
- 14.2 *Lavater* ] See note to 10.21.
- 14.3 *Danoews* ] Lambert Daneau (c.1530-c.1590), French jurist and Calvinist theologian.
- 14.3 *Tilenus* ] Daniel Tilenus (also Tilenius) (1563-1633), German-French Protestant theologian.

- 14.3 Polanus ] Amandus Polanus von Polansdorf (1561-1610) German Reformed Protestant theologian.
- 14.3 *Zepperus* ] Wilhelm Zepper (1550-1607), Reformed theologian.
- 14.4 *Peter Martyr* ] Peter Martyr d'Anghiera (1457-1526), 16th-century Italian-born historian of Spain and its New World discoveries
- 14.5 *Aretius* ] See note to 5.1.
- 14.8 *Rivet* ] See note to 4.12.
- 14.15 *Voetius* ] See note to 5.8.
- 14.19 *Altingius*] See note to 8.21.
- 14.23 Dr. *Downham*, ] George Downham or Downame (d.1634), was a Calvinist writer and Bishop of Derry.
- 14.23 *Babington* ] Gervase Babington (1549/1550-1610), English churchman, author, and bishop.
- 14.23 *Andrews* ] Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), English bishop and scholar.
- 14.25 *Usher* ] James Ussher or Usher (1581-1656), Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland between 1625 and 1656.
- 15.1 Dr. *Rainold* ] John Rainolds (1549-1607), Puritan theologian.
- 15.1 Dr. *Ames* ] William Ames (1576-1633), Protestant minister and scholar in England and Holland.
- 15.1-2 Mr. *Perkins* ] William Perkins (1558-1602) English cleric and Cambridge theologian.
- 15.2 Mr. *Dod* ] John Dod (1549-1645), Puritan minister.

- 15.2 Mr. *Elton* ] Edward Elton, English Puritan (c.1569-1624)
- 15.2 Mr. *Bolton* ] Robert Bolton (1572-1631) was an English clergyman and academic, noted as a preacher; or Samuel Bolton (1606-1654), English clergyman and scholar.
- 15.2-3 Mr. *Brinsley* ] John Brinsley the Younger (1600-1665), English nonconforming clergyman.
- 15.3 Mr. *Durham* ] James Durham (1622-1658), Scottish Reformed minister.
- 15.4-5 Mr. *Prin ... Histrio Mastix* ] William Prynne's *Histrio-Mastix. The Players Scourge, or, Actors Tragædie* (London, 1633) was the source for a number of Mather's references in this work.
- 15.25 *Macrobius* ] Fifth-century Latin author of *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* and *Saturnalia*.
- 16.1 *Scipio Africanus* ] Roman general and consul (236-183 BCE); victorious in the Second Punic War.
- 16.13 *Salust* ] Gaius Sallustius Crispus (86-35 BCE), known as Sallust, Roman politician and historian.
- 16.15 *Sempronia* ] Wife of Decimus Junius Brutus, the Roman consul of 77 B.C. She took an active part in political conspiracies and was reputedly of loose morals.
- 16.18-19 *Cicero ... Pro Muroena* ] Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BCE), Roman statesman, orator, and



- writer. *Pro Murena oratio*, 14; in defense of Lucius Licinius Murena, charged with election bribery in 62 BCE.
- 16.21 *Nemo saltat sobrius nisi forte insaniat.* ] “No man dances when sober unless perhaps he is a madman.”
- 16.22 *Cato* ] Marcus Porcius Cato (95-46 BCE), known as Cato the Younger, presented the case for the prosecution.
- 16.26 *Gabinus* ] Cicero participated in two trials of Aulus Gabinius, once as a witness, once for his defense; Gabinius was convicted of extortion and exiled.
- 17.1 *Antonius* ] Gaius Antonius Hybrida, Roman consul and governor, was convicted of extortion and exiled.
- 17.2 *Seneca* ] Lucius Annaeus Seneca the Younger (4 BCE-65 CE), philosopher, dramatist, Imperial politician, and senator.
- 17.8 *Priamus* ] Priam, king of Troy, in *Iliad*, xxiv, 260-61.
- 17.10 *Plutarch* ] (46-119) Greek philosopher and historian
- 17.15 Emperor *Tiberius* ] Tiberius Caesar Augustus (42 BCE-37 CE) was Roman emperor 14-37 CE.
- 20.21 *Galiards* ] or galliards; lively form of dance and music, characterized by leaps and jumps.
- 21.7 Mr. *Cotton* ] John Cotton (1585-1652), leading Puritan minister in England and Massachusetts. Increase Mather had married Cotton’s

daughter Maria (1642-1714) in 1661. Increase's father Richard Mather (1596-1669) had married Cotton's widow, Sarah Hankridge Cotton, in 1656.

- 21.23 *Moabites* ] In Numbers 25.1-5, the Israelites "began to commit whoredom" with the women of Moab and worshipped Baal. Moses executed the leaders and all those who joined.
- 21.24 *Midianitish Woman* ] In Numbers 25.6-15, an Israelite man and a Midianite woman were slain "in the tent" with a javelin by Aaron's grandson, thereby diverting a plague that had killed thousands.
- 22.1-2 *Dinah ... Dance among the Shechemites* ] In Genesis 34, Dinah, daughter of Jacob and Leah, "went out to see the daughters of the land" of Shechem and was raped by its prince who fell in love with her. Dinah's brothers avenged the dishonor by destroying his city and killing all its men. The Bible text does not mention a dance.
- 22.5-6 *Salome, the Daughter of Herodias* ] John the Baptist accused Salome's mother Herodias of unlawful marriage to the tetrarch of Galilee Herod Antipas and was imprisoned. When Salome danced before Herod and guests, she was granted one request; on her mother's advice, she asked for John's head. The story is told in the gospels of Mark and Matthew; the name is provided by the Jewish historian Josephus.

22.7 Nicephorus ] Nikephoros I of Constantinople (758-828), the legend about Salome appears to be a late invention.

22.17 Dr. Beards *Theater of Judgments*, ] English Puritan Thomas Beard (d.1632), author of *The Theatre of Gods Judgements* (1597) and one-time teacher of Oliver Cromwell.

23.4 *Magica de Spectris* ] *Magica de spectris et apparitionibus spiritum, de vaticiniis, divinationibus* &c .... [“The magic of ghosts and apparitions, of prophecies and divinations”] by Henning Grosse (1597; London, 1656).

25.11 *Osculations* ] Kissing

25.14-15 *Nicolaitism* ] The Nicholaitans are condemned by name in Revelations 2.14-15. They appear to have been a first-century sect named after Nicholas, one of the first deacons, whom Hippolytus claimed “departed from correct doctrine, and was in the habit of inculcating indifference of food and life.” Irenaeus (“Against Heresies”) writes that they “lived lives of unrestrained indulgence.” Clement of Alexandria wrote (*Stromata*, Bk. 3), “They abandon themselves to pleasure like goats ... leading a life of self-indulgence.” An eighteenth-century dictionary defined them: “Nicholaitans, *Hereticks who had their Wives in common* &c.” (Elisha Coles, *An English Dictionary* [London, 1724]). This may refer to the legend related by Clement that Nicholas was reproached by the Apostles for being jealous of

his beautiful wife, and so brought her to an assembly and declared that any might "marry" her. Clement says this led his followers to "*commit all Kind of Filthiness, without any Kind of Shame*" (John Marchant, *An Exposition on the Books of the New Testament* [London, 1743], p. 851). Laurence Echard, *A General Ecclesiastical History*, 7th ed. (London, 1729), wrote of one of their branches (the Cainites), "They had abominable Opinions, and held that the Way to be saved, was to make Tryal of all manner of Things, and satisfy their Lusts with all wicked Actions."

27.15 *The Church of ungodly Men and Women whose King is Lucifer* ] Printed by Richard Pinson, first printer in the city of London, fl. 1493-1527.

28.17-18 *Zepperus* ] See note to 13.20.

29.7-8 *Voetius* ] See note to 5.8.

30.24 Mr. *Caryls* ] Joseph Caryl (1602-1673), *An exposition with practical observations upon the three first chapters of the book of Iob delivered in XXI lectures* (London, 1643).

## *Historical Note*

Increase Mather (1639-1723) was motivated to write and publish this anti-dancing tract by the arrival in Boston in 1685 of a dancing master, Francis Stepney, who offered lessons and classes, some even scheduled for Thursday evenings, a time conventionally reserved for church functions. Judge Samuel Sewall's diary for November 12, 1685, notes:

[T]he Ministers of this Town Come to the Court and complain against a Dancing Master who seeks to set up here and hath mixt Dances, and his time of Meeting is Lecture-Day; and 'tis reported he should say that by one Play he could teach more Divinity than Mr. Willard or the Old Testament. Mr. Moodey said 'twas not a time for N. E. to dance. Mr. Mather struck at the Root, speaking against mixt Dances. — *Diary of Samuel Sewall*. 1674-1729. Vol. I. 1674-1700. Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, vol. v., Fifth series, 1878. Pp. 103-04.

"Mr. Willard" was Samuel Willard, 1640-1707, pastor of Boston's Third Church; "Mr. Moodey" was Joshua Moodey, 1633-1697, assistant pastor of First Church. Mr. Mather (Increase) was pastor of the Second or North Church, and at that time President of Harvard College.

Stepney requested a jury trial; he was ordered to close his school and post £50 bond. On February 4, 1685/86, he was fined £100, with £10 down and the balance "respired" until the end of March.

On February 16, Judge Sewall records "The Arrow against Dancing comes out." In the old style calendar, that was still 1685, since the new year was begun in March. Still, the dating 1684 on the title page is a curious error, unless it was done purposefully to suggest priority of the tract to the court proceedings.

Mather's tract reads much like a courtroom argument: detailed, methodical, citing many sources, bringing in opposing views in order to refute them. Possibly it served as a sort of *amicus curiae* brief prepared for the court to present the ministers' position and its precedents. The presentation seems targeted at judges and governors, not at young men and women who might be interested in dancing. Publishing the winning arguments put them in the public record—for the guidance of ministers and parents.

Francis Stepney ultimately departed Boston, leaving his debts behind. He appeared in New York sometime later, but also left disappointed creditors there.

Seventeenth-century Puritans in England and America were known to dance, particularly at weddings. Sometimes New Englanders were prosecuted for dancing, usually as part of a series of disorderly events. By the start of the eighteenth-century, a more worldly Boston had not managed to keep out dancing masters and mixed dancing, and Increase Mather's son Cotton Mather renewed the condemnation of dancing in

*A cloud of witnesses; darting out light upon a case, too unseasonably made seasonable to be discoursed on* (Boston, [1700]), which rehearsed many of his father's points and sources.

In the *Arrow*, Increase Mather does not hide his erudition or his library under a bushel. He makes reference to the following Continental Reformed theologians or writers: Benedictus Aretius (1505-1574), John Calvin (1509-1564), Gisbertus Voetius (Gijbert Voet, 1589-1676), Franciscus Junius the Elder (1545-1602), André Rivet (1572-1651), Pierre Ravanel (Ravanellus) (died c.1680), Theodor Zuinger (Zwinger) (1533-1588), Johann Heinrich Alting (1583-1644), Ludwig Lavater (1527-1586), Jean Paul Perrin (fl.1618), Augustin Marlorat du Pasquier (Augustinus Marloratus) (1506-1562), Lambert Daneau (c.1530-c.1590), Daniel Tilenus (also Tilenius) (1563-1633), Amandus Polanus von Polansdorf (1561-1610), and Wilhelm Zepper (1550-1607).

It also quotes or mentions the following English non-conforming or Puritan writers: George Downham or Downame (d.1634), Gervase Babington (1549/1550-1610), Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), James Ussher or Usher (1581-1656), John Rainolds (1549-1607), William Ames (1576-1633), William Perkins (1558-1602), Edward Elton, (c.1569 -1624), John Dod (1549-1645), Robert Bolton (1572-1631), John Cotton (1585-1652), James Durham (1622-1658), John Brinsley the Younger (1600-1665), Thomas Beard (d.1632), William Prynne (1600-1669), and Joseph Caryl (1602-1673).

Among the "Papists," are mentioned: Alexander Fabritius (Carpenter) (fl.1429), Thomas de Vio, Cardinal

Cajetan (1469-1534), Juan Azor "Azorius" (1535-1603), and Francesco Silvestri (c.1474-1526).

The following Church Fathers are invoked: John Chrysostom (c.347-407), Arnobius (died c.330), Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430), Saint Ambrose of Milan (c.340-397), Nikephoros I of Constantinople (758-828).

Historians or scholars include: Peter Martyr d'Anghiera (1457-1526) and Juan Luis Vives March (1493-1540).

Classical authors or texts referenced include: Juvenal, Horace, Hesychius of Alexandria, Pindar, Strabo, Macrobius, Sallust, Cicero, Seneca, Lucian, Plutarch, and the Iliad.

Historical or semi-mythical figures discussed include: King Priam of Troy, Salome, Emperor Tiberius, Aulus Gabinius, Gaius Antonius Hybrida, Cato the Younger, Sempronia, Scipio Africanus, and Alphonso X of Castile (1221-1284).

Nor is the Bible itself neglected, with the following passages invoked or cited: Isa. 3.16, 1 Pet 4.3, Phil. 4.8, 1 Cor 10.32, Ex. 32.1-4 (Golden Calf), 1 Cor. 10.7, Jer. 10.2, 1 Pet. 1.18, Rom. 12.2, Gen. 29.22 (Jacob's Marriage), Rev. 13.7, Rom. 2.14, 15, 1 Cor. 10.31, Eccl. 3.4, Jer. 9.20, Amos 6.5, Isa. 22.12-14, Ezek. 21.10, Rom. 1.18, Numb. 16.30, Rev. 2.6, Numb. 15.35, 2 Thes. 3.6, and Job 21.11, 12.

The tract associates dancing with the worst sorts of offenses — the Bible stories involve rape, execution, whoredom, idolatry; the classical authors add brothels, insanity, and treacherous women; the more recent accounts invoke Devil worship and witchcraft. The discussion of dancing opens onto a vast panorama of adultery



and sexual misconduct, so that the end of the path for this seemingly innocent activity is made plain. Mixed dancing is a gateway to sexual license and murder. Remembering fallen man- and womankind's capacity for sin, what begins as parenting advice – “don't send your child to dancing class” – becomes a horror story about sex and violence and the terrible things that happened when people danced: from adultery and idolatry to beheadings, plagues, and mutilations, even to the javelin-impalement of a couple in the act of copulation. (The Puritans were just so “gothic” – one reason we find them fascinating.)

The *Arrow* was reprinted with an excellent discussion and analysis by Joseph E. Marks III in *The Mathers on Dancing* (Brooklyn: Dance Horizons, 1975). Ann Wagner also presents an excellent study in *Adversaries of the Dance: From the Puritans to the Present* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

Biographical studies of Increase Mather include:

Kenneth Murdock, *Increase Mather: The Foremost American Puritan* (Harvard UP, 1925).

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/zeaamericanstudies/36/>

Robert Middlekauff, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728* (Oxford UP, 1971).

Mason I. Lowance, *Increase Mather* (New York: Twayne, 1974).

Michael G. Hall, *The Last American Puritan: The Life of Increase Mather* (Wesleyan UP, 1992).

## *Note on the Text*

This online electronic text edition of *An Arrow Against Profane and Promiscuous Dancing* was transcribed from digital page images of a copy of the first edition held by the New York Public Library and contained in the Early English Books Online package from ProQuest LLC.

The design and layout are based on the original edition published in Boston in February 1685 (old style) or 1686 (modern style). (The date is established by an entry in Samuel Sewall's diary, although the title page shows 1684 as the year.)

The text typeface is IM Fell English, probably cut by Christoffel van Dijck (roman) and Robert Granjon (italic), and digitized and furnished by Iginio Marini (<http://iginomarini.com/fell.html>). Some accommodations have been made in the composition: in deference to modern readers, the long "s" (ſ, italic *f*) and its ligatures have not been used, nor have the ligatures for & and ff, fl, ffi, ffl, or their italic versions—in order to allow for more accurate searching and excerpting. The headpiece on page 1 is a reconstruction of one in the first edition.

This edition retains the spelling, capitalization, italics, and punctuation of the first edition. No attempt has been made to standardize spellings or orthography. Certain passages suggest the printer faced a shortage of italic uppercase Ds, or that the typesetter was unable

to recognize or find them; nonetheless, these features are retained. Some typographical errors have been corrected, and a list of emendations is given below, keyed to page and line number of the present edition (the line count includes chapter headings, but not running heads or hairlines):

3.7	Cotechism	Catechism
8.17	1 <i>Cor.</i> 7.10	1 <i>Cor.</i> 10.7
10.8	gtave	grave
10.25	<i>Cajetan</i>	<i>Cajetan,</i>
13.7	Dance	Dance.
15.16	practice Practice	Practice
29.15	<i>to suppressed,</i>	<i>to be suppressed,</i>

— Paul Royster  
Lincoln, Nebraska  
October 21, 2021

## Abstract

When a dancing master arrived in Boston in 1685 and offered lessons and classes for both sexes during times normally reserved for church meetings, the Puritan ministers went to court to suppress the practice. Increase Mather (1639-1723) took the leading part, writing and publishing this tract, which compiles arguments and precedents for the prohibition of “*Gynecandrical Dancing*, [i.e.] *Mixt or Promiscuous Dancing, viz. of Men and Women ... together.*” These justifications were certainly shared with the court, which found the dancing master guilty, fined him £100, and allowed him to skip town.

Mather’s tract on dancing is a overwhelming compendium of sources and authorities: from the Bible, classical authors, Christian Church Fathers, medieval philosophers, and Reformed theologians both Continental and English. None of them, it appears, approved of mixed dancing—because it leads to adultery and worse. The vilest sins and the direst disasters lie only a short step from the dance floor.

Mather’s tract is remarkable for two things (at least): for how much allusion and citation it packs into its brief 30 pages, and for how quickly it escalates the issue into life-or-death scenarios all vividly painted to emphasize the mortal danger of men and women dancing together.

