



# **Of Sexual Irregularities, and Other Writings on Sexual Morality (Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham)**

*Philip Schofield, Catherine Pease-Watkin, Michael Quinn*

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The present volume contains three essays, 'Of Sexual Irregularities', 'Sextus', and 'General Idea of Not Paul, but Jesus', written in the mid-1810s but never before been published in authoritative form. Bentham presents the utilitarian case for sexual liberty on the grounds that the gratification of the sexual appetite constituted the purest form of pleasure, in opposition to the traditional Christian view that the only morally acceptable form of sexual activity was between one man and one woman, within the confines of marriage, for the purpose of procreation. Bentham offers classical Greece and Rome, where certain male same-sex relationships were regarded as normal, as alternative models of sexual morality, condemns the hostile portrayal of homosexuals in eighteenth-century literature, and calls for the removal of sanctions, whether imposed by religion, law, or public opinion, from all forms of consensual sexual activity, at least in so far as practised in private. Bentham was, moreover, persuaded by Malthus's argument that population growth tended to outstrip food supply. In these circumstances, non-procreative sexual activity had the additional benefit of not contributing to an increase in the size of the population. In the course of his discussion, Bentham expresses forthright views on various aspects of sexuality.

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