

**VIEWS OF SELECTED PURITANS,
1560-1630,
ON HUMAN SEXUALITY**

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
A. What Were the Original Puritans Like?	1
B. Sex in the Middle Ages	3
C. The Puritan Rejection of the Medieval Attitude	5
D. The Scope of the Thesis	7
 CHAPTER 2: PURITAN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE SEXUAL ASPECTS OF MARRIAGE	
A. The Goodness of Sex in Marriage	17
B. The Nature of Sex	20
C. The Purpose of Marriage and Sex	22
D. Romantic Love as the Context for Sex	24
E. Techniques of Coitus	28
(i) Where	29
(ii) When	30
(iii) Healthfulness of Ejaculation	31
(iv) Sex-Play	33
(v) Coital Positions	35
(vi) Abstentions from Coitus	37
 CHAPTER 3: PURITAN ATTITUDES TOWARD SOME ASPECTS OF SEXUAL DEVIATION	
A. Puritan Awareness of Sexual Deviation	41
B. Adultery	44
C. Prostitution	48
D. Incest	53
E. Homosexuality	55
F. Masturbation	57
G. Pornography	58
 CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION	60

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. WHAT WERE THE ORIGINAL PURITANS LIKE?

A Puritan is someone who is afraid that somewhere, sometime, somebody is enjoying himself.¹ A Puritan is a man sitting on a rock sucking a pickle contemplating adultery while reading the Bible. A Puritan is a blue-nose who is against smoking, gambling, drinking, and sex. The revolution in sexual morality today is partly a reaction against Puritan sexual mores. These statements reflect an attitude toward a movement that has been assigned the posture of being sexually strict and repressive. Were the Puritans sexually inhibited and repressive? Were the Puritans really prudes? What was the basis for their statements on human sexuality? Were the Puritans any different from others who lived at the same time? Did the Puritans reflect their milieu or did they change it so that sex became a forbidden topic for public discussion? Just what did they believe and teach about human sexuality?

When a New England wife complained, first to her pastor and then to the whole congregation, that her husband was neglecting their sex life, the church proceeded to excommunicate the man.²

William Gouge, in giving an exposition of Proverbs 5:18-19 (which compares a wife to "the loving hind and pleasant roe"), claimed that the hind and roe were chosen because they are most enamoured of their mates "and even mad again in their heat and desire for them".³

When young Seaborn Cotton was a Harvard College student, he copied some passionate passages of Renaissance love poetry in his notebook. In his later years, after becoming minister at Hampton, New Hampshire, he

¹ R. B. Perry, *Puritanism and Democracy* (New York: Vanguard, 1944) p. 239

² C. P. Smith, *Yankees and God* (New York: Hermitage House, 1954) p. 11.

³ R. M. Frye, *The Teachings of Classical Puritanism on Conjugal Love* (Studies in the Renaissance 2, 1955) p. 153.

saw no incongruity in using the same notebook for his notes of church meetings.⁴

To the embarrassment of the theory of the sexually repressed Puritans are statements from supposedly staid Puritan preachers. Cotton Mather called his second wife "a most lovely creature and such a gift of Heaven to me and mine that the sense thereof ... dissolves me into tears of joy".⁵ William Secker's book *A Wedding Ring* pictured husband and wife as two instruments making music and two streams in one current.⁶ Most impressive of all is the following description by Thomas Hooker:

The man whose heart is endeared to the woman he loves ... dreams of her in the night, hath her in his eye and apprehension when he awakes, museth on her as he sits at the table, walks with her when he travels She lies in his bosom, and his heart trusts in her, which forceth all to confess that the stream of his affection, like a mighty current, runs with full tide and strength.⁷

The modern stereotype stubbornly refuses to be reconciled with the statements of the Puritans themselves. Can it be that the modern image is wrong?

The influential Puritan, William Gouge, said that sexual intercourse was "one of the most proper and essential acts of marriage" and something in which a couple should engage "with good will and delight, willingly, readily, and cheerfully".⁸ William Perkins began his list of the duties between husband and wife with "the right and lawful use of their bodies or of the marriage bed, which indeed is an essential duty of marriage".⁹

⁴ E. S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) p. 63.

⁵ M. M. Hunt, *The Natural History of Love* (New York: Knopf, 1959) pp. 242-43.

⁶ L. T. Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Knopf, 1982) p. 221.

⁷ Morgan, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

⁸ L. L. Schucking, *The Puritan Family: A Social Study from the Literary Sources* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970) p. 38.

⁹ I. Breward, *The Work of William Perkins* (Appleford: Sutton Courtenay, 1970) p. 424.

B. SEX IN THE MIDDLE AGES

To understand Puritan attitudes toward human sexuality, we must see them in their historical setting. When we do so, it is obvious that the Puritans were revolutionary in their day. With amazing quickness they uprooted a Catholic tradition that had persisted for at least ten centuries.

The dominant attitude of the Catholic church throughout the Middle Ages was that sexual love itself was evil and did not cease to be so if its object were one's spouse.¹⁰ Tertullian and Ambrose preferred the extinction of the human race to its propagation through sin, that is, through sexual intercourse. For Augustine the sexual act was innocent in marriage but the passion that always accompanies it was sinful. Gregory the Great agreed, adding that whenever a husband and wife engage in sexual intercourse for pleasure rather than procreation, their pleasure befouls their sexual act.

Albertus and Aquinas objected to the sexual act because it subordinates the reason to the passions. Origen took Matthew 19:12 so literally that he had himself castrated before being ordained.¹¹ Tertullian claimed that "marriage and adultery ... are not intrinsically different, but only in the degree of their illegitimacy".

These rejections of sex resulted in the Catholic glorification of virginity and celibacy. By the fifth century, clerics were prohibited from marrying. Athanasius declared that the appreciation of virginity, which had never before been regarded as meritorious, was the supreme revelation of

¹⁰ The details that I cite in my survey of medieval Catholic teaching on sex are commonplace in any survey of the subject. Good brief surveys include R. Briffault, *The Mothers*, vol. 3 (New York: Macmillan, 1927), pp. 372-75; M. Valency, *In Praise of Love: An Introduction to the Love-Poetry of The Renaissance* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), pp. 19-24; and O. E. Feucht, ed., *Sex and the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1961), pp. 41-73. More detailed studies include E.C. Messenger, *The Mystery of Sex and Marriage* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1948); D. S. Bailey, *Sexual Relation in Christian Thought* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), pp. 19-166; W. G. Cole, *Sex in Christianity and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 43-99.

¹¹ According to Briffault, who cites Justin and Origen as sources, numerous others had the same surgery performed (p. 372). The church officially condemned the practice.

Christ. Augustine frequently commended married couples who abstained from sex. Jerome said that the good of marriage is that it produces virgins, and he also asserted that while there have been married saints, these have all remained virgins.

Virtually all the church fathers have statements praising virginity as superior to marriage. Jovinian was excommunicated for daring to suggest that marriage was no better in God's sight than virginity. A common interpretation of the parable of the sower was that the thirtyfold harvest represented marriage, the sixtyfold harvest widowhood, and the hundredfold harvest virginity. This tradition culminated in the Council of Trent's denouncing people who denied that virginity was superior to the married state.

Along with the praise of virginity there was constant disparagement of marriage, which was at the same time a rejection of sex. According to Ambrose, "married people ought to blush at the state in which they are living". The church kept multiplying the days on which sex was prohibited for married people until half of the year or more was prohibited, with some writers going so far as to recommend abstinence on five of the seven days of the week. According to Jerome, God refrained from pronouncing a blessing on the second day of creation because the number two prefigured marriage, which Jerome associated with sin.

The medieval Catholic commentaries on early Genesis are a good index to the prevailing attitudes toward sex and marriage. Chrysostom said that Adam and Eve could not have had sexual relations before the Fall. Origen agreed, and he inclined toward the theory that if sin had not entered the world, the human race would have been propagated by some mysterious angelic manner rather than by sexual union. Bishop Gregory of Nyssa claimed that Adam and Eve had originally been created without sexual desire and that if the Fall had not occurred, the human race would have reproduced itself by some harmless mode of vegetation.

C. THE PURITAN REJECTION OF THE MEDIEVAL ATTITUDE

The Catholic attitudes of the Middle Ages provide the necessary background against which we must understand the Puritan view of sex and marriage. In general, the Puritans affirmed what the Catholics denied and denied what the Catholics had traditionally affirmed. Many of the Puritan pronouncements, in fact, occurred in head-to-head debates with Catholics.

After the Reformation broke out in the early sixteenth century, the Catholic Thomas More and the Puritan William Tyndale conducted a bitter printed debate about whether clergymen were free to marry. Tyndale argued not simply that ministers were free to marry, but that Paul had commanded them to marry, citing verses such as 1 Timothy 3:2 ("Now a bishop must be the husband of one wife"). Thomas More, with his Catholic views about penance and asceticism, regarded Tyndale's Puritan theology as indulgent to the point of license, charging Protestants with "sensual and licentious living".¹² More spoke of the Protestants as people who "eat fast and drink fast and lust fast in their lechery".¹³

Puritan preachers were outspoken in their repudiation of the Catholic viewpoint. Again and again they ascribed the Catholic prohibition of sex to the devil. William Gouge wrote that "it is accounted a doctrine of devils to forbid to marry. For it is a doctrine contrary to God's word".¹⁴ "It was the devil that brought in a base esteem of that honourable condition" of marriage, wrote Richard Sibbes.¹⁵ According to Thomas Gataker, "The marriage bed (saith the Apostle) is of itself free from filth But saith the

¹² C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford University Press, 1944) p. 34.

¹³ C. S. Lewis, *Donne and Love Poetry in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 1938) p. 74.

¹⁴ C. H. and K. George, *The Protestant Mind of the English Reformation, 1570-1640* (Princeton University Press, 1961) p. 265.

¹⁵ G. F. Sensabaugh, *Platonic Love and the Puritan Rebellion* (Studies in Philology 37, 1940) p. 469.

Spirit of Satan speaking by these men or beasts rather: marriage is dishonourable".¹⁶

In his treatise on marriage the Catholic theologian Erasmus had praised as ideal a marriage in which husband and wife learned to live without sexual intercourse.¹⁷ By contrast, the New England Puritan John Cotton preached a marriage sermon in which he called marital abstinence "the dictates of a blind mind ... and not of that Holy Spirit which saith, It is not good that man should be alone".¹⁸

Catholic church policy had for centuries insisted on celibacy as a condition for ordination; the Puritan William Gouge denounced "the impure and tyrannical restraint of the Church of Rome, whereby all that enter into any of their holy orders are kept from marriage".¹⁹ Catholic doctrine had declared virginity superior to marriage; the Puritan reply was that marriage "is a state ... far more excellent than the condition of single life".²⁰ Many Catholic commentators claimed that sexual intercourse had been a result of the Fall and did not occur in Paradise; the Puritan comeback was that marriage was ordained by God, "and that not in this sinful world, but in paradise, that most joyful garden of pleasure".²¹

It is not only in physics that every action produces an equal reaction. Centuries of Catholic doctrine had denigrated human sexuality. The Puritans were equally vehement in reacting to that attitude, and they established a tradition that has persisted to the present day.

¹⁶ George, op. cit., p. 169. Luther had written, "Now it is certainly obvious that these human laws forbidding the marriage of priests are really not the laws of man but of the devil".

¹⁷ Frye, op. cit., p. 152.

¹⁸ Morgan, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

¹⁹ George, op. cit., p. 266.

²⁰ J. T. Johnson, *A Society Ordained by God: English Puritan Marriage Doctrine in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century* (Abingdon Press, 1970) p. 67.

²¹ L. Lerner, *Love and Marriage: Literature and Its Social Context* (New York: St Martin's, 1979) p. 111.

D. THE SCOPE OF THE THESIS

The Puritans whose views are presented were those who wrote in England between c.1560 and c.1630. The term Puritan was first used about 1560 and so this seemed to be an appropriate beginning date and by 1630, most of the domestic duties books that dealt with the Puritan view of human sexuality had been printed and the basic Puritan attitudes were at the end of a stage of development.

During the scope of this study however, a basic issue emerged in the question, what was a Puritan, or how should the term "Puritan" be defined during the period of this study. Various definitions could have been used. For example, Puritans were those who rejected the episcopal form of church government and favoured the presbyterian form. Puritans were those who were not terribly offended by the episcopal form of church polity but were incensed by the so-called romish trappings that were still found within the established church. Puritans were those who subscribed to a congregational form of church polity. Puritanism was an economically oriented middle-class movement that eventually brought about a civil war. Puritans were those who were scandalised by the lack of Christian morality within the body of Christ and attempted to reform the individual Christian life, the life of the local congregation, and consequently, the life of the national church. Puritans were those who did not subscribe to royal absolutism as espoused by James I and Charles I. Puritans were those people who saw in the Bible their sole guide for faith and life and thus they spoke out against what they thought were unbiblical practices in church and state. It is certainly difficult to accept all of the above definitions as being completely accurate; it is even difficult to argue that there is some truth in each of them. Yet, no one seems to have been able to devise a definition that would completely satisfy all the scholars who are concerned with this period.

To further complicate the problem, the Puritans were not a static group nor movement. Their approaches changed and they changed as their milieu changed. As one avenue of expression might be blocked, they tried another. Or, as one approach to change the established church failed, another was attempted. Collinson has demonstrated that about 1590 such a change did take place so that whereas previous to 1590 the Puritans had attempted to use political manoeuvring to gain their goals, after 1590 they tended to stress individual reform since the former had practically become impossible under Elizabeth.²² There was a brief hope for a combined religious and political reform with the coming of James I but the Hampton Court Conference made it clear that continued political and ecclesiastical efforts would be strongly resisted by the King and his Archbishop. The change in tactics by some Puritans indicated that their movement was dynamic with some subscribing to one concept and others to another; and it means that there is a built-in fuzziness in the effort to arrive at a clear definition of "Puritan". The lack of precision bothers the historian; but perhaps there never will be a neat tight definition that satisfies all students of the movement.

If there is a lack of a neat and precise definition how was it possible to select Puritan materials for this study? The method used was as follows: An item by item search was made of the Pollard and Redgrave *Short Title Catalogue*; a careful effort was made to note every item that related to human sexuality. Later the author of each item was checked in the *Dictionary of National Biography* to determine whether or not the author was of Puritan persuasion. If the *D. N. B.* declared the author to be a Puritan, a second check was made to determine whether or not the material was available by that author on microfilm, or in some printed edition. In the circumstance when the author was not listed in the *D. N. B.* or if the *D. N. B.* did not provide the author's religious position, other materials were

²² P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (University of California Press, 1967) *passim*.

consulted. These materials were the usual biographical tools that pertain to this period in English history. Some of the tools used were Wood's *Athenae Oxoniensis*, Cooper's *Athanae Cantrabrigiensis*, Fuller's *Worthies*, Venn and Venn's *Alumni Cantrabrigiensis*, Brook's *Lives*, A. G. Mathews' *Walker Revised*, Musgrave's *Obituaries*, etc. In some instances, even when the above tools were used and others, it was still not possible to determine whether or not a specific writer was a Puritan. When this was the case, and it was possible, internal evidence was looked for that might indicate the writer's religious position. Working with this information, there emerged an insight into the common background shared by the Puritans and their age, on the subject of human sexuality.

Following is a list of Puritans whose views are considered in this thesis. The form in which this grouping is presented, is to give when necessary the basic facts of the life of the author and who considered that author to have been a Puritan or part of the Puritan movement.

PURITANS

Ball, John: Fuller wrote that Ball was born in 1585 in Cassington to poor parents. He went to Brasenose College in 1602 and five years later went to St. Mary's Hall and earned his A.B. in 1608. He taught the children of Lady Cholmondely in Cheshire. It was there that he met some Puritans who won him over to their position. Eventually he was ordained and spent the rest of his life as a preacher and teacher, dying in a poor house in 1640. Both the *D.N.B.* and Wood identified him as a Puritan.

Becon, Thomas: Becon was born in Norfolk in 1511 and went to Cambridge where he earned the B.A. in 1530. In 1540 he was called before the

Privy Council for espousing heretical ideas and he recanted. The ideas had been expressed in his commentary upon the Ten Commandments. After this, he took the name Theodore Basille, dressed as a layman, and went to Kent. Again he was called to the attention of the authorities and in 1543 he was forced to recant again, because of his *Golden Boke of Matrimony*, and because of the use of his assumed name which meant "King given of God". By proclamation July 8, 1546, his books were prohibited. About a year later he became chaplain to Cranmer and Lord Protector of Somerset. In 1553 he was put in the Tower apparently as a mistake. Upon his release he left England and went to Strasbourg and to Marburg where he again resumed the use of his former pseudonym. In 1555 his books were again banned in England. After the death of Queen Mary, he was reinstated to a London prebend. In the convocation of 1562, he voted with the losing side that was against certain church ceremonies and observances. From his vote in 1562 and from his writings, which were extensively quoted by later Puritans, one can conclude he was one of the early Puritans.

Brinsley, John, the elder: He matriculated as sizar from Christ's College in March, 1580/81. He earned the B.A. in 1584/85 and M.A. in 1588. He was the headmaster of the Ashby de la Zouch school to 1619. He was suspended for his Puritan views. He was married to the sister of Bishop Joseph Hall of Norwich. Venn and Venn, and the *D.N.B.* considered him to be a Puritan.

Capel, Richard: He was a commoner at St. Alban's Hall in 1601. He was made perpetual fellow at Magdalen College in 1609 where he became eminent for his Puritan preaching. Fuller claimed that he

refused to read the *Book of Sports* and willingly then resigned his benefice and preached *gratis* to the neighbouring congregations. He was elected to the Westminster Assembly but did not sit in it. He was a friend of John Dod, Robert Cleaver, John Rainolds, all Puritans. The *D.N.B.*, Fuller, and Haller considered him to be a Puritan.

Carter, Thomas: Carter was born in Lilley, Hertfordshire about 1585. He earned the B.A. from St. John's, Cambridge 1604/5; the M.A. in 1608. He was ordained deacon by the Bishop of London in 1609 and priest in 1610. Watt in the *Bibliotheca-Britannica* claimed he was the vicar of Dynton Buckinghamshire 1610-1646. He was nominated by the House of Lords to the Westminster Assembly on May 26, 1642. He was active in the Assembly. He preached before the House of Commons on June 28, 1643, before the Assembly met, on "Prayers Prevalencie for Israel's Safety". In late 1646 he was made part of the ninth classis of the London province in the new Presbyterian set up. He was then serving St. Olaves Hart Street Church. He might have died toward the end of 1646.

Cartwright, Thomas: Fuller called him the champion of the Presbyterian party and there is no doubt of his Puritan beliefs. The *D.N.B.*, Knappen, Haller, Walker, Cooper, etc., considered him to be a Puritan.

Cleaver, Robert: There is little doubt about the Puritan position of Cleaver. He co-authored with John Dod the famous commentary on the Ten Commandments. Haller and Knappen considered him to be a Puritan.

Croftes, Robert: Croftes was sizar at St. John's in 1576. He earned the B.A. 1579/80 and the M.A. in 1583. He was ordained deacon in December of 1581 at the age of twenty-four. On the basis of his attendance at St. John's in the mid-1570's when it was a Puritan stronghold and on the basis of internal evidence of the work cited in this study, he can be termed a Puritan. The internal evidence is as follows: He held a positive view of the female; he saw marriage as a positive gift instituted by God; he viewed conjugal love as good; he was against a wide age disparity among mates; he had a practical section on how to avoid a bad marriage; he was for moderate practice of conjugal love; he viewed true conjugal love as a foretaste of divine love; he held the Puritan position on the relationship between Christ and the church as analogous to that of husband and wife. These attitudes and the general tone of the work were similar to that of the Puritans.

Dod, John: He matriculated as sizar from Jesus College in 1572 and earned his B.A. in 1575/6. He earned the M.A. in 1579 and was a fellow from 1578-1585. He was ordained deacon by the Bishop of London in April of 1579. He was university preacher in 1585 and was suspended in 1604 because of his Puritan position. He married the step-daughter of the Puritan Richard Greenham with whom he had twelve children. William Gouge officiated at his second marriage. Haller, the *D.N.B.*, and Knappen considered him to be a Puritan.

Gataker, Thomas: There is no doubt of the Puritan position of Gataker. His father became a strong Protestant during the Marian Catholic reaction. Thomas was sent to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he graduated with an M.A. In 1603 he commenced his B.D.

and eventually he was a participant in the scheme to buy impropriations and staff them with Puritan preachers. In 1643 he was nominated to the Westminster Assembly and in 1645 was elected to be one of the committee of seven charged with the preparation of the first draft of the confession of faith. Two of his four wives died in childbirth.

Gouge, William: Gouge seemed to have been predestined to be a Puritan.

One of his uncles by marriage was Laurence Chaderton, the master of Emmanuel College, and another uncle was William Whitaker, master of St Johns, Cambridge; both schools in the 1570's were known for their Puritan leanings as were both of the uncles. During his college days, Brook claimed, he was called the arch-Puritan. He was one of the originators of the impropriation of feoffees scheme. He was nominated to serve in the Westminster Assembly in 1643 and according to Brook, often filled the moderator's chair in his absence. Gouge was a strong supporter of the presbyterian system and signed the covenant with the Scots commissioners. He died in 1653.

Hart, James: Hart was born around 1585. He studied in France, Saxony, and Basle where he earned the medical degree in 1612. Apparently he never belonged to the College of Physicians. His major work and the work used in this study was *Klinikh* which according to the *D.N.B.* was a work that scarcely had a fore-runner in medical literature since classical times. The *D.N.B.* termed him a strong Puritan.

Joye, George: He earned his B.A. from St. John's in 1563/4; M.A. in 1567 and B.D. in 1575. He was a fellow at St. John's in 1565. When he was

twenty-six, he was ordained deacon. He was at St. John's during the time when Puritan influence was strong in the school. In 1570 he signed a letter of testimony given to Cartwright. Charles C. Butterworth and Allen G. Chester have written about Joye and from their testimony and the evidence above, Joye was a Puritan.

Perkins, William: Born in 1558, he matriculated as pensioner in 1577 at Christ's College. He earned the B.A. in 1580/81 and was elected fellow in 1582. He earned the M.A. in 1584. He was soon engaged on the Puritan side in disputes at the university. He was called before the heads of the colleges in 1586 and charged with espousing ideas that were detrimental to the established church. Yet he continued to espouse the Puritan position. He resigned his fellowship from the university and married. He continued to propound Puritan ideas and is recognised as a Puritan by Cooper, Haller, Knappen, and Collinson.

Pritchard, Thomas: There was a Thomas Pritchard reported by Venn and Venn to have attended Queen's College but this was not the author we are concerned with for the Thomas Pritchard cited in this study was writing before the Pritchard of Venn and Venn was born. The author cited here was a bachelor at the time of his writing and he relied heavily upon the *Boke of Matrimonye* of Thomas Becon. The general tone and internal evidence seem to indicate that he was in sympathy with the Puritan view of marriage and sex. He argued that God originated marriage before the Fall for the benefit of mankind; he was against the use of beauty and wealth as the sole criteria for marriage; he felt consultation with friends was a necessity in choosing a mate; he was in favour of marriage with one of the same religious

persuasion; he used many biblical examples as guides for his readers as did most of the Puritans; he listed the usual duties of husbands and wives as given by the Puritans; he was in favour of modesty and moderation within marriage. Thus on the basis of the closeness between his writings and those of other Puritans, I have included him in this category.

Smith, Henry: Born about 1560, he was a fellow-commoner at Queen's College in 1573 but went to Oxford in 1575. He apparently did not finish his education although he did study under Richard Greenham. Cooper doubts that he received an M.A. from Oxford as argued by Wood. His preaching ability was considered to be remarkable. Cooper reported one sermon given on the necessity of mothers to nurse their own children and the result was that many mothers recalled their children from the wet-nurses around London and nursed them as Smith had encouraged them to do. He was suspended from his preaching in 1588 by Aylmer because of his Puritan sentiments. Cooper, *D.N.B.*, Haller considered him to be a Puritan.

Stubbes, Phillip: Haller and the *D.N.B.* considered Stubbes, who wrote *The Anatomy of Abuses*, to be a Puritan.

Twisse, William: Twisse attended New College, Oxford, in 1598 as a probationer. He earned the B.A. in 1600, M.A. in 1604, B.D. in 1612, and D.D. in 1614. He was acknowledged to be a fine Puritan preacher. He was nominated to the Westminster Assembly and was elected prolocutor of the Assembly.

Whately, William: Whately was born May 21, 1583 in Banbury. He entered Cambridge, Christ's College at the age of fourteen and heard the lectures of William Perkins and Laurence Chaderton. He earned his B.A. in 1601 and shortly after, married Martha Hunt. Upon the urging of his father-in-law, he went back to school to St. Edmund Hall, Oxford to study for the ministry. In 1604 he earned the M.A. and was chosen lecturer at Banbury. He was affectionately called "the Roaring Boy of Banbury". This was due to his ability to preach. After the publication of his *A Bride-bush* in 1619, he was called before the High Commission for his liberal view of divorce. He recanted and stated so in his preface in *A Care-cloth*. The *D.N.B.*, Haller, and Knappen considered him to be a Puritan as did his biographer, William Scudder.

Willet, Andrew: At the age of fifteen, Willet was admitted as pensioner to Peterhous on February of 1576. He migrated to Christ's and earned the B.A. in 1580/81, the M.A. in 1584, B.D. in 1591, and D.D. in 1601. He was a fellow at Christ's 1583-88. He was incorporated at Oxford in 1584 and was ordained as deacon by the Bishop of London the same year. In 1612 he was admitted to Lincoln's Inn. He was a famous preacher, chaplain to Prince Henry, and an incessant writer. Fuller reported that he wrote so much that some said he even wrote while he slept. He married the daughter of Dr. Goad. She bore him eighteen children. Haller, Fuller, and Collinson considered him to be a Puritan.

CHAPTER 2

PURITAN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE SEXUAL ASPECTS OF MARRIAGE

A. THE GOODNESS OF SEX IN MARRIAGE

Given the Catholic background against which they wrote and preached, the Puritans' praise of marriage was at the same time an implicit endorsement of marital sex as good. They elaborated that point specifically and often. This becomes clearer once we are clued into the now-outdated terms by which they customarily referred to sexual intercourse: "matrimonial duty", "cohabitation", "act of matrimony", and (especially) "due benevolence".

Everywhere we turn in Puritan writing on the subject we find sex affirmed as good in principle. Gouge referred to physical union as "one of the most proper and essential acts of marriage".²³ It was Milton's opinion that the text "they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24) was included in the Bible

to justify and make legitimate the rites of the marriage bed; which was not unneedful, if for all this warrant they were suspected of pollution by some sects of philosophy and religions of old, and latelier among the Papists.²⁴

William Ames listed as one of the duties of marriage "mutual communication of bodies".²⁵

So closely linked were the ideas of marriage and sex that the Puritans usually defined marriage partly in terms of sexual union. Perkins defined marriage as "the lawful conjunction of the two married persons; that is, of

²³ Frye, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

²⁴ J. Milton, *Complete Prose Works* (Yale University Press, 1953) pp. 606-7.

²⁵ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 64. Both Luther and Calvin had prepared the way for the Puritan affirmation of married sex. Calvin, for example, had written that "conjugal intercourse is a thing that is pure, honourable and holy, because it is a pure institution of God" Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

one man and one woman into one flesh".²⁶ Robert Cleaver's definition was this: Marriage

is a coupling together of two persons into one flesh, according to the ordinance of God By yoking, joining, or coupling is meant, not only outward dwelling together of the married folks ... but also an uniform agreement of mind and a common participation of body and goods.²⁷

Married sex was not only legitimate in the Puritan view; it was meant to be exuberant. Gouge said that married couples should engage in sex "with good will and delight, willingly, readily, and cheerfully".²⁸ An anonymous Puritan claimed that when two are made one by marriage they

may joyfully give due benevolence one to the other; as two musical instruments rightly fitted do make a most pleasant and sweet harmony in a well tuned consort.²⁹

Alexander Niccholes theorised that in marriage "thou not only unitest unto thyself a friend and comfort for society, but also a companion for pleasure."³⁰

In this acceptance of physical sex, the Puritans once again rejected the asceticism and implicit dualism between sacred and secular that had governed Christian thinking for so long. In the Puritan view, God had given the physical world, including sex, for human welfare. Robert Croftes wrote that

he that useth these external felicities of the world, such as this of nuptial love, to the glory of God and to good ends, ... is better to be reputed than he that ... neglects so great a good, which God freely offers to our acceptance.³¹

26 J. Halkett, *Milton and the Idea of Matrimony* (Yale University Press, 1970) p. 11.

27 Ibid., p. 11.

28 Schucking, op. cit., p. 38.

29 Frye, op. cit., pp. 155-56.

30 Johnson, op. cit., p. 23.

31 R. V. Schnucker, *The Puritans on Marriage and Human Sexuality* (University of Iowa, 1969) p. 307. Gouge frequently disparaged what he called "Stoical abstinence", calling it at one point "a disposition no way warranted by the Word" Frye, op. cit., p. 154.

In the Puritan view, God was no celestial Scrooge who deprived his creatures of good things:

Wisest Solomon among his gravest Proverbs countenances a kind of ravishment ... in the entertainment of wedded leasures; and in the Song of Songs ... sings of a thousand raptures between those two lovely ones far on the hither side of carnal enjoyment. By these instances, and more which might be brought, we may imagine how indulgently God provided against man's loneliness.³²

The Puritans rejected asceticism because of their firm grip on the doctrine of creation. In their view, it was God who had created people as sexual beings. Thus William Whately could claim that "the Author of nature hath appointed this union betwixt one man and one woman",³³ while William Perkins was assured that marriage "was ordained by God in Paradise".³⁴ Robert Cleaver spoke of marriage as a "coupling together of two persons into one flesh ... according unto the ordinances of God".³⁵

Contrary to a popular misconception, the Puritans were not squeamish about physical or erotic contact between couples. Thomas Gataker said that "the Holy Ghost did allow some such private dalliance and behaviour to married persons between themselves as to others might seem dotage".³⁶ Many Puritan writers used Genesis 26:8, which describes Isaac's fondling of Rebekah, to argue that erotic love was legitimate.³⁷ Henry Smith commented that in marriage "a play-fellow is come to make our age merry, as Isaac and Rebekah sported together",³⁸ while Gouge cited the same passage to charge husbands who reject such contact as taking no more delight in their own wives than in any other women.³⁹ Perkins described

³² Milton, *op. cit.*, p. 597.

³³ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

³⁴ George, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

³⁵ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

³⁶ Frye, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

³⁷ See Schnucker, *op. cit.*, pp. 340-342 for examples.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 341-42.

one of the ways by which couples should show "due benevolence" to each other as "by a holy kind of rejoicing and solacing themselves with each other", in connection with which he mentioned kissing.⁴⁰

B. THE NATURE OF SEX

Although Puritan writers and preachers did not give an anatomy of what sex is, with a little analysis we can easily piece together their thinking. In the first place, sex is a God-implanted *natural or biological appetite*. Edward Taylor, New England poet and minister, spoke of "the use of the marriage bed" as founded in man's nature".⁴¹ William Perkins classified marriage as one of the things that are spiritually "indifferent", adding that "the kingdom of God stands no more in it than in meats and drinks", again exhibiting an assumption that sex is as natural as the appetite for food.⁴²

If sex is thus a natural impulse, it is at the same time intended to be *more than a physical act*. It is part of a total union of two persons, including their minds, emotions, and souls as well as their bodies. For Robert Cleaver, sexual union in marriage implied "an uniform agreement of mind" as well as "common participation of body".⁴³ Milton argued regarding the marriage union that "by loneliness is not only meant the want of copulation", since "man is not less alone by turning in a body to him, unless there be within it a mind answerable".⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Johnson, op. cit., p. 70.

⁴¹ E. S. Morgan, "The Puritans and Sex", in *Pivotal Interpretations of American History*, ed. Carl N. Degler (Harper and Row, 1966) p. 5. Some of the best comments about sex as natural appear in Martin Luther, who wrote, for example, "If a girl is not sustained by great and exceptional grace, she can live without a man as little as she can without eating, drinking, sleeping, and other natural necessities. Nor, on the other hand can a man dispense with a wife. The reason for this is that procreating children is an urge planted as deeply in human nature as eating and drinking".

⁴² George, op. cit., p. 268.

⁴³ Johnson, op. cit., p. 56.

⁴⁴ Milton, op. cit., p. 598.

Thirdly, sex is *necessary in marriage*. Marriage is the God-ordained means of satisfying the sexual urge. Perkins called marriage "a sovereign means to avoid fornication".⁴⁵ William Whately told spouses that marriage "will keep their desires in order, and cause that they shall be well satisfied each in other, as in God's gifts".⁴⁶

The need for sexual satisfaction as a human condition led the Puritans to say a great deal about sex as a marriage duty, with 1 Corinthians 7:1-5 serving as the central text. Henry Smith called verse 3 of that passage "a commandment to yield this duty (of sexual intercourse), ... and not to do it is a breach of commandment".⁴⁷ According to Whately, neither husband nor wife can "without grievous sin deny" sexual intercourse to the other.⁴⁸ To deny sexual union, said Gouge, "is to deny a due debt, and to give Satan great advantage".⁴⁹

The fear of physical separation between spouses was a major theme of Puritan writers on the subject of sex. Typical was Benjamin Wadsworth's advice that married couples not allow quarrels to "make you live separately, not lodge separately neither: for if it once comes to this, Satan has got a great advantage against you".⁵⁰

To regard sex as a marriage duty was not, however, to make it a joyless thing. William Whately encouraged marriage partners to love each other "with an ardent love" and admonished them that they must not "yield themselves with grudging and frowardness, but readily, and with all demonstrations of hearty affection".⁵¹

Fourthly, the Puritans taught that *sex is private*, not because it is bad, but because of its inherent nature as a total union between two people who commit themselves to each other permanently. The Puritans had an

⁴⁵ Johnson, op. cit., p. 56.

⁴⁶ Schnucker, op. cit., p. 364.

⁴⁷ Frye, op. cit., p. 155.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 155.

⁴⁹ Schnucker, op. cit., p. 302.

⁵⁰ Morgan, op. cit., *Puritan Family*, p. 63

⁵¹ Frye, op. cit., p. 155.

abhorrence of erotic displays in public, where the sexual urges of others might be inflamed.⁵² But this negative attitude toward public dalliance did not extend to private love. Gouge claimed that "much greater liberty is granted to man and wife when they are alone than in company".⁵³

Nowhere do we come closer to the revolutionary core of the Puritan's teaching on sex than in their insistence that *married sex is a form of chastity*. Catholic doctrine had equated chastity with virginity, a misconception that is still with us. William Gouge attacked the position of the Council of Trent with the statement:

Here by the way note the dotage of our adversaries, who think there is no chastity but of single persons: whereupon in their speeches and writings they oppose a chastity and matrimony one to another, as two contraries.⁵⁴

William Ames defined "virginal chastity" as "that which should be kept ... until ... marriage", and "conjugal chastity" as "that which should be kept in wedlock", adding that "a marriage lawfully contracted and observed goes with conjugal chastity".⁵⁵ The Protestant poet Edmund Spenser devoted a whole book of his poem *The Faerie Queene* to a portrayal of chastity, by which he meant abstinence before marriage and "active, honest, and devoted love" after marriage.⁵⁶

C. THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE AND SEX

The Puritans also had a fully developed theory of the purposes of marriage and sex. The larger context into which we must put their

⁵² For examples, see Frye, pp.156-57; and Schnucker, pp. 344-45.

⁵³ Schnucker, op. cit., p. 345.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 306.

⁵⁵ W. Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, ed. John D. Eusden (Boston: Pilgrim, 1968) p. 318.

⁵⁶ The quoted description of Spenser's picture of chastity comes from G. Hough, *A Preface to the Faerie Queene* (New York: Norton, 1962) p. 170.

comments is the unified Protestant tradition that included both Anglicans and Puritans. While individual writers might modify the scheme, the general framework was a threefold purpose for marriage - procreation, a remedy against sexual sin, and mutual society.

The distinctive contribution of the Puritans within this framework was to shift the primary emphasis from procreation to companionship. The order adopted in the Book of Common Prayer was (1) the procreation of children, (2) the restraint and remedy of sin, and (3) mutual society, help, and comfort. James Johnson has written a whole book to show that as Puritan thought developed, the first and third purposes of marriage became reversed from the list in the Prayer Book. Johnson provides numerous quotations from the Puritans, which I do not have space to reproduce, but his summary is worth pondering:

It is the result of the Puritan emphasis on companionship in marriage that the first and last reasons change place. Another way of saying this is to note that the Puritans normally look to a verse from the second chapter of Genesis - "God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" instead of the one normally cited from the first, "Be fruitful and multiply" - for their explanation of why marriage was instituted by God in the first place.⁵⁷

In Catholic doctrine, the only thing that had salvaged sex in marriage was the procreation of children. The Puritans disagreed. Perkins stated that "some Schoolmen do err who hold that the secret coming together of man and wife cannot be without sin unless it is done for procreation of children".⁵⁸ This is similar to Milton's opinion that

God in the first ordaining of marriage taught us to what end he did it, ... to comfort and refresh him against the

⁵⁷ Johnson, op. cit., p. 114. Johnson also notes that "exalting companionship over procreation does not mean for the Puritans that procreation has less place in marriage. Rather a Christian marriage is expected to produce offspring as a result of companionable life" (p. 116).

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 68.

evil of solitary life, not mentioning the purpose of generation till afterwards.⁵⁹

If the main purpose of married sex is the expression of mutual love and companionship, it is a perversion of sex to reduce it to a merely physical act. "How can two ... become one flesh lawfully", asked Cleaver, "when as there wanteth the union and conjunction of the heart, the true and natural mother of all marriage duties?"⁶⁰ Perkins had something similar in mind when he wrote, "Nothing is more shameless than to love a wife as though she were a strumpet".⁶¹ And Milton wrote,

Although copulation be considered among the ends of marriage, yet the act thereof in a right esteem can no longer be matrimonial than it is an effect of conjugal love. When love ... vanishes, ... the fleshly act indeed may continue, but not holy, not pure, not befitting the sacred bond of marriage, being at best but an animal excretion.⁶²

D. ROMANTIC LOVE AS THE CONTEXT FOR SEX

Did the Puritans go beyond the ideal of godly and compassionate marriage to romantic passion? It is usually said that they were too rational, practical, and domestically oriented to qualify for what today we would call romantic passion. I would suggest that if we listen to what the Puritans said about sexual love, we can catch the resonance of romance.

⁵⁹ Milton, op. cit., p. 235. Luther had similarly written, "Propagation is not in our will and power, for no parents are able to see whether they ... will bring forth a son or a daughter. My father and mother did not consider that they wanted to bring a Dr. Martin Luther into the world. Creation is of God alone and we are not able to perceive it". R. Bainton, *What Christianity Says About Sex, Love, and Marriage* (New York: Association, 1957) p. 79. L. Stone, *Family*, concludes that "Protestant theologians of all persuasions had long since identified mutual comfort and endearment as two of the purposes of the sexual act within marriage" (p. 625).

⁶⁰ Schnucker, op. cit., p. 302.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 360.

⁶² Milton, op. cit., p. 608-9.

The American poet and minister Edward Taylor wrote to his beloved that his passion for her was "a golden ball of pure fire".⁶³ Reverend John Pike called his wife "the desire of mine eyes".⁶⁴ William Whately said that the mutual love of husband and wife should be "most fervent and abundant".⁶⁵

The letters of John Winthrop to his wife are an especially well-known example of Puritan romanticism. Winthrop typically closed his letters to his wife with phrases such as these: "I kiss and love thee with the kindest affection"; "so I kiss thee and wish thee Farewell"; "I kiss my sweet wife and remain always thy faithful husband" "many kisses of love I send thee"; "so with the sweetest kisses and pure embracings of my kindest affection I rest thine".⁶⁶

The love of which these Puritans speak is an emotional rapture that sweeps the lover into its orb. Henry Smith told his parishioners that in marriage there must be "a joining of hearts and a knitting of affections together".⁶⁷ William Gouge urged wives "to be lovers of their husbands, as well as husbands to love their wives", adding, "Under love all other duties are comprised: for without it no duty can be well performed It is like fire, which is not only hot in itself, but also conveyeth heat into that which is near it".⁶⁸

A few Puritan writers were even intent on preserving the mystery of romantic love. Thomas Gataker wrote:

As faith, so love cannot be constrained. As there is no affection more forcible, so there is none freer from force and compulsion There are secret links of affection that no reason can be rendered of.⁶⁹

⁶³ Quoted in Edmund Morgan, *Puritan Family*, p. 50.

⁶⁴ Ulrich, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁶⁵ Schnucker, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

⁶⁶ Morgan, *op. cit.*, *Puritan Family*, p. 302.

⁶⁷ Halkett, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁶⁸ Lerner, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

Daniel Rogers sounded a similar note:

Husbands and wives should be as two sweet friends, bred under one constellation, tempered by an influence from heaven whereof neither can give any reason, save mercy and providence first made them so, and then made their match; saying, see, God hath determined us out of this vast world each for other.⁷⁰

It has been rightly said that "from magnifying the religious significance of marriage Puritan thought easily proceeded to magnify the emotional, romantic, and idealistic aspects of the marriage relation".⁷¹

There is another reason to credit the Puritans with fostering romantic love, and it comes from literary history. Throughout the Middle Ages, love poetry and love stories had celebrated adulterous romantic love. By the time we reach the end of the sixteenth century, the ideal of *wedded* romantic love had replaced the adulterous courtly love ideal of the Middle Ages as the customary subject for literature. C. S. Lewis has shown that "the conversion of courtly love into romantic monogamous love was ... largely the work of English, and even of Puritan, poets".⁷² Someone else claims that the Puritans "did what courtly lovers had never dared to do; by combining the romantic love relation and the marriage relation, they created the new social institution of *romantic marriage*".⁷³

The Puritan ideal was wedded romantic love. Without such love, sex in marriage was doomed to be a disappointment. "As for love", wrote William Whately, "it is the life, the soul of marriage".⁷⁴ Benjamin Wadsworth claimed that people should not marry "unless they can have a real cordial love" to their spouse, "for God strictly commands mutual love

⁷⁰ Johnson, op. cit., p. 110.

⁷¹ W. Haller, *The Puritan Art of Love* (Huntington Library Quarterly 5, 1941-42) p. 265.

⁷² Lewis, op. cit., p. 75. For commentary on the influence of the Protestant ethic of wedded romantic love on literature, see also Laurence Lerner, *Love and Marriage: Literature and Its Social Context*; and Leven L. Schucking, *The Puritan Family: A Social Study from the Literary Sources*.

⁷³ H. W. Richardson, *Nun, Witch, Playmate: The Americanization of Sex* (Harper and Row, 1971) p. 67. Richardson claims that "the rise of romantic marriage and its validation by the Puritans ... represents a major innovation within the Christian tradition" (p. 69).

⁷⁴ Johnson, op. cit., p. 107.

in this relation".⁷⁵ According to John Wing, a husband's love to his wife "must be the most dear, intimate, precious and entire that heart can have toward a creature; none but the love of God ... is above it, none but the love of ourselves is fellow to it, all the love of others is inferior to it".⁷⁶ A modern scholar has summarised the situation by saying that "love was the cement of the Puritan family and sex was viewed as one of the means of expressing that love".⁷⁷

The Puritan doctrine of sex was a watershed in the cultural history of the West. The Puritans devalued celibacy, glorified companionate marriage, affirmed married sex as both necessary and pure, established the ideal of wedded romantic love, and exalted the role of the wife.

This complex of ideas and values received its most eloquent and beautiful expression in Milton's picture of the married life of Adam and Eve in his epic *Paradise Lost*. In portraying the perfect marriage in Book 4, Milton went out of his way to show that Adam and Eve enjoyed sexual union before the Fall. As Adam and Eve retire to their bower for the evening, we read,

Straight side by side were laid, nor turned I ween
Adam from his fair spouse, nor Eve the rites
Mysterious of connubial love refused:
Whatever hypocrites austere talk
Of purity and place and innocence.
Defaming as impure what God declares
Pure, and commands to some, leaves free to all.
Our Maker bids increase, who bids abstain
But our Destroyer, foe to God and man? ⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Morgan, op. cit., *Puritan Family*, p. 54. Gataker said that marriage "must needs bind the husband not only to love, but to love his wife with a love above all other love" (Schnucker, p. 105).

⁷⁶ Schnucker, op. cit., p. 104. This is similar to Gouge's comment that "nor friend nor child nor parent ought to be so loved as a wife; she is termed, *the wife of his bosom*, to show that she ought to be as his heart in his bosom". (Schnucker, p. 105).

⁷⁷ F. J. Bremer, *The Puritan Experiment; New England Society from Bradford to Edwards* (New York: St. Martins, 1976) p. 177.

⁷⁸ Milton, op. cit., lines 741-49.

Having disassociated himself from the Catholic tradition, Milton proceeds to give his famous apostrophe (address) to wedded love:

Hail wedded love, mysterious law, true source
Of human offspring, sole propriety
In Paradise of all things common else.
By thee adulterous lust was driven from men
Among the bestial herds to range, by thee
Founded in reason, loyal, just and pure,
Relations dear, and all the charities
Of father, son, and brother first were known.
Far be it, that I should write thee sin or blame,
Or think thee unbefitting holiest place,
Perpetual fountain of domestic sweets,
Whose bed is undefiled and chaste pronounced.⁷⁹

All the usual Puritan themes are here: the biblical basis for affirming sex (as evidenced by several key biblical allusions in the passage), the differentiation between animal lust and human sexual love, the domestic context into which sexual fulfilment is put, and the romantic overtones of the passage. This, and not the modern stereotype, is what the Puritans really said about sex.

E. TECHNIQUES OF COITUS

Let us turn now more directly to what the Puritans and others said about sexual intercourse. With all of the emphasis that has been given to the importance of the sex act - that it was ordained by God; that it mirrored the relationship between Christ and the church; that it was good; that it was a mutual duty among the married; that it was the means whereby the church was increased and the race continued; and so on - one might expect some rather detailed information about how, when, and where it ought to occur. The people of that age were not as interested in these topics apparently as people are today. The general guide line was that the husband

⁷⁹ Ibid., lines 750-61.

and wife ought to treat each other when they were sexually intimate in the same manner and with the same attitude as found in Christ's relationship with the church. No direct instructions were given other than a few rather ambiguous remarks that we must examine to see whether or not a picture can be gained about the actions and attitudes of the period.

Of all the writers consulted, Whately gave the most precise instructions concerning the general use of the marriage bed. First of all, the time, place, and attitude of the couple ought to be one of cheerfulness. They must lovingly, willingly, and familiarly communicate themselves to each other for this was the best means to be used to nourish and continue their mutual natural love. By being cheerful with each other, the true and proper ends of marriage would be attained in the best manner. Second, the attitude of the couple must not reflect the passion and heat of unreasonable and brutish beasts. Their sexual act ought to be sanctified; that is, they must recognise the presence of God in the act and seek his blessing that the sex act would be blessed. Whately suggested that since men sought God's blessing at meal time, they ought to do the same during this extremely holy act.⁸⁰ Further to sanctify the marriage bed and to use it as God intended, with prayer and thanksgiving, it ought to be used moderately. Thus the couple would not become weary of each other. Third, sexual intercourse must be done at seasonable and lawful times.⁸¹ This third requirement will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

(1) WHERE

No suggestion was made by Whately as to where the sex act should take place. Students of the period have made the obvious suggestion that it took place most frequently in a bedroom. This ought to come to our mind

⁸⁰ Schucker, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

in recalling the post-nuptial celebrations where the bridal party took their last leave of the young couple while the couple was in the bed chamber. It has been pointed out that the bedroom was often the parlor during the early part of the sixteenth century but by the seventeenth, it had become a separate room with a very large bed in it.⁸² This shift to privacy in the bedroom probably meant more sexual intimacy. The bedroom as a rule was furnished with a chest or two of drawers, a wash-stand and the bed which dominated the whole room. In the middle-class and upper-class homes this bed was usually a four-poster which, depending upon its cost, could be large and simple or large and very ornate with drawing curtains, valances, fringes, ornately carved pillars, and an elaborate head board. Some cost as high as a thousand pounds and were willed frequently to close relatives as a valuable heirloom.⁸³ Ben Johnson referred to the large bed and its sensual use:

I will have all my beds blown up, not stuf;
Down is too hard: And then mine oval room
Filled with such pictures as Tiberius took
From Elephantis, and dull Areteine
But coldly imitated. Then, my glasses
Cut in more subtle angles, to disperse
And multiply the figures, as I walk
Naked between my succubae.⁸⁴

(2) WHEN

The best time of the day and of the year for sexual intercourse was considered by some writers of that period.

⁸² Ibid., p. 334. By implication, Gouge indicated the marriage debt was paid in bed. This conclusion comes from his declaration that husbands and wives who had separate bed rooms and were not bed-fellows, robbed "... each other of that due beneuolence which they mutually owe one to another, they expose themselues to the devils snares"

⁸³ M. St. Clare Byrne, *Elizabethan Life in Town and Country* (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1934), pp. 27-28.

⁸⁴ B. Johnson, *The Alchemist*, John I. McCollum, Jr., ed., (Woodbury, New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1965) p. 34.

Many thought that night-time was the best and that immediately after the act was over, rest ought to occur for all labour after intercourse was hurtful.⁸⁵ The Puritan physician, James Hart, however, although mentioning the advantage of sleep after intercourse at night, said that he was in favour of morning as the best time. He recommended that sexual intercourse should not occur after excessive eating, nor after violent exercise nor bodily labour that had consumed much strength. Winter was preferred to summer by some, for the summer was hot and dry and man who was also hot and dry would be sapped of his strength. Hart suggested that the temperate times of the year were best for it kept man in a state of moderation between the hot and cold seasons, which would suit his humours. One ought to be wary during extremely hot or cold seasons, but particularly during great heat.⁸⁶

(3) HEALTHFULNESS OF EJACULATION

The act of sexual intercourse was considered by many to be a necessity for the preservation of a healthy body and mind. The health manuals of the period and some of the theologians argued that ejaculation in moderation was healthful. Toward the end of the fifteenth century, a Roman Catholic theologian, Martin Le Maistre, expressed this in his book *Moral Questions*. His most radical idea, according to Noonan, was this:

I say that someone can wish to take pleasure, first, for love of that pleasure, secondly to avoid tedium and the ache of melancholy caused by the lack of pleasure. Conjugal intercourse to avoid the sadness coming from the absence of venereal pleasure is not culpable.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Schnucker, op. cit., p.336.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 336.

⁸⁷ J. T. Noonan, *Contraception, A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966) p. 308. Noonan quoted Le Maistre's *Questiones morales* II fol. 49 v.

The teachings of Le Maistre were continued by John Major, Professor of Theology from 1505-1550 at the Sorbonne, Glasgow, and St. Andrews. Noonan said of Major, "He is one of the rare English-speaking theologians to make a substantial contribution to the theological discussion of marriage".⁸⁸ Major taught that it would be entirely proper to have intercourse for the sake of one's own or one's wife's health.⁸⁹ Following the precedent of Le Maistre and Major, other writers of the period also argued that the evacuation of semen in moderate amounts was healthful. Thomas Cogan and Robert Burton both agreed that when intercourse was omitted, people became heavy, dull, suffered from melancholy, headache, and other ailments. If the seed was not evacuated but retained for an extended period of time, in some it turned to a poison and the vapours of it affected the brain and heart.⁹⁰ Further, by not using this means to keep healthy, one could lose the ability to engage in intercourse. Burton told the story of a scholar who studied so hard and so long that when he went to bed with his new wife, he was unable to perform the marriage duty, and after numerous nights of failure, she found someone who was capable of performing copulation.⁹¹ That marriage could come to a sour note when intercourse was absent was noticed by Hart. He said that the lack of intercourse could breed disease and too much of it would cause a decay and debility or atrophy of the organs. The genitals were to be used for "... propagating and increasing mankind, and for the alleviating and easing their bodies, and for preserving and maintaining health".⁹² Although the

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 310.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 311. Noonan quoted Major, *On the Sentences* 4. 31.

⁹⁰ Schnucker, op. cit., p. 338. He quoted Thomas Cogan, *Haven of Health* (London: T. Orwin, 1589) p. 241 and Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford: U. Lichfield and J. Short, 1961) p. 104.

⁹¹ Schucker, op. cit., p.339.

⁹² Ibid., p. 339. Hart had the best summary of the need for intercourse to keep one healthy. Moderate copulation that was timely and orderly was "... in many respects usefull and profitable: for, besides that it serveth for the propagation of mankinde, it inhibiteth also the repletion of the body, reviveth the spirits, exiteth natural heat, helpeth the agility of the body, quickeneth the mind, and qualifieth fury and melancholy. The immoderate and unseasonable use therof, resolves the spirits, cooleth the body, hurteth the

Puritan preachers did not include the above kind of information in their writings, one should not conclude that they were either ignorant of it nor that they did not subscribe to it since they did not mention it. Since these ideas were common in the period, and were taught in the various medical schools, it would seem fair to assume that the Puritans would subscribe to these ideas as did most of the informed people of their day.

(4) SEX-PLAY

Today, many sex manuals recommend a period of sex-play prior to the act of intercourse on the basis that it takes the female longer to become adequately prepared for coitus than the male. The age under consideration here, discussed the same activity but called it "sporting together". Interestingly enough, there was considerable comment made concerning this aspect of sexual intercourse.⁹³

More specific reference to sex-play came when the Puritans discussed the scriptural approval for this activity. Smith used a play on the word marriage to point to the scriptural approval. "... marriage doth signifie merry-age, because a play-fellow is come to make our age merry, as *Isaak* and *Rebecca* sported together"⁹⁴ The example of Isaac and Rebecca was the main example used by the Puritans. Cleaver pointed to the story of sporting together and said that the king in seeing this sex-play realised that such activity only took place between those who were husband and wife.⁹⁵

head, eyes, nerves, and joints, ingendreth crudities, dulleth the mind and sense, procureth a stinking breath, pissing of blood, consumption of the back, & c."

⁹³ Noonan, op. cit., p. 325. Noonan indicated that Thomas Sanchez (1550-1610) in his *The Holy Sacrament of Matrimony* 9.45.33-37 raised the question of pre-coital love play since some had objected to it for it might lead to premature ejaculation and thus cause the sin of Onan. Sanchez felt "... there is an urgent cause for touches of this kind to show and foster mutual love among spouses, and it would be great austerity, and love would be much diminished, if they abstained from touches of this sort". Noonan did not indicate whether or not Sanchez had been influenced by any reformation writings.

⁹⁴ Schnucker, op. cit., p. 341.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 341.

Those who opposed such sex-play were called stoical by Gouge. He said they had no heat and lacked a heart of affection. Thus they took no more delight in their own wives than in any other woman.⁹⁶ He then pointed to the story of Isaac and Rebecca in Genesis 26.8 and said that their sporting was a privilege which pertained to the estate of marriage.⁹⁷ Another scriptural passage cited as proof of the propriety of sex-play was Proverbs 5:15,18,19. Gataker quoted these passages and said:

*Let her brests or her bosome content thee at all time: and delight continually, or as the word there is, euen doate on the Loue of her. As if the holy Ghost did allow some such priuate daliance & behaiour to married persons between themselues as to others might seeme dotage.*⁹⁸

The detailed techniques of sex-play suggested in present day manuals were totally lacking in the marriage manuals of the Puritan world. The information that was given was general in nature. For example, Croftes wrote a chapter entitled "Shewing how to enjoy our wishes, please our Lovers, & increase love". What might have been a detailed description of the technique of sex-play was in reality general advice as this:

Pleasant and well composed lookes, Glances, Smiles, Countersmiles, plausible Gestures, pleasant carriage, and behaviour, affability, complements, salutations, a comely gate and pace, dancing and the like, will greatly please and increase the love of some female creatures.⁹⁹

But the effectiveness of sex-play was known. "Wee know", said Croftes, later, "that even common and frivolous discourse being spoken in the way

⁹⁶ Schnucker, op. cit., p. 342.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 342.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 342. Perkins also cited these passages from Proverbs and added Canticles 1.1 and Isaiah 62.7. He wrote that part of the marriage duty involved a "... holy kind of reioycing and sollacing themselues each with other, in a mutuall declaration of the signes, and tokens of loue and kindnesse". Then he declared that such activity was more the prerogative of the man than the woman and to be performed more in their younger years than in their old age. (Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*, p. 691.)

⁹⁹ Schnucker, op. cit., p. 343.

of love, will much please and take these female lovers" and cause the recipient of this attention to be head over heels in love.¹⁰⁰

The one restriction given by those who considered the element of sex-play, was that it must be done privately between husband and wife. There was a general abhorrence of such activity in public for such open sex-play and passion might enflame the desires of others.

Gouge spoke about those who were always having their wives in their laps, colling and kissing them, dallying with them, doting upon them, being fond and light with them, regardless of the company about them. He was not against the actions but against their public display for it meant that the couple had forgotten the gravity, sobriety, modesty, and decency that belonged to their relationship. "Much greater liberty", he said, "is granted to man and wife when they are alone, than in company".¹⁰¹ Thus, it was generally conceded by the Puritans that sex-play was proper and good, and Isaac's example was certainly appropriate; but it was secretively seen; thus his "sporting" had been privately done and this was the example the Puritan was to follow.

(5) COITAL POSITIONS

Recently a book advertised through the mail purported to contain colour photographs of one hundred different coital positions,¹⁰² a remarkable number when one considers the *Koka Shastra* listed about thirty-three.¹⁰³ Whether or not the Puritans and those of their time were this inventive in devising various coital positions is not known. Certainly

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 344.

¹⁰¹ Schucker, op. cit., p. 345.

¹⁰² Karl Jacobson, *Dynamic Intercourse*. This book is circulated by Cybertype Corporation of New York City. The advertisement stated: "Over 100 coital positions - each one illustrated *in color* by men and women, completely nude. Irresistible methods of stimulation - able to drive a person into an orgy of sexual excitement".

¹⁰³ Kokkoda, *Koka Shastra*, Alex Comfort, trans. & ed.; (New York: Stein and Day, 1964), p. 133 ff.

the writings being considered in this study make but very slight reference to coital positions. However, by briefly examining some of the ideas of the middle ages, the theological position of the Puritans, and recalling a couple of accounts given previously, the more probable coital positions may be determined. Some of the medieval writers believed that some of the sins against nature in the realm of sexual experience, involved improper coital positions.¹⁰⁴ The proper and natural position was the man over and the woman underneath. Various reasons were given against any other position than this natural one. Other positions made conception difficult. For example if the natural position was reversed, the woman over and the man underneath, the danger was for the semen to run out thus frustrating conception. Since the major reason for coitus was procreation, such a position which made conception difficult was a sin against nature. Avicenna claimed such an unnatural position could cause genital injury. Thomas Aquinas argues the natural position had been given by God and should not be altered by man. Thus to do what was unnatural, an act whereby the order of nature was violated, was to commit also an injury to God, the creator of and sustainer of nature.¹⁰⁵ Henriques has pointed out that the concern over the natural position made its way into the Penitentials used by priests in confession during the middle ages. The *Penitential of Angiers* gave forty days penance, others as high as seven years, for the use of the quadrupedal or animal, or rear-entry position. It was apparently the opinion of some medieval medical writers that such a position tended to induce abortion.¹⁰⁶ The *Penitentials* according to Henriques, indicated that anything other than the natural position might lead to the enhancement of the pleasure of sexual intercourse and this

¹⁰⁴ Noonan, op. cit., p. 238f. I have depended heavily upon the researches of Noonan for this section.

¹⁰⁵ Noonan, op. cit., p. 238, et passim.

¹⁰⁶ F. Henriques, *Love in Action, The Sociology of Sex* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1960) p. 318.

would have been sufficient to condemn that position.¹⁰⁷ The attitude of the medieval writers, of the natural position for coitus, was part of the general milieu possessed by the Puritans. On the basis of what has been presented thus far concerning the Puritan attitude of the superiority of the husband over the wife in marriage, it would seem to follow that this would have carried over into the position of the act of coitus so that the male would be over the weaker and inferior female.

I think it is safe to conclude that the recommended and often used position during this period was the natural position of man over and woman under. Because of the injunctions against unnatural positions, whilst they were known and most probably used, the extent of their usage is uncertain.

(6) ABSTENTIONS FROM COITUS

Most Puritans agreed with the idea that there were certain times when husband and wife ought to abstain from coitus. Those times were when the woman was having her menstrual flow, during illness, during pregnancy, after childbirth, and during certain religious seasons. This was the opinion of Thomas Cartwright, who when he preached a sermon for his daughter and future son-in-law, called to their attention that the time of the woman's period was not an advisable time for coitus.¹⁰⁸ The same position was taken by Perkins, Cleaver, Gouge, Whately, and Hart.¹⁰⁹ All of these men cited Leviticus 18:19; 23:27, 29 and occasionally Ezekiel 18:6 and 22:20 as the scriptural proof for their belief. They also declared that to engage in coitus during the period was to commit the sin of the Canaanites, for which the Lord had rooted them out of their land. Some of the writers indicated

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 318.

¹⁰⁸ Schnucker, op. cit., p. 349.

¹⁰⁹ Schnucker, op. cit., p. 350.

that it was wise not to insist upon coitus when one of the mates was ill. Gouge said that it was a merciless act to insist upon intercourse when the mate was "... weake by sicknesse, paine, labour, travell, or any other like meanes"¹¹⁰

The non-procreative coitus that could take place during pregnancy had been deplored with zeal by many medieval theologians.¹¹¹ Of all the Puritan writers, Gouge discussed most thoroughly the question of coitus during pregnancy. He said he found no evidence in Scripture that condemned the practice and thus he would not declare it to be a sin. Some had claimed that since beasts did not copulate during pregnancy, neither should man. Gouge swept this aside by saying that this was not true of all animals and "Besides, that which beasts by nature are tied vnto, must be left to mans discretion".¹¹² Still others had reproduced the argument of the middle ages, that since the major purpose of marriage was procreation, once conception had taken place, there was no further reason for copulation until after the child was born. To this Gouge replied that the argument was in error for "Conception is not the only end of this dutie: for it is to be rendred to such as are barren".¹¹³ I think one can conclude that there was a change in attitude about this practice but whether the practice changed or whether the frequency of coitus during pregnancy changed, is at this stage undeterminable. Universally however, all of the writers were against intercourse immediately following childbirth. Whately, and Hart were typical of this view. They all recommended about three to four weeks to lapse after childbirth before coitus was resumed again.¹¹⁴ Here they followed the general recommendations found in Leviticus 12. Thus in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, intercourse was resumed usually after the new mother had been "churched". The roots of this

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 350.

¹¹¹ Noonan, op. cit., p. 248f.

¹¹² Schnucker, op. cit., p. 351.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 352.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 353.

practice were in the Levitical Law of the Old Testament.¹¹⁵ During the middle ages, intercourse for the man and birth for the female were considered defiling and required purification, for the man before officiating at the altar and for the woman before entering the church after childbirth.¹¹⁶ The Scottish physician John Makluire advised that twenty days after the birth of a male child was sufficient before the woman went to the church, but if the infant was a girl, then forty days ought to elapse before returning to the church. During this time, the husband was not to have sexual intercourse with his wife.¹¹⁷ The Puritan preacher Henry Smith, who apparently never married, recommended a period of purification for

some staine or other doth creepe into this action, which had need to be repented, and therefore when they prayed, *Paul* would not haue them come together, lest their prayers should be hindred.¹¹⁸

Although Cartwright was opposed to the practice of "churching" because he thought it was a Jewish ceremony not in accordance with God's word, it was still practised well into the seventeenth century.¹¹⁹

Finally it was suggested that one ought to abstain from coitus during certain holy periods or seasons of fasting and prayer. Prior to the reformation, coitus was forbidden on Sunday, feast days, and fast days which might involve Friday and possibly Wednesday. A strict following of the rules for Lent and Advent as fasting periods meant no coitus during these times; and coitus was to be abstained from prior to communion. When all of this was totalled, the period of abstinence demanded of the religious

¹¹⁵ Leviticus 13, et passim.

¹¹⁶ Bainton, op. cit., p. 75.

¹¹⁷ Schnucker, op. cit., p. 433.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 434. Previous to Smith's statement on "churching" he said that he thought it was rare when sexual intercourse was not abused; yet the act itself was not evil, in fact Smith claimed it was honourable. The actions of men and women and their attitudes made it tainted.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 434.

couple, extended to nearly half of the year.¹²⁰ By the mid-sixteenth century, the restrictions were ignored by the protestants.

The Puritan position was that if the married couple was going to abstain for any reason other than those mentioned above, it should be only for prayer and fasting and even then only by mutual consent. In commenting on I Corinthians 7:3-5, Cleaver said "... so that they may not defraude one another, except the one abstaine from the other by mutuall consent, that they may be better giue themselues to prayer...." they must be carefull that the abstinence did not stir them up to worse lust.¹²¹ Perkins also allowed abstinence during a fast by mutual consent.¹²²

The abstinence from sexual intercourse was also the result of physical separation, some of which was legitimate and some of which was not. The former was characterised by Gouge as separation which was for the good of the church or the Commonwealth such as going to war, serving as an ambassador, or separation because of business such as a merchant's long journey or the lawyer's need to attend court: but both parties had to consent to the separation. Improper separation could have involved long distances, as when the husband lived in London while the wife lived in the country, or a separation within the home where both lived under the same roof but had different bedrooms.¹²³ Separate but equal bedrooms was a violation of the institution of marriage for the couple robbed each other of the due benevolence which they mutually owed each other. In other words, such an arrangement was not conducive to coitus.¹²⁴ Separation was proper, providing it was within clearly defined limitations and only for a specific span of time.

120 Henriques, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

121 Schnucker, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

122 *Ibid.*, p. 354.

123 *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

124 *Ibid.*, p. 355.

CHAPTER 3

PURITAN ATTITUDES TOWARD SOME ASPECTS OF SEXUAL DEVIATION

A. PURITAN AWARENESS OF SEXUAL DEVIATION

We know that the world of the Puritans was aware of sexual deviation such as incest, sodomy, buggery, bestiality, homosexuality, lesbianism, abnormal coital positions, and masturbation. Not always did the Puritans use a preciseness in their terminology; not always did they make it clear why they were against sexual deviation; and not always did they reveal all they probably knew about it.

The vast majority of writers who referred to these activities did so by lumping them under the ambiguous terms of "unnatural commixture", "the spending of man's or woman's nature otherwise than in lawfull matrimony", "unlawful fleshly pleasure", and other similar euphemisms.¹²⁵ Thus it is not always possible to determine exactly the opinion of this or that writer on a specific activity such as masturbation for although the writer was probably aware of the activity, it was thrown in with other sexual sins and all of them were condemned as an unit. Yet enough evidence is available that a fairly substantial indication is available about the thinking of many of the writers concerning sexual deviations.

The terms used in describing sexual deviants are often confused¹²⁶ and I would hazard a guess that sometimes this was done by those who wrote in the past and currently write dictionaries because they do not wish to reveal more than they think is necessary. Such an attitude prompted Eric Partridge to compose his dictionaries of slang after the appearance of the

¹²⁵ Schnucker, op. cit., p. 522.

¹²⁶ *The Websters New International Dictionary*, W. A. Nelson, ed.; (2nd ed., New York: A. Merriam-Webster Inc., 1934), p. 350. The term bugger is defined as "unnatural sexual intercourse; loosely sodomy". This is a good example of the lack of precision referred to above.

great *Oxford English Dictionary*.¹²⁷ Thus to secure a precise definition, the usual dictionaries are not of much help. The source I have relied upon is George W. Henry's two volume work *Sex Variants: A Study of Homosexual Patterns*, and I have consulted the works of Partridge.

Writers of the period made mention of the action performed by men with men. They called this Sodomy, a reference to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, where the men of Sodom had more interest in an erotic experience with the male visitors in Lot's house than with his daughters. The story does not make clear the exact nature of the erotic experience they were interested in enjoying. George Henry, mentioned above, was cautious about identifying this variant form of sexual experience but it seemed to refer to anal and oral coitus between men. The term buggery usually was considered to be vulgar at the time of the Puritans, but it was the term for anal coitus. The terms buggery and sodomy made no distinction between the active and passive participant and in this they are similar to the current use of homosexual. Bestiality, sometimes confused with sodomy, referred to sexual intercourse between humans of either sex with an animal. Pederasty or confrication, a term used in the middle ages, referred to the sexual love of a man for a boy. In the period of this study, this was sometimes mentioned with the words catamite or gannymede. The female homosexual is now usually called a lesbian; the term sapphist from the poet Sappho was a technical designation of the Puritan world for oral eroticism among women, a form of lesbian activity. Ribady or frigging was the confriction of the vulva, or simulated coition by women by means of a moderately enlarged clitoris of the partner, or the use of an artificial penis, as a dildo, attached by straps about the waist and thighs.¹²⁸

During the middle ages, anal and oral coitus, *coitus interruptus* and any departure from the natural position in coitus, the man over the woman

¹²⁷ Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, (5th ed., New York: Macmillan Co., 1961), v.

¹²⁸ George W. Henry, *Sex Variants: A Study of Homosexual Patterns* (New York: Paul B. Hoeber, Inc., 1941), vol. II, pp. 1151-1154.

under was the natural position, was termed a sin against nature. By the time of the high middle ages, Thomas Aquinas was distinguishing between auto-erotic acts, bestiality, sodomy, and other acts where the natural position for coitus was not used.¹²⁹ The objection to these sexual deviations for Aquinas was that they resulted in extra-vaginal ejaculations thus frustrating the purpose of procreative insemination, the purpose of God and the reason for coitus.¹³⁰ When procreation became impossible because of the deviant behaviour, Aquinas argued that it was not the neighbour who was offended, as he could be in contraceptive action, but it was God who was offended. This approach put an emphasis on the act of coitus in the natural position with the male ejaculating within the vagina.¹³¹ It was his opinion that the act was invested with a God-given quality not to be manipulated by man, and those who frustrated the proper technique were going completely counter to God's will. This idea had an interesting conclusion in the preaching of Bernardine: "It is better for a wife to permit herself to copulate with her own father in a natural way than with her husband against nature".¹³² At another time he said: "It is bad for a man to have intercourse with his own mother, but it is much worse for him to have intercourse with his wife against nature".¹³³ The Puritans did not share these ideas as expressed by Bernardine; but to a large extent, their views tended to follow the Thomist rationale for the natural position and the corollary rejection of sexual deviations.

129 Noonan, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-225.

130 *Ibid.*, p. 238.

131 *Ibid.*, p. 240.

132 *Ibid.*, p. 260. Noonan quoted Bernardine, *The Christian Religion*, 17.1.1.

133 *Ibid.*, p. 260f. Noonan quoted Bernardine, *Seraphic Sermons*, 19.1.

B. ADULTERY

We normally think of adultery as extra-marital intercourse but in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the seventh commandment was studied, the word adultery included not only extra-marital intercourse but almost all of the sexual sins, natural and unnatural, that man has committed. Thus to commit adultery with one's mate within the marriage bed could have involved, as far as most of the writers being examined were concerned, oral or anal intercourse, "69", *coitus interruptus*, the quadrupedal position which was associated with the position used by beasts, and the position for coitus with the woman over, the man under. Apparently these positions were associated with whore houses and to use them in coitus with one's mate was symbolic of the motivation and actions of whore houses; thus it would be an unnatural or unlawful action prohibited by the seventh commandment. Another possibility for adultery in marriage was again related to the whore who attempted to avoid conception. If this was done by the couple intentionally, it indicated an unnatural relationship between husband and wife as they attempted to frustrate one of the purposes of marriage. Finally the writers warning against adulterous marriage might have been concerned with sexual passion becoming so enflamed that rationality was abandoned and coitus became an animalish and lascivious action. This would have been the denial of the relation of Christ and his church that was to be reflected in the two becoming one flesh. When this was the approach to coitus, then the Puritans believed that "... marriage is but a continual fornication, sealed with an oath"134

Puritan John Dod attempted to accentuate the positive in handling this problem. In his exposition of the seventh commandment it was his conclusion that what saved the marriage from an internal adulterous

134 Schnucker, op. cit., p. 363.

relationship was the attitude of the husband and wife. They must keep in mind that the act of copulation was to be accomplished in a loving, holy, and godly manner; then the evils of unnatural and unlawful copulation would be avoided.¹³⁵ Thus when the two became one flesh, and the motivations and attitudes and the mechanical technique of copulation were proper, in short when within the conceptual approach of the Puritans, coitus was not abused, it was not only not sinful but an enjoyable and holy pleasure from God.

Adultery, forbidden by the seventh commandment, was the breach of wedlock made by one or both of the mates when either or both engaged in sexual intercourse outside of the bond of marriage.

This paraphrase of Dekker's description of an act of adultery brings us to the complex and rich conception of the Puritan view of this age old marital problem.

When night had come, he was there according to his promise. The maid conveyed him into her mistress' chamber. He quickly but quietly undressed and softly slid into her bed. Immediately he began to embrace her although she pretended to be asleep. Then showing more awareness, she asked with a timorous voice "Who is it?" "It is I sweete love; feare nothing". She, knowing that the lover was not her husband, responded with "Ah, think you to prevail this way? No! No!" She made a mild effort to get out of bed to call to her maid but the maid who was to hear nothing, did not appear. The mistress realizing that there was no outside help began to faintly resist her lover while he pressed his advantage. But what can a naked woman do against a naked and resolute lover? "... there is therefore no other remedy but that at length ... being out of breath with striuing, she must needes yeeld to the stronger". She would have cried out again, but she feared the discovery of her discredit.¹³⁶

To engage in illicit intercourse obviously meant to physically copulate with a member of ther opposite sex not the mate. Gataker suggested it also meant

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 364.

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp. 463-4. Schnucker quoted Dekker, *The Batchelors Banquet*, fol. E 3 V.

to mentally do the same although the physical act might never take place.¹³⁷ In addition to the breaking asunder the holy injunction that the two shall become and remain one flesh, the age of the early Puritans included in the seventh commandment other mental, sexual, and sensual activities that were to be avoided and were condemned. Examples of these prohibited activities involved the excessive consumption of drink and meat, wanton talk and spectacles, lewd behaviour, fornication, and other activities that could lead to the violation of the godly intention of marriage.¹³⁸ Although at the time there was an implied double standard in many of the relationships and activities between husband and wife, in the consideration of adultery, it was generally held by the Puritans that it was as bad for the male as for the female to violate the marriage vows by engaging in adultery.

Adultery not only was a sin of the flesh, but it was a sin of the spirit and these two aspects of adultery were closely connected. Spiritual adultery was considered to be idolatry and physical adultery was the punishment of the former. Those inclined toward idolatry were prone to sexual adultery claimed Perkins, and

As this was true in these Israelites, so it is to be seene among the Turkes, and with the Papists at this day, who maintaine fornication, in tolerating stewes, and further it much by their vow of single life, wherewith they bind the conscience, though the partie want the gift of continencie.¹³⁹

Jesus spoke about this in Mathew 5:28 where he told those who had gathered to hear him preach that the man who lusted after a woman had already committed adultery with her. This mental adultery ought to teach the lesson said Perkins, that "... we must labour to keepe our hearts and minds pure and chast, as well as our bodies".¹⁴⁰ The idea that the adultery

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 465.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 466.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 467. Schnucker quoted Perkins, *A Godly and Learned Exposition or Commentary upon the Three first Chapters of the Revelation*, 2nd Rev. ed.; (London: f. William Melbe, 1618), p. 299.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 467.

which broke the marriage relationship was best controlled by avoiding mental and spiritual adultery, was a basic element in the Puritan approach.

It is not always safe to assume that writers who addressed themselves to a certain problem of society which appeared to them to be wrong, such as adultery, were followed by the rest of society nor that the writers were in fact reporting the true condition of society. Thus when considering the extent of the practice of adultery during the period of the rise of puritanism, one must be careful about any broad or sweeping statement about the frequency of adultery, even when many commented upon the prevalence of it. There should be no doubt that there was a problem of adultery during the period. To assume that the people of that time were not involved with this, would be to argue that their times differed from previous and later times as far as human nature is concerned and more important, it would ignore the evidence found in literature and in religious writings that pointed to a concern for the high incidence of adultery.

The punishment for adultery, other than the spiritual consequences and familial discord, consisted of action taken by the magistrate and excommunication by the church. Some of the Puritans would have had the violators of the seventh commandment put to death. The fact that they were not, was one reason why so much of it took place.

George Joye who wrote in 1549, supported the strict interpretation of Scripture, that death ought to be the punishment of all adulterers. Joye's argument was similar to those used by some of the Puritans who advocated the same thing. Joye claimed that any law that was for the public tranquillity of Christ's church and for the conservation of the Commonwealth, was both profitable and necessary. It was God's law, he said, that required the death penalty for adultery for the tranquillity of His church; and since it was God's law, the penalty was both necessary and profitable. God had ordained the magistrate to repress evil and to preserve the private and public peace, to encourage honesty, godly zeal and virtue to

the end that men's salvation might be, and for the glory of God. Thus the magistrate ought to exhort all Christians to avoid the contagious canker of adultery; it might otherwise creep in and soon corrupt the whole body of Christ. Further the magistrate ought to set the example by exercising the death penalty for those guilty of adultery.¹⁴¹

C. PROSTITUTION

I recall seeing a cartoon some years ago that had as its setting a vocational counsellor's office. Opposite the counsellor sat an attractive young lady with shock emanating from her face as the counsellor with all seriousness said to her "But Miss, it is the oldest profession known to man". If I understood the cartoon correctly, he had suggested to her that she ought to consider the profession of prostitution. Such a cartoon might have caused some laughter among the Puritan clergy of the period under study, but almost without exception, Puritans condemned prostitution or whoredom, as strongly and for the same reasons as they had condemned adultery. In order to understand the Puritan rejection of whoredom, a general description of this profession as practised in the sixteenth century follows.

A variety of terms were used to describe those who practised this profession:

filth, curtisan, queen, strumpet, punk, light housewife, concubine, leman, love, mistress, etc. The prostitute was likened to a pirate ship that lay in wait for spoil and was double and triple manned.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 485. Schnucker quoted Joye, *A Contrarye Consultacion*.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 497.

The verbal descriptions of the whore differed according to the background of the writer. The ministers saw her as one who was guilty of religious sin while the secular writer saw her as one that could lead a man to physical rack and ruin. The religious description of the whore used by Becon, was taken from the book of Proverbs and although such a female was properly described there, the descriptions given by the secular writers gave more of the Elizabethan manifestations of the whore. Becon added to his description of the physical appearance, the mental attitude of the whore. She was easily moved to all kinds of dishonesty for nothing more than a piece of bread and a glass of beer; and her final end was an extreme form of beggary.¹⁴³

Why would a woman want to become a whore? Croftes suggested four reasons: They had no other choice since they had no means of support. Others took up the profession because of the currish demeanour of their husbands. Others might have tried the profession because of a false sense of pride in that they wanted to maintain a standard of living no longer possible from their husband, or unattainable by the husband. And still others sought love since there was none in their relationship with their husbands.¹⁴⁴ Women who became whores on the basis of the above were usually secretive about their activities and would try as best as they could, to conceal their whoredom and thus maintain their good reputation in the eyes of the world.¹⁴⁵

There was a second kind of whore who set aside all fear of God, shame of the world, and gave herself completely to the profession. Perhaps their humours were so hot and moist that they were forced into

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 498. Becon claimed that God's blessing rested upon the properly married wife but God's curse and vengeance came upon the whore. The whore's children were not "... begotten in true matrimony, but are bastards and misbegotten, and therefore they were both begotten, conceived, and born in the heavy anger, wrath, and displeasure of God; so that by this means they cannot prosper, but have short continuance on the earth...."

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 499. Croftes stated that "Indeed, many Lovers for want of enjoying their wishes in this kind, become extreame melancholy and sorrowfull, and some betake themselues to ill courses, as whooring, and Taverne-haunting, and sometimes spoyle themselues".

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 500.

intemperate lusts. They soon lived upon the spoil of their patrons consuming their wealth, bodies, and souls. They were not secretive but made their profession and reputation available to any and all so they would be sought after. They appeared at the proper places and times in order to solicit and to be solicited.¹⁴⁶

The suburbs of London had a reputation of being the locales in which the whores maintained their places of business. This did not mean that they did not seek patrons throughout London. The Strand and other theatres were considered to be prime places to find whores.¹⁴⁷ The technique of the whore was to frequent the play houses in the afternoon in one kind of dress and then to the tavern in another costume. The practice of the whore was to walk the streets at night in both summer and winter looking for a customer. When one had been found and enticed, the couple went to a tavern, had a drink or two and then retired to a room where more often than not, the man discovered that among her charms, was the ability to pick his pocket.¹⁴⁸

A whore who wished to make the highest sums possible in her profession, had to maintain a certain standard in her professional appearance as well as in her apartment. A high class whore would dress as a countess, be followed by serving men; have a coach to convey her; perhaps a boat on the Thames and champions who would fight for her. She dressed in the latest style and was carefully made up with the proper cosmetics, jewellery and perfume.¹⁴⁹

In some instances the young whore was supervised by a bawde or a madam who had been a whore. The bawde taught her some of the tricks of her trade, sometimes was procurer, and confidante of the whore.¹⁵⁰ The whore also had other procurers called a pimp or pander, or punk. The

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 500.

¹⁴⁷ St. Clare Byrne, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁵⁰ Schnucker, *op. cit.*, p. 511.

clientele of the whore came from any walk of life depending upon their means and her fee.

The effects of whoredom fell upon the whore and upon her patron and in neither instance were the consequences pleasant. The whore faced all kinds of dangers and degrading experiences. While she was able to work, the whore constantly faced the risk of being uncovered and brought before the local magistrates. The end result would have been a public whipping. In London the whore would have been taken to Bridewell court; she would have been tied to the whipping post, stripped naked to the waist and then publicly whipped by the Beedle. The whip had four tails that would easily tear the tender skin off the back. She was then given a blue gown, put to work weaving flax or hemp. This was the least punishment, for some whores were hung. By the time she was released from jail, her blue gown would have become rags, she would have been covered by lice and their bites, she would have been covered by sores, the victim of aches and a bad stench.¹⁵¹

The whore was also the victim of syphilis or the pox. The cause for this ailment was well-known. As men frequented her bed, they brought the disease to her and she in turn dispensed it to them. In Cranley's *Amanda, or the Reformed Whore*, she described the horrors of syphilis from the viewpoint of the whore.

There's a disease that is the plague of whores,
Which rooteth in the marrow and the bones.
Within thee, and without thee full of sores:
That, that I say, will take thee all at once,
And make thee to reduplicate thy grones.
That Morbus Gallicus will fill thy veines,
And gnaw into thy bowels, and thy reins.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Thomas Cranley, *Amanda, or the Reformed Whore* (London: J. Norton, 1635), pp. 59-61. Thomas Platter described the fate of whores at Bridewell: "The woman is taken to Bridewell, the King's palace, situated near the river, where the executioner scourges her naked before the populace. And although close watch is kept on them, great swarms of these women haunt the town in the taverns and playhouses". (Thomas Platter, *Thomas Platter's Travels in England 1559*, Clare Williams, trans.; (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), pp. 174-175).

¹⁵² Cranley, op. cit., p. 48.

The whore also faced a hard life in the sense that after four or five years, her attractiveness was gone so that the quality of good paying customers declined and she was forced to take on those of lower and lower social and economic levels.¹⁵³ Finally, as Amanda declared, the whore was reduced to beggary.¹⁵⁴

One of the unwelcome fruits of adultery, fornication and whoredom, was the bastard. The definition of a bastard was any child born or fathered outside the bond of marriage; legitimate children were born from their parents within lawful marriage. The Puritan attitude toward bastardy was universally one of condemnation. This can be traced in a chronological manner from the early part of the sixteenth century until the early part of the seventeenth century. An example of the anticipation of the Puritan attitude was the statement of Agrippa that only a legitimate child could enter orders and become the proper heir of a family for a bastard was the son of no man.¹⁵⁵ About a half a century later, the Puritan Pritchard, wrote about the vile, filthy, and abominable bastardy of his day.¹⁵⁶ A few years later, Smith claimed that on the basis of Deuteronomy 2:2, bastards had no inheritance in heaven, nor on earth and could not be counted as part of the congregation of the church.¹⁵⁷ Almost a century after Agrippa's rejection of bastardy, Carter told his readers that God rejected the seed of bastardy "... begotten in your filthy fornication and adominable adultery...." None of them could be chosen to be part of God's Kingdom and to reign in glory with God's beloved Son declared Carter.¹⁵⁸

The former were aimed more at the parents than the child, although the child suffered from the condemnation of its parents. The child was

¹⁵³ Ibid., pp. 48-49.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁵⁵ Schucker, op. cit., p. 518.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 518.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 518.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 518.

symbolic of the violation of godly regulations governing copulation and a result of the defiling of the body of Christ.

D. INCEST

The sin of incest was known to the Puritans. The Puritans did understand how and why such a relationship could develop even though they vigorously condemned it. The change from a deep brotherly and sisterly love, or a natural love between relatives to an erotic and carnal love was recognised as possible. Those who were related to each other, claimed Capel, thought they could be more familiar with each other and take more liberties than they should. They feared nothing since they were related - who would suspect their dalliance was anything more than familial love? The world seldom took notice of men and women who were related and seemed to have a close loyalty to each other and spent periods of time alone with each other - a cloak for the most abominable sin of incest, warned Capel.¹⁵⁹

Upon examination of the Old Testament, the sin of incest was seen to be a violation and defiling of the father's bed; it did violence to the couple involved; and it was against nature in that it was the result of a most violent and brutish rage of lust.¹⁶⁰ To further appreciate the implications of incest, it is necessary to keep in mind the rules of consanguinity and affinity, so that to have coitus with a daughter-in-law, as Judah did, was considered to be incestuous. The example of Judah leads us to the favourite source of

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 527. The beginning of incest was found in the story of Judah and Tamar for he saw her along side the road and from this his lust was stirred that led to incest. Whately also agreed that such sin was due to a wanton look.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 528. Snucker quoted Whately, *Prototypes*, p. 140b. Earlier Whately had warned against incestuous adultery as committed by Bilhah: "O let all women take heed of adultery, and chiefly of incestuous adulteries with their husbands son in law, or brothers, or a like neare blood, where the offence is made much more heinous by that aggravation: and if any have committed any such crime, let the mentioning of it in this woman bring it to their remembrance, and provoke them to repentance, that they may not have to fearefull a crime to answer for upon their sick-bed in the houre of death".

proof texts that were given against incest. The favourite passages quoted as injunctions against incest by the Puritans, were the stories of Judah and Tammar, Ammon and Tamar, Lot and his adughters, and the relevant passages in Leviticus against incest. Perkins for example turned to Leviticus and found here a number of reasons why incest was against the will of God and nature. He pointed to the fate of the Caananites for their practice of incest and intimated that such a fate would come to those who engaged in incest in his day. God denounced incest in Leviticus 20: 11-14 and through John the Baptist in Mark 6: 18. Further, nature itself by instinct abhorred the practice of incest and men in all ages had expressly made laws against it.¹⁶¹ The example of Lot and his daughters was used by Whately. What disgusted him more than the act was the consultation held by the daughters to determine exactly how they would dupe their father. He did not subscribe to the idea that the daughters committed incest only to continue the line; they had engaged in lust and perpetrated a villainous design void of any goodness.¹⁶²

These examples from the Old Testament were illustrative of one kind of incest, the incest that was the result of lust either with a direct blood-line relative or an in-law. One of the concerns of the Puritan was the incest that might occur without the cause of lustful intention but incest that might result from the lack of knowledge when the bans were not properly given, and when the rules of consanguinity were not followed. This partly helps to explain why the Puritans were so insistent that the bans be observed to avoid the feared sin of incest.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 529.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 529.

E. HOMOSEXUALITY

The usual explanation for the appearance of homosexuality was rooted in the story of the men of Sodom. Sodomy was seen to be base and vile for it resulted in the confounding of the sexes which God had created to be distinguishable with each sex possessing a separate sexual function within His scheme. The sodomite through the use of anal intercourse used the male as if he was female and thus "...turned men into women for the satisfaction of the prodigious lust...." not because there were no women but because of the sinfulness of their desires.¹⁶³ Inherent in this confusion of the role of the sexes was the firm belief that God had ordained the conjunction of husband and wife primarily for procreation, for the peopling of the earth. To engage in sodomy meant that it became "...utterly impossible to attain the proper end of such meeting...."¹⁶⁴ Although this objection does not use the terminology given previously in the discussion of the view of Aquinas, the Thomist concept was implied in the Puritan position. As Aquinas objected to sodomy because it meant extra-vaginal ejaculation, a frustration of the act of procreation, so did some of the Puritans make the same objection.¹⁶⁵

The decription of the sodomist given by Whately was not pleasant. The sodomist was a bugger, that is, one who preferred anal intercourse, who took great pleasure in watching others perform such unnatural acts. The age of the sodomist had little bearing upon the desire for the act. Some were so old they could scarcely see or hear and "...what they could not act because

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 531. Schnucker quoted Whately, *Prototypes*, p. 216a and Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*, p. 673. Whately's comments were based upon the story of Lot and the visiting angels in Sodom. In pressing the idea that each sex is different for a reason, he said: "For he made Male and Female, but these beasts would needs so much as was in them, take away that so necessary and useful distinction, and would have abused Males as if they had beene Femeales". Perkins described the sin as the "vnnaturall and monstrous sinne of vncleanesse betweene parties of the same sexe ... when one kind commits filthiness and abomination with another".

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 531.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 532. Capel, Whately, and Aquinas held the same objection to sodomy: the impossibility of procreation - a God ordained act. Capel said: "... posterity which is natures end, is utterly lost by it".

of weaknesse, yet the strength of their unmortified lusts did make them delight to behold, and attempt to performe so farre as they could".¹⁶⁶ It was Becon's opinion that sodomy was becoming more prevalent and more freely practised while very few were punished for it. The consequences of the sin were clearly exposed. The sodomist would never be admitted to the Kingdom of heaven; he would be deprived of all religion, the use of reason, and he would suffer a guilty conscience.¹⁶⁷ There was some indication that the Puritans suspected those who practised sodomy were effeminate. Idle youth soon find their minds turning to lust, claimed Perkins, and from this would come the entertaining of unnatural sin such as sodomy.¹⁶⁸ Stubbes was particularly suspicious of musicians. He suggested that if a father wanted his son to be transformed into a woman and inclined to an unnatural sexual life, the son ought to be sent to dancing and music school "...and then shall you not faile your purpose".¹⁶⁹

The most famous example of the effeminate male for the period was James I. Whether or not he practised sodomy is difficult to prove.

One of the jests of the day pointed to the effemininity of James: "Elizabeth was King; now James is Queen". The actions of James I and those in his court brought a word of condemnation from the Puritans.

Thus the Puritans were not overly prudish in their attitude; they were reflecting the general mores of their time against what appeared to almost everyone since the middle ages to be an unnatural and ungodly sin.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 532. Whately was disgusted with older men who engaged in sodomy. If young men do it, he thought perhaps age would temper them "... but in whome these fires continue sparkling, when his body is little warmer than a dead carkasse, what hope can be conceived of his amendment?"

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 533. Becon's opinion of the morality of his time was very pessimistic and perhaps that was his reason for speculating that sodomy was increasing. The following reflects his attitude: "Matrimony is despised, whoredome is had in price, true wyues and faithfull yoke fellowes are neglected and set at nought, but whores and harlots are embrased, (kulled?) and much set by. Honest wiues sit at home and almost perishe for hunger; but harlottes are sumptuously fed with all kinde of deynties. Matrimony is called an halter, but whoredome is recounted a pleasure, Wedlocke is now taken for a kinde of liuing replete with all misery, care, sorrow, pouertie, wretchedness, and beggary but to liue in whoredome and suche other detestable uncleannes, is recounted to liue like a clean and ryght up man"

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 533.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 533.

F. MASTURBATION

Masturbation was also considered to be sinful, and was associated with Satyriasis, and Priapismus, two diseases in which the penis had as its usual state, the condition of erection.¹⁷⁰ Those who engaged in masturbation were warned that they committed a secret kind of murder and the result of the act would be rottenness, a weakened body, and the curse of God in whose sight the activity was execrable.¹⁷¹ No mention was made of female masturbation.

All of the sexual deviations mentioned thus far were considered to be the product of lust or lechery resulting in physical and spiritual uncleanness. What might have been a properly motivated sexual interest became sinful; lechery was love abused in some carnal delight that was a violation of God's intention for his creation. The way to avoid these sexual deviations was to fast, to tame the body with exercise, to avoid the occasion and means of the act, and to seek God's help. There was nothing "puritanical" about the attitudes of the Puritans concerning these actions; they assumed the same attitudes as those about them and to some extent continued the views of the middle ages and scriptural injunctions against deviant sexual behaviour.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 540.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 541. Capel also declared that this was secret murder even if this was not the intent of the individual; the murder was accomplished in the act. He used a play on the command to love one's neighbour in condemning masturbation: "I must not defile my neighbour, because I am to love my neighbours chastity; but I am to love my selfe and mine owne chastity, before the chastity of any else; and this is a foule sinne against nature, and therefore the worse, for the unnatural the sin is, the greater the guilt is still in that respect".

¹⁷² Geoffrey May, *Social Control of Sex Expression* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1930) pp. 151-152, 157. It seems to me, as stated previously, that the Puritans were quite close to Aquinas and his concern that any ejaculation must be intra-vaginal for the human being. Since none of these sexual deviations were intra-vaginal, they violated one of the purposes for which God created humanity, specifically male and female. According to a carefully documented paragraph by Geoffrey May, a full century prior to the development of the Puritan political party, attempts had been made to express through civil law a condemnation of sexual deviation. Once the Puritans gained political control in the 1640's, they continued to pass the same kind of laws as passed by non-Puritans and the Puritans had no more success than those who had preceded them.

G. PORNOGRAPHY

What might be called pornography today was called contemplative fornication by Dod in the sixteenth century.¹⁷³ The use of suggestive pictures and the use of lewd books was not uncommon during this period, and the suggestion of Dod was insightful in that the fornication caused by such materials was usually contemplative. For the Puritan it was mental activity that preceded the physical act; thus anything that began as a mental stimulus that would lead to immoral sexual contemplation and activity, was to be abhorred and condemned.

*Wanton pictures, playes, gestures, dancing, or dalliance, of the very beholding whereof, euery ones conscience will tell him the danger, when it is truly awaked, at least for breeding wanton thoughts, and lusts, condemned by our Sauour....*¹⁷⁴

These words expressive of the attitude of Brinsley were echoed in the writings of some of the Puritans. Gouge and Burton were opposed to the display of pictures that they thought would lead the mind and heart to wanton, lascivious and immoral action. Such pictures were in existence and were used in whore's rooms as a means to incite the passions of the patron.¹⁷⁵ In the same rooms there were books whose purpose was to accomplish the same end as the pictures.¹⁷⁶ The attitudes directed against the pictures was directed also against the books. Stubbes' comment was representational of the Puritan sentiment.

For as corrupt meat doe annoy the stomacke, and infect the body, so the reading of wicked and ungodly bookes

¹⁷³ Schnucker, op. cit., p. 600. He quoted Dod, *Decalogue*, p. 298. "... the eye is alwayes busied in vnchaste and wanton lookes. Also the tongue, in vnchaste and wanton songs, and reading loue-bookes of dalliance and filthiness, which is a kind of contemplatiue fornication. They that made them be wantons, and so are those that reade them".

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 600.

¹⁷⁵ Cranley, op. cit., p. 30.

¹⁷⁶ Cranley, op. cit., pp. 31-32. Amanda kept amorous pamphlets, songs of love, sonnets of lust, and other such materials in her room for her patrons.

(which are to the mind, as meate is to the body) infect the soule, and corrupt the mind....¹⁷⁷

A large number of Puritans would have agreed with Stubbes' comment.

¹⁷⁷ Schnucker, *op. cit.*, p. 601.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

While acknowledging that some Puritans held differing positions on the topics presented, this conclusion will present the mainstream of the Puritan thought.

The first source of the Puritan principles was their immediate intellectual background. The late middle ages, the renaissance and the reformation served as the intellectual footings upon which the Puritan edifice was to be constructed. The influence of the past was evident in particular in their discussion of banns and impediments.

The banns were kept and for about the same reasons as given by the pre-Puritan world. The idea of impediments was retained but not in the quantity used by the Catholic Church. The Puritans abandoned the spiritual impediments of the middle ages, and turned to the Bible, Leviticus 18 in particular, for their definition of impediments.

The second basic source of Puritan principles was Scripture. There were two basic biblical concepts that were used by most of the Puritans. First from the Genesis story of the creation of mankind, came the basic conviction that God was the originator of marriage and that God had established certain rules and principles that were to govern marriage.

Marriage was seen by the Puritans as positive, good, and holy, rather than as a concession to man's post-Fall sinful nature. Further, God had provided rules for the relationships between husband and wife in the Decalog and other Old Testament examples.

The second biblical concept came from the New Testament passages that spoke about the union of the believer with Christ within the body of Christ. After study of these passages, the Puritans came to the conclusion that the relationship between Christ and his spotless bride, the church, was directly related to the relationship that ought to exist between husband and

wife on earth. Thus a constant theme used by the Puritans was the insistence that the husband and wife must love and treat each other as Christ loves and treats his bride, the church. The Puritan attitude toward marriage and sex rested upon this biblical witness and theological conviction that all believers were part of the body of Christ and intimately one with him. From these two basic biblical concepts, they derived many of their attitudes toward marriage and sex. To illustrate how these principles were used, some examples follow.

The Puritans generally did not subscribe to an ascetic view of marriage. They did not believe that marriage was a less perfect form of existence for male and female while celibacy was the perfected form. They did not claim that the perfected life was available only in the monastery or the convent. They did not envision marriage solely as the ultimate solution for those who could not remain continent. They did not assign to marriage a negative last-resort quality but they saw in the biblical witness a positive quality. It was possible to attain the highest level of existence within the estate of marriage. The Puritan rejection of celibacy and affirmation of marriage as the most perfect state of human existence was based upon the principle that marriage was instituted by God before the Fall, regulated by his commandments, and blessed by Jesus Christ. God had not exalted the celibate existence as He had the married existence.

The non-ascetic view of marriage was reflected in their attitude toward coitus. This act was the direct result of God's creative action prior to the Fall when he had created mankind male and female, and thus differences between the two sexes were part of His good creation. Therefore coitus, the two sexes becoming one flesh, was not a filthy act to be used only as the means to avoid incontinency or to be used only for procreative purposes. The Puritan perceived in coitus more than a physical union between male and female; it was an archetype of the mystical union of the believer with Christ and the body of Christ. It was a physical and spiritual

union of mutual comfort and pleasure, a duty which might result in the recreation of God's image in man through the process of conception and birth. Thus the Puritans argued vigorously for the properness of coitus as holy, wholesome, and necessary. Their concern for this positive view of coitus was of such a nature that many of them attempted to instruct young married couples as to the proper attitude needed for the first act of coitus that the ensuing acts of coitus would become a high, holy, and intimate relationship befitting Christians.

The union of Christ and the church, mirrored in the relationship of husband and wife, was to permeate all of the relationships of husband and wife. The duties of the husband in relation to his wife and family; the duties of the wife in relation to her husband and family; their mutual duties to each other and to God, were to reflect the intimacy of Christ with the church. Because of this positive emphasis, certain changes and modifications began to appear in Puritan writings that might be seen as harbingers of future marital and sexual mores. There was a trend toward a single standard of sexual mores. As Gouge pointed out, although the husband was the head of the family and could almost be seen as a benevolent familial despot, yet in the realm of sexual activity, his body's use was under the control of his wife. Further, he had to treat his wife with the same tender love and consideration that Christ extended to His bride, the church. Some of the Puritans saw the full implication of this approach and thus spoke against the double standard of their day, but it would be some time before a single standard would be accepted.

The belief that husband and wife as believers in Christ, were part of the body of Christ, served as one of the key principles, along with the restrictions found in the Decalog, that required the rejection of adultery and whoredom by the Puritans. Recall that the Puritans used a broad definition of the term adultery, so that many sexual sins were included in it, such as fornication and various sexual deviations as well as adultery as we

understand the term. Those who committed adultery had violated the covenant of marriage, had broken the relationship between mates, and had introduced to the body of Christ, filthiness and uncleanness. Any violation of the natural relationship between husband and wife meant a corresponding rupture in the relationship between the individual and the body of Christ and with Christ. Using this concept, the Puritans rejected all sexual deviation. Those who engaged in sodomy, bestiality, lesbianism, oral coitus, or any other form of unnatural sexual relations were condemned because they were perverting a God-given gift. Those who engaged in these sexual activities were not only involved in unnatural sexual relations but they, as part of the body of Christ, were bringing their corruption into the mystical union with Christ and causing the corruption to spread to other members. It is in light of this abhorrence of adultery and whoredom that one can understand their attitude toward the occasional fruit of these sins, the bastard. The bastard was the result of physical and spiritual whoring that was closely tied to the idolatry that had precipitated man's original sin.

In a further effort to keep the bride of Christ spotless, the Puritans stressed pre-marital chastity and virginity as well as chastity within marriage. Pre-marital intercourse, although not as strongly condemned as adultery, was seen as a violation of God's law and a rupture in the relationship between the believer and the body of Christ. Chastity within marriage meant more than natural coitus with the mate. It meant the proper attitude had to accompany the act of coitus. Recall the Puritans believed that there lurked in the very act of closest intimacy in marriage, the danger of committing adultery with one's mate. Thus the Puritans had recommended moderate use of coitus so that one would not lose the purpose for which it was given; it was given so that it would not become a lascivious sensual activity, but that it would become a means of physical and spiritual union between husband and wife and the two of them with Christ.

Other examples of adherence of the Puritans to the Scriptural witness appeared in their concern for parental consent for the choice of a mate; in their insistence upon the mother nursing her own child; in their approval of pre-coital love play between mates; in their rejection of the numerous grounds for divorce advocated prior to the Reformation; and in their insistence that adultery was the only true ground for divorce.

In the preceding examples, there were direct ties between the Puritan principles and the attitudes held. The principles possessed implications for the Puritans that went beyond the relationships between husband and wife. For example, the Fall brought sin into the world and this resulted in the labour pains of the mother, the lust of the man after another woman other than his mate, and lust that led to sexual deviation. The implications of the two biblical principles meant that the Puritans regarded dancing with suspicion for it could be used for immoral purposes. It meant they were unhappy with the celebration of May Day since it often led to sexual excesses such as the deflowering of young maidens. Because of the implications of the biblical principles, the Puritans spoke out against the theatre since the gestures and words used there were often bawdry and suggestive so that men and women could be led astray. They were against certain fashions since men dressed as females and vice versa, thus confusing the sexes. They were opposed to the use of cosmetics, and pornography because of the implications they found in their biblical references. These activities listed above could result in the perversion of a gift from God that was intended for good purposes rather than for the immoral and lustful purposes of fallen man.

How different were the Puritan attitudes discussed above from the views of the contemporary non-Puritans? Were the Puritans prudes? These questions require further study. Now that a description of the Puritan attitudes has been given, it is in order to proceed with a series of investigations so that comparison might be made that would aid in the

solution to such questions. I would propose a study be made similar to this one but that the Anglican, English Roman Catholics, Independents, and Humanists be considered. Then when each group's attitudes had been sifted out, a comparison could be made and conclusions drawn concerning the uniqueness or the commonality of the Puritan attitude toward marriage and human sexuality. On the basis of some investigation that has been made in an effort to carry out this proposal, it is becoming apparent to me that the Puritan view of marriage and human sexuality generally was not unique and that Puritan attitudes reflected their milieu; but in at least one instance, the move toward a single standard of sexual morality, they were pointing in the direction of future attitudes and standards.

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