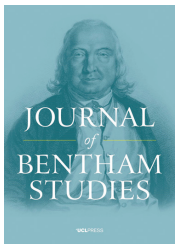

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Commentary

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Jeremy Bentham: Prophet of Secularism

Philip Schofield

Abstract

Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), the philosopher and reformer, pointed out that the original Greek term for prophet referred in its most extensive sense to a person who 'speaks out', and in a more limited extent to a person who 'foretells'. Every politician who advocated a measure that he thought was beneficial, noted Bentham, was therefore a prophet. The term, however, had been appropriated by 'religionists', who had seized on its ambiguity to further their own schemes and projects.

Bentham turned against religion in his early teenage years. He came to advocate religious freedom and the abolition of all formal connection between church and state. Reluctant for many years to make his hostility explicit, by the 1810s he was ready to launch a sustained attack on religion and religious establishments. In 'Not Paul, but Jesus', a comparison of the teachings of St Paul with those of Jesus, Bentham offered a critique of the teachings of Paul, with a particular focus on the principle of asceticism (the doctrine that the right action is that which promotes pain and eliminates pleasure).

Bentham argued that Paul's strategy had been to instil credulity in his followers so that they would believe anything he told them. Paul had gone on to attack activities that might divert his followers from following his religion, the most important being the pleasures of the bed and the table. Bentham argued that Jesus had not condemned such pleasures. The religion of Paul was, therefore, different from the religion of Jesus. Bentham proposed that all sexual activity that was consensual – whether with oneself, whether with partners of the same or the opposite sex, whether with partners of different species – should be made free from legislative interference.

Keywords: Jeremy Bentham; St Paul; Jesus Christ; asceticism; homosexuality

1. A Secular Prophet?

To speak of a 'prophet of secularism' appears at first glance to be a contradiction in terms. A prophet is usually said to be a person who, inspired by some supernatural agency, speaks on behalf of that supernatural agent and, in some instances at least, predicts the future. Secularism is the view that what is morally right should be based on whatever promotes the wellbeing of sentient creatures in the physical world, to the exclusion of all considerations derived from a belief in the supernatural. A prophet is inspired by the supernatural; secularism declares the supernatural to be irrelevant – hence the contradiction in terms.

According to the utilitarian philosopher and reformer Jeremy Bentham, the contradiction lay in

> a source of illusion which pervades the whole system of technical religion, and by which the conceptive and judicial faculties of mankind have in a most deplorable degree been distorted and debilitated.

The Greek word from which the English word 'to prophesy' had been derived, according to Bentham, had two distinct meanings. The first and more extensive meaning was 'to speak out' or, more generally, 'to discourse in an open manner', whether in speech or in writing and whether addressing a single person or a large crowd. The second, more limited sense was 'to predict' or 'to foretell', either in the sense of what the speaker thought would be likely to happen in the future or of what the speaker wished his hearers to believe would be likely to happen. 'Religionists', as Bentham termed believers in a supernatural supreme being, assigned to the word whichever of the two meanings – to speak out or to predict – suited their purpose. Bentham pointed out that in 'the Church-of-England translation of the Bible' – that is, in the Authorised King James Version – the verb 'to prophesy' did in fact appear in reference to both past and future events. An example of the former was where the blindfolded Jesus is mocked with the words: 'Prophesy who is it that smote thee'[1] – that is, speak out and say who it was that hit you.

The 'plain truth', noted Bentham, was that the word 'prophet' as it appeared throughout the Bible was the equivalent of the modern word 'statesman'.

> Now in the character of a Statesman it is scarce possible that, for any continuance, a man should discourse in either way without

> making reference, in some way or other, to time future as well as to time present and time past: nor can he speak of time future, that is of such events as to his eyes present themselves as likely to have place in time future, without being as to so much a predictor of future events, and, in that other and narrower sense, a prophet.

A statesman who proposed or opposed a measure would necessarily refer to its probable effects and consequences, and so could not avoid being a predictor of future events, and hence a prophet. Leaving inspiration aside, Bentham continued, none of the authors of the so-called prophecies that appeared in the English translation of the Bible had any better title to the name of 'prophet' than 'almost every modern Statesman whose name appears in the Parliamentary Debates'. In fact, the advantage lay very much with the modern statesmen, and even with the 'most insignificant writer' of a newspaper article or pamphlet.

> Why? Because in the discourses of the most ordinary writer of the present day scarcely will you find any one of a length equal to that of the shortest of those of the so-called Jewish Prophets, in which there exists not something distinct and specific, something that is presented in a shape more or less tangible, something that presents a determinate import of some sort or other, good or bad: whereas in those Jewish prophets may be seen page after page in which no determinate import is presented – nothing to which the appellation of reasoning can, with any tolerable approach to propriety, be applied. Lamentation, vituperation, with or without prediction – all of them floating in the air, scarce in any of them any thing by which any thing in the shape of information – deliberate information – true or false, good or bad, is conveyed.

Bentham complained that translations of the Bible had confounded the two senses of the word 'prophesy', that is the sense of 'speaking out' and the sense of 'prediction', and that modern religious commentators had interpreted as many propositions as possible as predictions. These predictions, it was then assumed, had emanated 'in a supernatural, unexplained and inexplicable manner' from God himself, and the person who had spoken or written down the prediction in question had been 'dignified […] with the title of prophet'.[2] Hence, to refer to Bentham as the 'prophet of secularism' is to refer to him in the sense of one who speaks out as an advocate of secularism: that theology should have no influence over morals and legislation. 'In point of utility,'

wrote Bentham, a book of Cookery might as well be interlarded with ejaculations, as

> a book of Jurisprudence with theological speculations. It might indeed better: for the devotions in a book of Cookery would only be useless: In a book of Jurisprudence it can certainly do no good, and it is a thousand to one but … it does mischief.[3]

Bentham turned against religion in his early teenage years, in the early 1760s, while a student at the University of Oxford. His anti-religious views had either been formed by the time that, in 1764 and aged sixteen, he was required to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England in order to take his degree, or were formed by that experience. However, it was not until the 1810s that Bentham devoted a large proportion of his time and effort to producing a sustained attack on religion.[4] We are only now beginning to appreciate the full extent of Bentham's religious views, in that we are in the midst of producing for the first time accurate transcripts of Bentham's voluminous manuscript writings on the subject.[5] The passage I have discussed on prophecy is taken from unpublished material headed 'Not Paul, but Jesus', currently being edited as part of the new authoritative edition of *The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham*.

Bentham's *Not Paul, but Jesus* was published pseudonymously in 1823,[6] but this constituted only the first part of a much larger work. The remainder of the work exists in manuscript in the Bentham Papers in University College London Library, and it is on this material that much of the present article is based. Bentham comments on the enduring influence of what he termed the principle of asceticism and presents extraordinarily outspoken views – as one would expect from a prophet – on religion and sexual morality. Bentham believed that attitudes to the gratification of the sexual appetite in his own time were rooted in the Mosaic law and, more importantly, in the teachings of St Paul. Bentham's aim was to throw off the grip of religion from all areas of public life, and he regarded sexual morality as one of the fields in which a critical battle would need to be fought.

2. Four Stories

From a historical point of view, Bentham's writings for 'Not Paul, but Jesus' have an important place in at least four narratives that can be told

about the emergence of a secular view of the world. The first is the place that Bentham in general, and this material in particular, might have in the transmission of the philosophy of the Enlightenment, as interpreted by Jonathan Israel in his monumental three-volume study of the philosophy of the Enlightenment,[7] into demands for political, legal and social reform. Israel distinguishes between the thought of the moderate, anti-democratic Enlightenment and that of the radical, democratic Enlightenment. The Radical Enlightenment was inspired by the philosophy of Spinoza:

> On Spinoza's principles, society would become more resistant to being manipulated by religious authority, autocracy, powerful oligarchies and dictatorship, and more democratic, libertarian and egalitarian.[8]

The Radical Enlightenment, according to Israel, aimed to separate philosophy, science and morality from theology. It looked to ground morality on secular criteria alone and especially on the notion of equality, supported freedom of thought, expression and the press and advocated democracy as the best form of government.[9] A 'revolution of the mind' took place in the 1770s and 1780s, when the radical *philosophes* gained the intellectual ascendancy over the moderates, paving the way for the 'revolution of fact' most momentously exemplified in the French Revolution.[10] Israel's interpretation helps to make sense of Bentham's emergence as a radical thinker who was opposed to the influence of the Church, and of theology more generally, in public affairs and who came to support democracy based on a theory of equality.[11] Thus, the first narrative that might be told about the material discussed here concerns Bentham's role in converting the agenda of the Radical Enlightenment into a mainstream programme for practical reform.

The second narrative concerns the place of this material in the emergence of a philosophy of sexual liberty. As Louis Crompton points out, the law against homosexuality, a capital offence since the Buggery Act of 1533, was increasingly enforced in eighteenth-century England. Despite high standards of proof demanded by the courts (penetration and emission), there was an average of two executions per year in the thirty years following 1806. For those who avoided being charged with the capital offence, there was the lesser offence of 'assault with attempt to commit sodomy', punished by the pillory. Given the popular wrath displayed against homosexuals, the pillory could itself be a sentence of death.

This was at a time when, in Europe more generally, penal laws against sodomy were being relaxed and executions becoming more rare. In France, for instance, sodomy was decriminalised in 1791.[12] The tone for English persecution was set by William Blackstone in *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, first published in 1765–9. Based on lectures delivered at the University of Oxford, it quickly established itself as the standard guide to English law. Blackstone referred to 'the infamous *crime against nature*, committed either with man or beast', an offence of 'still deeper malignity' than rape, 'the very mention of which is a disgrace to human nature' and therefore best treated as 'a crime not fit to be named'. It was a crime that 'the voice of nature and of reason, and the express law of God, determine to be capital'. The express law of God was revealed in Leviticus 20: 13, 15. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, moreover, which took place 'long before the Jewish dispensation', proved that 'this is an universal, not merely a provincial precept'.[13] As Crompton notes, 'The hard fact was that both learned and popular opinion in England was overwhelmingly on Blackstone's side'.[14]

In Crompton's account, Bentham emerges as the 'spokesman of a silent and invisible minority' – a minority that Crompton estimates at several hundreds of thousands. Bentham argued that no action should be established as a criminal offence unless it caused harm. Homosexuality, where there was consent, caused no harm and should therefore be decriminalised. 'Nowhere did utilitarian ethics', states Crompton, 'yield more devastating results than in its application to sexual morality.'[15] Bentham was the one significant systematic philosopher who was prepared to defend the decriminalisation of homosexuality.

Crompton's interpretation links with Faramerz Dabhoiwala's account of the emergence in England of an intellectual case for sexual freedom between 1660 and 1800. For centuries sex outside marriage (fornication) had been illegal and individuals had been punished accordingly. From the later seventeenth century and through the eighteenth century the balance began to shift towards sexual freedom, with the view that 'sexual activity outside marriage should be regarded as a private matter, not subject to public regulation or punishment' coming to be articulated in a manner that was increasingly 'sophisticated, public, and influential'.[16] Dabhoiwala draws attention to Bentham's significance as an advocate of sexual freedom. He comments that it is 'remarkable how little notice' Bentham's work has received and how scholars have failed to relate it to the wider intellectual currents of the age.[17] The second narrative thus concerns the increasing demand for sexual freedom in

relation to heterosexual activity, along with Bentham's even more radical demand that such freedom be extended to all forms of sexual activity, at a time when homosexuals were facing more stringent persecution than ever before.

The third narrative concerns the place of this material in the development of biblical criticism. Bentham explained that he had adopted the method of 'historical criticism', which, 'like every other branch of the art and science of logic', had been 'a plant of tardy growth'. The earliest compilers of historical materials, whether sacred or profane, had given 'an undiscriminating and equal acceptance' to 'materials of all kinds and qualities'. It had not been until recently that attention had been paid to the credibility of historical sources through consideration of such factors as whether the authors had been eyewitnesses, whether they had written contemporaneously with the events that they related and where in terms of geographical location they had written in relation to those events.[18] Bentham announced that he would treat the Bible as he would any other historical document, bringing the same sort of historical criticism to bear on it as might be applied to any other text. As a result,

> Throughout the whole course of the present examination, the men in question will, all of them, be alike considered as actuated by human interests, human desires [and] human motives – actuated by such interests, desires and motives as all men in general are actuated by.[19]

Bentham was writing in the 1810s, a time in which biblical criticism had made some headway in Germany, but was virtually unknown in England.[20] Bentham's approach amounted to a forensic examination of the biblical accounts: he tried to explain the actions of the historical persons portrayed in them according to the observed principles of human behaviour and regularities of the natural world, and to distinguish the reality from what we would today call the 'spin'. Furthermore, part of his purpose was to show not only the inconsistencies within the texts themselves, but also the inconsistencies between the texts on the one hand and the beliefs and practices of religionists of his own day on the other.

The fourth narrative concerns the place of this material in the emergence of atheism, or rather of agnosticism.[21] Bentham has often been described as an atheist, but such a label misrepresents his position. Perhaps the main evidence for the view that Bentham was an atheist is derived from the arguments developed in *Analysis of the Influence*

of Natural Religion, published pseudonymously in 1822.[22] This work was written by George Grote, using Bentham's manuscripts. Grote was a closet atheist and, insofar as there are any atheistic tendencies in *Analysis*, it might be plausibly suggested that they should be attributed to Grote rather than to Bentham.[23] Bentham's view was that since all knowledge was founded on our experience of the natural world derived from our sense-perception, there could, by definition, be no knowledge of anything supernatural. To speak about God, his attributes or his activities was therefore to speak nonsense. The term God was merely a sound, for there was no known thing to which it related. It was just as nonsensical to say that God existed as it was to say that God did not exist. Bentham saw religion as a great instrument of terror, oppression and human misery. He believed that religion promoted unhappiness in the present life; since human beings could have no knowledge of any future life, or indeed of anything supernatural, any talk of reward in such a future life was also nonsensical.[24] Hence the fourth narrative relates Bentham's 'Not Paul, but Jesus' to the emergence of atheism and agnosticism.

3. Principles of Morals and Legislation

Before proceeding to examine Bentham's interpretation of St Paul's doctrines and motives, it will be helpful to give a brief account of his exposition of the principle of utility and its opposite, the principle of asceticism. In Bentham's view, the desire for pleasure and the aversion to pain were the sole motives to conduct. In other words, every action performed by a sentient creature was motivated by either a desire to experience some pleasure or to avoid some pain. In the field of human psychology, terms such as happiness and suffering did not make sense unless they were related to sensations of pain and pleasure: a person was happy when he or she was experiencing a balance of pleasure over pain and in a state of misery or suffering when experiencing a balance of pain over pleasure.

In the field of ethics or morality, terms such as good and evil did not make sense unless they were also explained in terms of pleasure and pain. Good thus consisted in pleasure and exemption from pain, and in nothing else, while evil consisted in pain and loss of pleasure, and in nothing else. An action was right and proper if it produced a balance on the side of pleasure or happiness and wrong if it produced a balance on the side of pain or suffering. If a person believed that he or she would

gain pleasure from performing some action or seeing some state of affairs brought about, he or she was said to have an interest in performing that action or bringing about that state of affairs.

Each person, then, was motivated to pursue his or her own happiness. Yet many actions affected not only the person or persons acting, but other persons as well. When judging whether an action was right or wrong, one had to account for all the pleasures and pains produced by the action in question. This meant not merely taking into account the pleasures and pains of the actor or actors, but those of every single person affected by the action. The right and proper course of action was that which promoted the most pleasure in the most people – in other words 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. To accept this standard of right and wrong was to be an adherent of the principle of utility. Bentham later became dissatisfied with the term 'utility' because it did not easily bring to mind the idea of happiness, and so came to prefer the term 'greatest happiness principle' – but the principle of utility, and utilitarianism, are the terms that have stuck. In summary, an adherent of the principle of utility was a person who approved of those actions that increased pleasure and diminished pain.[25]

In contrast to an adherent of the principle of utility, an adherent of the principle of asceticism approved of those actions that increased pain and diminished pleasure. Bentham noted that if one-tenth of the inhabitants of the world pursued the principle of asceticism consistently, 'in a day's time they will have turned it into a hell'. It had nevertheless been pursued by two classes of people. The first were the Stoic philosophers, who had pursued the principle in the hope of furthering their reputation, which was in fact a source of pleasure. The second were religionists, who had 'frequently gone so far as to make it a matter of merit and of duty to court pain', and who had been motivated by 'the fear of future punishment at the hands of a splenetic and revengeful Deity'. There was, therefore, a contradiction in the practice of those who adhered to the principle of asceticism: they took the view that by experiencing pain in the short term they would either experience pleasure, or avoid greater pain, in the longer term or in the hereafter.[26]

There was a third principle – the principle of sympathy and antipathy. All other moral principles, whether called, for instance, natural law, right reason, common sense or justice, were variants of this principle. The adherent of the principle of sympathy and antipathy raised his or her own likes and dislikes – his or her own desires and aversions – into a moral standard, in order to achieve his or her own ends, or the ends of the

party or group to which he or she belonged, whatever the consequence for the greatest happiness of the greatest number. While the adherent of the principle of utility took into account the interests of all the persons affected by the action under consideration, the adherent of the principle of sympathy and antipathy took into account no more than his or her own interest, or at most the interests of some group or class smaller than the whole number of persons affected.[27] As we shall see, Bentham argued that Paul had advocated the principle of asceticism in order to promote his own selfish interests. He was thus really a disguised adherent of the principle of sympathy and antipathy.

4. Paul's Doctrines

The key figure in the promotion of the principle of asceticism, and therefore the person whose influence Bentham was most keen to undermine, was Paul. Bentham's strategy for doing this was to show that Paul's religion was not the religion of Jesus. By showing the ways in which Paul's teachings differed from and contradicted those of Jesus, he hoped to persuade Christians to reject Paul's teachings – hence the title 'Not Paul, but Jesus'. Having done that, he would turn his attention to Jesus, and show how Jesus was not the Son of God (whatever that might mean), but rather a revolutionary who hoped to establish himself as King of Judaea, and whose kingdom, after his failure and death, was 'spiritualized' by his followers into a heavenly kingdom. Jesus's teachings, imbued as they were with Epicureanism, had some value, but not nearly so much as those of the modern Epicurean, Bentham.[28]

In that part of *Not Paul, but Jesus* published in 1823, Bentham argued that Paul was a fraud: his so-called conversion on the road to Damascus was a stratagem designed to establish his authority to speak on behalf of Jesus. Paul had then done a deal – entered into a partition treaty – with the Disciples: the latter would confine themselves to the Jews, while Paul would be left free to proselytise the Gentiles.[29]

Paul's object was personal advancement: to acquire as much wealth, power and reputation for himself as possible. He saw an opportunity to achieve his ambition by exploiting the religion already established by the adherents of Jesus. Paul recognised that the existing eleven Disciples of Jesus lacked the capacity to extend their influence beyond the Jewish community, whereas he, being 'not simply a Jew' but also a Greek, and well versed in both divinity and law, was capable of taking the religion of

Jesus to the Gentiles. The problem, in Bentham's view, lay not in Paul's ambition as such, but in the pernicious effects of the doctrines that he advanced. Bentham identified four main doctrines in Paul's Epistles:

1. Magnification of *faith* absolutely considered.
2. Magnification of faith in contradistinction to *works*: viz. […] the peculiar points of the Jewish law.
3. Cacodæmonism: i.e. holding up to view the Almighty in a terrific character.
4. Asceticism. Enjoining, under the notion of their being offensive to the Almighty, the sacrifice of gratifications in themselves innoxious.[30]

In relation to the magnification of faith, Bentham explained that, by faith, what Paul meant was 'persuasion of the truth of the doctrines which he was occupied in the delivery of', and in particular the persuasion that they in fact expressed the will of Jesus.[31] In relation to Paul's strategy of promoting faith at the expense of works, Bentham pointed out that by 'works' Paul meant the ceremonies and rites required by Jewish law and religion – not good works in general, as it had come to be interpreted in the Christian tradition.[32] Bentham summarised Paul's strategy as follows: 'Works nothing; faith every thing. Such, from beginning to end, is the burthen of his song.' Paul recognised that if men put their trust in works, their trust was not in him. The ostensible object of the faith was Jesus, but the real object was Paul.[33]

Paul needed to make his followers have faith in him, in order to instil obedience in them. However, he could not pretend to be himself the author of 'the system of reward and punishment on the eventual expectation of which his influence was dependent'. Paul had to present God as the author and Jesus 'either as specially commissioned from God' or, better still, 'as himself God or part and parcel of God', with himself as Jesus's 'specially commissioned emissary'.[34] In presenting an image of God, it suited Paul's purpose to promote the doctrine of cacodæmonism – that is, to emphasise the attributes of '*formidableness* and *incomprehensibility*'.

> On the degree of formidableness depended the force of the instrument of influence he was occupied in the application of: on the degree of incomprehensibility, the assurance of working that instrument in such manner as to turn it to the best account in and for the furtherance of his own personal and carnal ends.

In short, God would distribute rewards and punishments in an afterlife. Paul was the interpreter of God's will. In order to enjoy the rewards and avoid the punishments, men had to do as Paul told them.[35] Paul's aim was to preach faith without a basis in evidence – in other words, to instil 'credulity'. Paul wanted his followers to develop 'a proneness to believe extraordinary things', and that simply because he himself asserted them to be true.[36]

> Faith in the abstract – abstraction made of the adequacy of the grounds on which it is built – is neither more nor less than credulity: in so far, then, as by hopes or fears, by exhortations which are but invitations, [and by] commands with threatenings and promises in the back-ground, a man can be engaged to nourish in himself a disposition to credulity – to take extraordinary things upon trust upon the mere word of him by whom they are delivered, although a stranger – the general object – this part of the object – is accomplished.

The inculcation of credulity, or 'faith in the abstract', was thus the central feature of Paul's teachings. Once Paul had instilled credulity into his followers, they would give 'indiscriminate acceptance to truth and imposture'. Truth did not need to be supported by credulity, and so all that such preaching as Paul's did was 'to procure acceptance for imposture: to deliver men's minds bound into the hands of interested and prædatory impostors'.[37]

Bentham did not simply reject the notion of faith as nonsense; he also presented a secular exposition of the term. He argued that faith, properly understood, was belief founded on an evidence-based assessment of probabilities:

> What is meant by faith is belief, persuasion: the quantity of the faith is in the intensity of the persuasion, and of the intensity of persuasion, if any determinate measure, or so much as any precise and determinate idea, be to be found, it will be found in what is called the doctrine of chances: an event or state of things being given, the intensity of the persuasion of its existence will be as the number of chances in favour of its existence to the number of chances in favour of its non-existence, according to the estimate made on the subject by him whose persuasion is in question.[38]

Belief, therefore, was 'an act of the judgment'. Belief based on 'good grounds' was both the result of and proof of 'the soundness of the judgment', but

> pronounced on bad or inadequate grounds, it is the result of weakness in that same part of the mental frame: pronounced on no grounds at all, it is the result of still greater – of still more prostrate – weakness, and the more prostrate he [i.e. the person believing] has been, the fitter and more likely he is to be made an instrument of evil – of mischief not only to himself, but to others – in the hands of knaves and impostors – more especially of that class who take the field of religion for the field of their imposture […].

The inculcation of credulity – of belief on false or on no grounds – led to the perversion of the judgement by the will. The influence of the will on the judgement was beneficial insofar as it impartially directed attention towards all the considerations relevant to a particular issue. However, in the case of religion, where the attention was typically directed to the considerations on one side of the question alone, with those on the opposite side being ignored, its influence was pernicious.[39]

Paul's strategy undermined the 'unbiased operation of the understanding' (that is, the judgement) by the linking of merit to faith: the greater the faith, the greater the praise received. Faith, in Paul's sense, became 'belief either against evidence or at best without evidence': there was no merit in believing in accord with the appropriate evidence. Yet to judge against or without evidence, remarked Bentham, was plain folly. The strength of a man's faith was proportional to the strength of the command obtained by his will over his judgement. The only measure of the degree to which such control existed was the absurdity of his belief, and there was nothing more absurd than a self-contradictory proposition: 'This, therefore, is the point to which, on the part of the believer in the merit of faith, all exertions – all efforts – tend.'

Two examples of self-contradictory propositions were the proposition that one God was made up of three Gods (trinitarianism) and the proposition that one and the same object was eaten and not eaten at the same time (transubstantiation). 'Fitter propositions for a man to die for, rather than contradict them,' remarked Bentham, 'the power of imagination can not frame to itself.' The apparent paradox, noted Bentham, that the human mind could be brought to the condition in which the greater

the absurdity of a proposition, the more easily and eagerly it would be accepted, and the more obstinately maintained and defended, was 'no more than the natural, and not only the natural but the necessary, consequence of a steady and consistent belief in the maxim, notion or persuasion of the meritoriousness of faith.'[40]

The strength of religious faith was consequently '[p]roportioned not to the reasonableness' of the proposition, but rather to the intensity with which the preacher appeared to believe it, and then maintained by its nonsensicalness. Paul's success during his lifetime had been due 'to the energy, seconded by the nonsensicalness, of his discourses'; the same qualities had maintained his influence down to the present. These were the qualities that had produced his 'triumph'; namely, 'the having supplanted, on pretence of supporting, the religion of Jesus'.[41]

5. Paul's Asceticism

Paul, like the preacher of any new religion, saw 'in every pursuit in which his wished-for disciples are engaged or liable to be engaged, a source of rivalry, opposition, and competition'. The ferocity of the competition was proportional to the strength of the propensity.[42] There were two main 'rival pursuits' against which Paul had to contend: one spiritual and one carnal. The spiritual consisted in the fulfilment of the duties imposed by the Mosaic law and the carnal in pleasures of all sorts.[43] The propensity that Paul feared the most, because it was the strongest, was 'the sexual appetite', and it was against this that 'his hostile endeavours' were 'pushed with greatest force and energy'.[44] Paul found no support in the acts or sayings of Jesus for his condemnation of the sexual appetite, but he did find support in a 'counter-propensity' that had been 'established to a certain degree in men's breasts', namely 'the love of distinction'. Bentham had in mind the philosophy of the Stoics, by whom both pleasures and pains had been held in equal contempt. The more valuable the sacrifice made, the greater the distinction bestowed on the individual who had made it. 'For the sake of this brilliant acquisition,' remarked Bentham, 'how numerous the instances in which life itself – life the field within which pleasures of all sorts and sizes are included – had been sacrificed!'[45]

A second factor worked in Paul's favour. Jesus had promised, as a reward, a future life full of happiness without end. At the time, in both the Jewish and the Greek mind, the idea of sacrifice was associated with

the Almighty; it was thus assumed that, without sacrifice, such a benefit could not be obtained. It was further assumed that the greater the sacrifice, the greater the chance of obtaining the benefit – and so, for even the smallest chance of obtaining such a benefit, no sacrifice could be too great. There could be no greater sacrifice than '[t]he gratification belonging to the sexual appetite'. Total abstinence from food or drink would be suicide, and so there was no plausible rival to the sacrifice of sexual gratification. So it was sexual gratification that was prohibited and sanctioned 'by a punishment the magnitude of which was to be proportioned to the value of the sacrifice'.[46]

Bentham ranked the violence of Paul's attack on various sexual practices as follows:

> In the order of vituperation and proscription, first accordingly, under the name of uncleanness,[47] came the gratification when obtained either without the help of any co-operator, or when obtained with a co-operator of the same sex:[48] next comes the gratification in the case when obtained in the more generally preferred mode with the co-operation of a person of the correspondent and opposite sex, but without the sanction of marriage […].[49]

Paul told the Corinthians that 'it is good for a man not to touch a woman'.[50] This was as much as to say that it was 'Good that no man should be born: better still had none been ever born'.[51] This proposition did not merely refer to fornication, but to 'the union of the sexes under any circumstances'.[52] As Bentham observed,

> Generally and radically bad, therefore, according to Paul, is all union of the sexes. A thing ever to be desired is, therefore, that every where there shall be as little of it as possible.[53]

Paul's advice, where individuals had not married or were widowed, was that they should abstain from sex, so long as they could manage to do so. If they could not abstain – 'if they cannot contain' – they would be permitted to marry, on the grounds that it was 'better' (that is, less bad, glossed Bentham) 'to marry than to burn'. Where married couples were concerned, not content to leave the 'peace of the marriage bed' undisturbed, Paul advised them to abstain from sexual gratification unless one or other of them insisted on it, and to devote themselves to fasting and praying. In order to prevent them from being tempted by Satan, Paul

gave them his permission to 'come together again'.[54] One consequence of Paul's doctrine – 'this really unnatural doctrine' – was 'the forced celibacy of the Romish clergy'. Bentham was indignant:

> Behold the spawn of Paul – all these men of chastity, whether real or pretended, with which the Catholic part of the world is infested: in the male votaries behold the instruments and accomplices of his successors, in the females the victims.[55]

6. Jesus's Sexuality

Bentham claimed that, unlike Paul, Jesus did not, according to any account that appeared in the four Gospels, condemn either the pleasures of the table or the pleasures of the bed.[56] On the contrary, Jesus's opposition to asceticism was shown in his condemnation of the Mosaic law in Matthew 9: 9–17. Disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus, and asked: 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?' Jesus replied with two parables: first, that no one put a piece of new cloth into an old garment; and second, that no one should put new wine into old bottles, since the bottles break and the wine runs out. In the first parable, argued Bentham, Jesus drew attention to the badness of the Mosaic law, the old garment. John the Baptist's attempt to perfect the Mosaic law by abstaining from food was to put a patch on the old garment, and thus only made it worse. In the second parable, Jesus introduced what he regarded as the true doctrine. The old bottle represented the Mosaic law. By adding more asceticism to the old law – by putting new wine into old bottles (or rather skins, as Bentham pointed out, since the 'bottles' in question were not made of glass) – the whole system would be 'blown to pieces' – the old bottles would burst – and any good that it contained would be 'scattered and lost'. Put new wine – the new doctrine – into new bottles, however, and nothing was lost. The new bottle represented the religion of Jesus, the new wine the abolition of asceticism. Hence, while John the Baptist attempted to strain the old asceticism 'still tighter than before', Jesus condemned it. Yet in Bentham's own day, he complained, the 'hypocrisy of the Pharisees', despite the condemnation of Jesus, was 'held in honour, […] pursued and imitated'.[57]

'We come now,' remarked Bentham, 'to a ground of extreme delicacy.'[58] As noted above, Bentham pointed out that Paul's most forceful condemnation was directed towards homosexuality. Bentham responded

that not only had Jesus never condemned homosexuality, but that he had also probably engaged in it. There were, moreover, many females in Jesus's immediate circle, and again Bentham saw no reason why Jesus might not have engaged in heterosexual activity as well. Not accepting that there was any sense in the proposition that Jesus was God, or part of God, Bentham saw Jesus as a historical figure. Given that, in the Greco-Roman classical world, sex between males was not condemned as such, but under certain circumstances accepted as normal, Bentham saw no reason why Jesus might not have taken the same view. According to Christian teaching, the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah showed that God condemned homosexual activity. Bentham argued that what the Bible condemned was the force that was used and the number of people involved – it was not homosexuality that was condemned, but gang rape. Bentham, moreover, pointed to positive, or at least non-condemnatory, accounts of homosexuals in the Old Testament.

The most prominent example was that of David and Jonathan.[59] Bentham laid particular stress on I Samuel 1: 26:

> I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful passing the love of women.

Bentham argued that the love of body to body was stronger than the love of mind to mind. Physical love between a man and a woman was stronger than any love of mind between one man and another. But Jonathan's love to David was stated as being stronger than the love of women. Jonathan's love to David must therefore have been both the love of mind to mind and the love of body to body.

> But at the very outset of the story, the clearest exclusion is put upon any such notion as that the love of mind to mind, or in one word *friendship*, was in the case in question clear of all admixture of the love of body for body – in a word, of sexual love. Love at first sight? in the words of the title to the play[60] – few incidents are more frequent: nothing can be more natural. But friendship at first sight – and friendship equal in ardency to the most ardent sexual love! At the very first interview, scarce had the first words that Jonathan ever heard of [David's] issued from his lips, when the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. In a country in which the concupiscence

> of the whole male population of a considerable town is kindled to madness by a transient glimpse of a single man, what eye can refuse to see the love by which the young warriors Nisus and Euryalus were bound together in Virgil's fable,[61] and Harmodius and Aristogiton in Grecian history?[62]

Bentham commented that it should not be a matter of surprise that while, under certain circumstances in the classical world, the propensity was made capitally punishable, under other circumstances it was admired:

> considered as mere sensuality, it would be regarded with disapprobation, especially if running to excess – leading to excess in *quantity* as well as to aberration in respect of *shape* and *quality*: considered as a bond of attachment between two persons jointly engaged in a course of life regarded as meritorious, it might nevertheless be respected and applauded.

Harmodius and Aristogiton, bound together by their homosexual relationship, had been celebrated in Athens as liberators from tyranny. The fortitude that the same sort of relationship had inspired among members of the Theban band had been the subject of 'universal admiration and elogium among the Greeks'.[63] Relationships between Achilles and Patroclus and between Nisus and Euryalus, heroes of the Trojan War, had likewise been viewed with admiration.[64]

In relation to Jesus's homosexuality, in the first place there was, among Jesus's followers, the youth with the 'linen cloth cast around his naked body' mentioned in Mark 14: 51–2 in the account of Jesus's arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. According to Bentham, the youth was a male prostitute. Given his loyalty to Jesus when all the other followers had fled, there must have existed a particularly strong bond of attachment between Jesus and the youth.[65] In the second place there was Jesus's relationship with his disciple John, as portrayed in John's Gospel.

> If the love which, in and by these passages, Jesus was intended to be represented as bearing towards this John was not the same sort of love as that which appears to have had place between King David and Jonathan, the son of Saul, it seems not easy to conceive what can have been the object in bringing it to view in so pointed a manner, accompanied with such circumstances of fondness. That the sort of love of which, in the bosom of Jesus, Saint John is here

> meant to be represented as the object was of a different sort from any of which any other of the Apostles was the object is altogether incontestable: for of this sort of love, whatsoever it was, he and he alone is, in these so frequently recurring terms, mentioned as being the object.

It might be objected that an attachment of this sort would not have been tolerated in Jesus's time when it was ranked among capital crimes by the law of the land, and more especially by the law of God. Moreover, it had produced the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by supernatural means. In relation to the law of Moses, Bentham's view, as noted above, was that Jesus held the law of Moses in scorn, thinking it merely a human law and ill-adapted to the welfare of society. The relevance of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah to Jesus's relationship with John was at best superficial. The act that attracted supernatural punishment was not 'the act of those who by mutual consent partake of the sort of gratification in question', but rape, aggravated by the large number of persons who intended to partake in it, and thereby breaching the law of hospitality regarded as so important at that time. In actual fact, noted Bentham, the cities were probably set alight by lightning strikes. The imagination of the priest who later wrote down the story had gone to work and fabricated the cause in a way that suited his purpose at the time.[66]

7. The Dæmon of Asceticism

Bentham believed that Paul's teaching remained central to the sexual morality of his own age. Paul's modern followers, the adherents of the principle of asceticism, made 'war' against both sexual gratification and the enjoyment of food and drink – referred to by Bentham as the pleasures of the bed and the pleasures of the table respectively. They could not exclude the pleasures of the table altogether since this would lead to the death of every individual. The ascetic did not want to exterminate the human race, since there would then be no 'receptacle' for pain. Indeed, once all pleasure had been removed, the ascetic was most anxious to preserve life; the 'parting with life to obtain deliverance in one and the same moment from all pains' was deemed 'the most flagitious and unpardonable' of sins. Unable to strike out the pleasures of the table completely, the ascetic had more room for manoeuvre in relation to the pleasures of the bed. An individual could be deprived of all pleasures of the bed

and yet continue to live. However, if the pleasures of the bed were totally forbidden, the human race would eventually become extinct. Once again pain, the only object that the ascetic valued, would disappear at the same time. As Bentham noted,

> Therefore, to keep on foot so many receptacles of pain the population must be kept up: and to the number of those in whose instance life is purified of all pleasure in this shape, limits must somehow or other be set.

The problem for the ascetic was to work out how many breeders were necessary to keep up the greatest number of non-breeders, so that the greatest number possible could be denied the pleasures of the bed. At first glance it might appear that castration would be an appropriate means of producing the proper number of non-breeders, but this solution did not appeal to the ascetic since 'along with the pleasures, are excluded certain pains – the pains of unsatisfied desire'.[67]

The 'dæmon of asceticism' had reserved its greatest hostility for sexual gratification 'by that modification in which the sex is on both sides the male'. If asceticism were consistent, noted Bentham, it would have been equally critical where the sex was female on both sides, but asceticism had never been much concerned with consistency. The greater '*physical* impurity' in the case of sexual activity between males compared with that between females had produced, in the imagination of the ascetic, a greater sense of '*moral* impurity', and hence a greater demand for punishment.[68] However, there were two arguments, based on apparently reasonable (utilitarian) considerations, that were deployed to condemn homosexuality. The first objection was that homosexuality led to a decrease in population, and the second was that it harmed the female sex. Both objections, in Bentham's view, were groundless.[69]

In relation to the diminution of population, Bentham considered this to be an argument that, no matter how widely accepted it had been in the past, would be unlikely to be used again in the future. The whole question had been transformed by the publication in 1798 of Thomas Robert Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population*,[70] which had warned of the tendency of population growth to outstrip subsistence:

> Ever since the great work of Malthus on this subject has had time to produce its effect, so far as concerns population, a truth which every thinking and even every influential mind without exception

> seems sufficiently possessed of is that every where it is from excess in this article that general human happiness has every thing to fear; from deficiency, nothing.

Even so, homosexuality did not produce a 'deficiency in population'. It only needed one out of the whole number of 'sexual operations' that the male was capable of performing in a year to create the maximum addition possible to the mass of population. However pleasurable the remaining 300 or so operations (assuming the male capable of performing the operation once a day, and allowing for sickness and absence in the course of the year), in terms of increasing the population, they were so much waste. In order to lead to a reduction in the population, 'the propensity of this appetite to the same sex would have to be three hundred times as great as towards the correspondent and opposite sex'. This was evident nonsense – and if it were true, the term '*eccentric*' would apply to the heterosexual rather than to the homosexual 'conjunction'.

Bentham made a further point. If all sexual activity was in the 'eccentric modes', then the species, at the end of a certain period, would be extinct. Yet the same result would ensue if males expended their whole sexual activity on females beyond the age of child-bearing. In other words, if homosexual conjunctions were condemned because of their purported effect on population, so should heterosexual conjunctions where pregnancy could not result.[71]

In the post-Malthusian age homosexual relationships, insofar as they operated as a check on population, were not an evil, argued Bentham, but rather a remedy. Wherever there was a tolerable degree of security provided by government, the provision of subsistence would be overtaken by population growth. For the indigent, over-population resulted in 'premature death preceded by lingering disease'; for the opulent, it resulted in the pain of privation to the extent that they provided relief for the indigent. But the very provision of relief in turn acted as a stimulant to the increase of population, and thence to the amount of indigence. Malthus had suggested that population was in fact checked by three causes: the first was '*misery*', consisting in premature death through starvation; the second was '*vice*', consisting in sexual gratification in an unprolific mode; and the third was '*moral restraint*', whereby persons abstained from sexual gratification.

Malthus – as was to be expected from a Church of England clergyman, noted Bentham – had recommended 'moral restraint'. Now both the ascetic and the utilitarian agreed that the first check, premature

death, was an evil. In regard to the second check, 'vice', the ascetic regarded it not only as an evil, but also as a 'remedy' worse than the 'disease' (over-population) itself. In contrast, the utilitarian regarded the so-called 'vice' not as an evil but rather as a good, to the extent that it operated as a check upon population. The utilitarian, moreover, did not approve of 'moral restraint', since it involved two evils:

> 1. loss of pleasure, by the amount of the capacity of gratification thus prevented from coming into act. 2. actual pain, viz. pain of unsatisfied desire, as measured by [i.] the number of individuals in whose instance the desire, having existence, remains unsatisfied: [ii.] its intensity: and [iii.] its duration in the instance of each of them.

Bentham concluded by stating that the means by which, according to the principle of utility, the evil of population growth might be checked was a subject well worth enquiring into, and he would do so in an Appendix. The Appendix has not been identified among Bentham's surviving manuscripts and may never have been written. In it, however, he may have intended to discuss either contraception or infanticide, or both.[72]

The second objection that had an apparently reasonable (utilitarian) basis was that homosexuality produced a deterioration in the condition of females. This objection, argued Bentham, seemed to have the same untenable basis as the first: namely, that the desire in its eccentric shape predominated over the desire in its ordinary shape to the extent that males would prefer to have sex with other males on 300 occasions rather than to have sex with a female on one occasion. There was no evidence, from any part of the world at any time, that this was the case. In the East, where the eccentric propensity was condemned neither by law nor by opinion,

> the value set upon the charms of the female sex, and the importance attached to the possession of them, so far from falling short, exceeds any thing that is found exemplified in these western and northern regions. In an European, jealousy is as ice to fire in comparison of what it is in an oriental breast.

The wretched state of females in the East was due to the despotism of the government, not to the practice of homosexuality. In Italy and France, where homosexuality was much more common, the female sex had much

greater authority than in Britain 'where the propensity is so rare' and in Ireland 'where it is scarce known'. The married female had much more to fear from other females as rivals for the affection of her husband than from other males. Relying on the accounts of sexual practices in the classical world, Bentham argued that men ceased to be interested in other males when the latter had reached the age of twenty. The attractions of another male would thus tend to be 'ephemeral' to the husband, whereas those of another female had, as every one was aware, 'no bounds'. It was rather the prostitute who had most to fear from the eccentric appetite.[73]

Conclusion

If reason and consistency, in other words the principle of utility rather than the principle of asceticism were the guide, argued Bentham, the pleasures of the bed would be treated with the same 'indifference' as the pleasures of the table. Just as with the table, individuals were left free to choose not only the 'crude material' that they ate, but also 'the mode of cooking, seasoning and serving up', so with the bed they would be left free to choose:

> with or without a partner – if with a partner, whether with a partner of the same species or with a partner of another species: if of the same species, whether of the correspondent and opposite sex or of the same sex: number of partners, two only or more than two.

In every instance, the 'portions and parts of the body employed' should be left to the free choice of the individuals concerned.[74] Just as morality and religion did not interfere in the methods of cookery, so they should not interfere in the modes of sexual gratification.

> Thus it is that, according to the principle of utility, the pleasure, whatsoever it be, that may be capable of being derived from the pleasures of the bed – from the use of the sixth sense – from gratification afforded to the sexual appetite – belongs not either to the field of religion or to the field of morality by any other title than does the pleasure of scratching where it itches.[75]

As Crompton points out, Bentham's insight was to think that what needed explanation was not same-sex relationships themselves, but rather the

hostility that the thought of such relationships produced in mainstream society.[76] That led Bentham to point the finger at religion and the interest of religious leaders in promoting asceticism.

Bentham's views – and he would have been deeply saddened by this – still have massive relevance nearly 200 years after he wrote, whether in relation to the stoning of men and women for adultery in Afghanistan and Iran or the legal persecution of homosexuals in Africa. Perhaps he would not have been so surprised that the one attitude shared by evangelical Christians and fundamental Muslims is homophobia.

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Notes

1 Luke 22: 64.
2 University College London Library, Bentham Papers [hereafter UC], Box clxi, fols. 77–8, 80–3 (9 March 1818).
3 UC lxix. 139 (*c.* 1776).
4 See Philip Schofield, *Utility and Democracy: the Political Thought of Jeremy Bentham*, Oxford, 2006, pp. 171–6.
5 For earlier treatments of Bentham's religious views see James Steintrager, 'Language and Politics: Bentham on Religion', *The Bentham Newsletter*, iv (1980), 4–20; James E. Crimmins, *Secular Utilitarianism: Social Science and the Critique of Religion in the Thought of Jeremy Bentham*, Oxford, 1990; and Delos B. McKown, *Behold the Antichrist: Bentham on Religion*, Amherst, NY, 2004.
6 Gamaliel Smith, *Not Paul, but Jesus*, London, 1823. This work, like Bentham's other writings on religion, was excluded from the nineteenth-century edition of his works edited by his literary executor John Bowring: see *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed. John Bowring, 11 vols, Edinburgh, 1838–43 (reissued as a whole in 1843).
7 Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750*, Oxford, 2001; *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670–1752*, Oxford, 2006; and *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750–1790*, Oxford, 2011. For a helpful summary see Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy*, Princeton and Oxford, 2010.
8 Israel, *Revolution of the Mind*, p. 2.
9 Israel, *Revolution of the Mind*, pp. 20–1.
10 Israel, *Revolution of the Mind*, pp. 37–9.
11 See Schofield, *Utility and Democracy*, pp. 137–70.
12 Louis Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in 19th-Century England*, London, 1985, pp. 14–19.
13 William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 4 vols, Oxford, 1765–9, iv. 215–16.
14 Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love*, pp. 19–22.
15 Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love*, pp. 26–9.
16 Faramerz Dabhoiwala, 'Lust and Liberty', *Past and Present*, ccvii (2010), 89–179, at 88–92.
17 Dabhoiwala, 'Lust and Liberty', 168. Dabhoiwala's view ('Lust and Liberty', 175) that Israel's attribution of the emergence of sexual liberty to the radical strand of the Enlightenment is problematic, since the historical process was not the outcome of a coherent, philosophical programme, presumably needs modifying in relation to Bentham, since he did develop such a coherent, philosophical programme.
18 UC cxlix. 216 (21 September 1815).
19 UC cxlix. 219 (10 September 1817).
20 See, for instance, Thomas Albert Howard, *Religion and the Rise of Historicism: W.M.L. de Wette, Jacob Burckhardt, and the Theological Origins of Nineteenth-Century Historical Consciousness*, Cambridge, 2000; and David M. Thompson, *Cambridge Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Enquiry, Controversy and Truth*, Aldershot, 2008.
21 For a general account see David Berman, *A History of Atheism in Britain: from Hobbes to Russell*, London, 1988.
22 Philip Beauchamp, *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind*, London, 1822.
23 See Berman, *History of Atheism*, pp. 192–4; and Catherine Fuller, 'Bentham, Mill, Grote, and an Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind', *Journal of Bentham Studies* x (2008), at http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1322983/.
24 See Philip Schofield, 'Political and Religious Radicalism in the Thought of Jeremy Bentham', *History of Political Thought* xx (1999), 272–91.
25 Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ed. J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart, London, 1970, pp. 11–16.
26 Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, pp. 17–21.
27 Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, pp. 21–31.
28 UC clxi. 227 (19 October 1817).

29 See Schofield, *Utility and Democracy*, pp. 193–8.
30 UC clxi. 143–4, 155–6 (23 August 1817).
31 UC clxi. 157–9 (23 August 1817).
32 UC clxi. 160 (August 1817).
33 UC clxi. 162 (27 August 1817).
34 UC cxli. 145–6 (11 September 1817).
35 UC clxi. 151–2 (12 September 1817).
36 UC cxli. 146 (11 September 1817).
37 UC cxli. 147, 149 (13 September 1817).
38 UC cxli. 181 (25 October 1817).
39 UC cxli. 150 (13 September 1817), 182 (25 October 1817).
40 UC clxi. 181–6 (25–6 October 1817), 137 (8 September 1817).
41 UC clxi. 137–9 (8, 13 September 1817).
42 UC cxli. 187 (1 September 1817).
43 UC clxi. 152 (12 September 1817).
44 UC clxi. 187 (1 September 1817).
45 UC cxli. 189 (1 September 1817).
46 UC clxi. 190 (1 September 1817).
47 Bentham had in mind Ephesians 5: 3.
48 Bentham had in mind Romans 1: 26–32.
49 UC cxli. 188 (1 September 1817).
50 I Corinthians 7: 1.
51 UC cxli. 192 (2 September 1817).
52 UC cxli. 195 (2 September 1817).
53 UC cxli. 196 (2 September 1817).
54 UC cxli. 191 (1 September 1817), 196–7 (2 September 1817). See I Corinthians 7: 5–9.
55 UC clxi. 199 (15 September 1817).
56 UC cxli. 342 (19 November 1817).
57 UC cxli. 348–50 (29 December 1817).
58 UC cxli. 475 (20 November 1817).
59 Bentham picked out passages at I Samuel 17: 56–8, 18: 1–4; I Samuel 20: 17; and I Samuel 1: 17, 19, 26, as evidence that their relationship was homosexual.
60 There were at least two eighteenth-century plays with that title: David Craufurd, 'Love at First Sight. A Comedy', London [1704]; and Anon., 'Love at First Sight: A Ballad Farce', London, 1763.
61 The allusion is to Virgil's account of the Greek attack on the Rutulians in *Aeneid* ix, 176–458.
62 Harmodius and Aristogiton plotted to kill the tyrant Hippias in 514 BC. The plan miscarried, leading to the death of Hipparchus, brother of Hippias, and the execution of the 'tyrannicides'. Following the removal of Hippias, Harmodius and Aristogiton were celebrated as heroes. The story of the plot is recounted in Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* vi, 56–9.
63 According to Plutarch, the Sacred Band of Thebes, the elite force of the fourth-century BC Theban army, was formed of 150 homosexual pairs, whose mutual love led them to fight all the more fiercely.
64 UC clxi. 457–60 (21, 24 December 1817).
65 British Library, Grote Papers, Add. MS 29,808, fols. 6–11 (3 October 1811). For a more detailed account see Philip Schofield, *Bentham: A Guide for the Perplexed*, London, 2009, pp. 132–3.
66 UC cxli. 475–82 (28 November 1817).
67 UC cxli. 266–7 (1 January 1818).
68 UC clxi. 273–4 (2 January 1818).
69 UC clxi. 275 (2 January 1818).
70 T.R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, ed. Donald Winch, Cambridge, 1992.
71 UC clxi. 276–7, 279 (2 January 1818).
72 UC cxli. 280–3 (2–3 January 1818). Bentham was an advocate of contraception and encouraged his friend Francis Place in his 'over-population-stopping expedient', but the details remain obscure: see Bentham to Place, 24 April 1831, British Library, Add. MS 35,149, fos. 73–4; Lea Campos Boralevi, *Bentham and the Oppressed*, Berlin, 1984, pp. 109–12; and Dudley Miles, *Francis Place 1771–1854: the Life of a Remarkable Radical*, Brighton, 1988, pp. 145–8. For Bentham on infanticide see 'Sex', in *Selected Writings: Jeremy Bentham*, ed. Stephen G. Engelmann, New Haven and London, 2011, pp. 33–100, at 50–2, 83–5.
73 UC clxi. 284–7 (3 January 1818). While Bentham's view seems to have been that certain men at least would, if public opinion were neutral on the matter, prefer to gratify their sexual appetites with other men rather than with female prostitutes, other contemporaries of Bentham saw some merit in prostitution in that it saved young men from sodomy: see E.C. Denlinger, 'The Garment and the Man: Masculine Desire in *Harris's List of Covent-Garden Ladies*, 1764–1793', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, xi (2002), 357–94, at 375–6.
74 UC cxli. 268 (January 1818).
75 UC cxli. 271 (8 January 1818).
76 Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love*, p. 38.