EDUCATION FOR SEXUAL MORALITY: MORAL REFORM AND THE
REGULATION OF AMERICAN SEXUAL BEHAVIOR IN
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

by

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of sex education into the schools in the early years of the twentieth century represented a curious culmination of the hopes and aspirations of nineteenth century moral reformers. Though, for almost a century, they had repeatedly warned that ignorance and silence would not facilitate sexual purity, they had succeeded in developing measures for the dissemination of sexual knowledge which were, in many cases, as stringently circumscribed in content as had been the policy of silence.

Under the assumption that the sex education movement can be better understood by giving more attention to the 'old regime', this study surveys the continuing endeavors of nineteenth century moral reformers to preserve a traditional morality in the face of rapidly changing social conditions. The investigation shows that sexual immorality emerged as a social problem after the 1830's in response to changing perceptions of deviant behavior. Changing attitudes toward sexual deviancy were fostered by a perceived increase in prostitution and by a group of moral physiologists who
asserted that sexual misbehavior was widespread and harmful to society. According to the moral physiology viewpoint, sexual hygiene was sexual morality, and education for one would result in education for the other. This view became popular and was disseminated by diverse groups of moral reformers, child nurture experts and women's rights advocates through a number of reform activities which are explored in this study.

Their efforts, which generally included conditioning techniques and sex instruction, were almost always directed at the family. Only when reformers agreed that parents had shown themselves inadequate to perform their duties of sex education did they attempt to extend their arena of operations to the school. The sex education movement, therefore, represented an exchange of the home for the school as the principal agency of sexual instruction. Despite the change of educational vehicle, the assumptions underlying the objectives of the movement reflected long seasoned and conservative sexual attitudes.
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INTRODUCTION

Curricular expansion is often advocated as a response to perceived social problems. A deterioration in the nation's health, for example, may be followed by the promotion of expanded physical education activities in the school. Female dissatisfaction with traditional roles as housekeepers and mothers has been manifested by pressure to include women's studies in schools and universities. Concern over alcoholism and the use of drugs has led to the implementation of increased health education and guidance activities within the school curriculum. Similarly, concern over sexual promiscuity of one kind or another has tended to promote interest in developing sex education programs for the school.

Sex education programs on a national scale were first introduced into American schools at the beginning of the twentieth century. The ostensible reason for the introduction of such programs was the rising tide of venereal disease that, many felt, threatened to contaminate large areas of the population and cause untold damage to the nation's health. This view was reinforced by late nineteenth and early twentieth century advances in the field of medicine.
which demonstrated the hitherto unknown and multiple effects of sex-related diseases.

Recent studies of American attitudes toward sexual behavior have tended to agree that the new scientific discoveries of that era pertaining to sex and health stimulated reformers to attack misconceived notions concerning sexual behavior, and promoted a revolution in middle-class standards of sexual behavior.¹ John C. Burnham, for example, has

¹See for example:


emphasized the crucial role of the Social Hygiene Movement in developing sex education programs. This physician-led campaign developed in the early years of the twentieth century in response to growing fears over the rapid spread of venereal disease. Yet despite the existence of a cure for syphilis, social hygiene groups came to emphasize moral, rather than sanitary prophylaxis. As Bryan Strong has pointed out, it was not against disease, but against what was considered immoral behavior that the venereal disease campaign was ultimately directed. Far from creating a revolution in attitudes toward sex, the Social Hygiene Movement was a


3 In 1905, a group of scientists at the University of Berlin discovered Spirochate Pallida, the parasite thought to be the cause of syphilis. The following year, the Wasserman test was developed to show the presence of syphilis in the blood stream. In 1907, the compound Salvarsan was discovered which could effectively treat people infected with syphilis. Lavinia Dock lists these discoveries in Hygiene and Morality (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), p. 5.

In spite of this knowledge, members of the Social Hygiene Movement expected fear of infection to be the most effective preventive measure against the spread of venereal disease. See Prince A. Morrow, "The Teaching of Sex Hygiene," Good Housekeeping Magazine (March, 1912), p. 406.

further manifestation of efforts to regulate sexual behavior which had been underway for several decades.

This study contends that the promotion of sex education and a number of related programs stemmed less from the impact of scientific discoveries which emphasized new health problems than from decades of endeavors to preserve a traditional morality in sexual matters in the face of rapidly changing conditions.

Part 1 of the study suggests that sexual immorality emerged as a social problem prior to the Civil War in response to changing perceptions of deviant behavior. It argues that during and after the 1830's, not only did a number of moralists perceive a distinct increase in prostitution and its related effects, but a significant change in attitudes toward all kinds of sexual behavior began to occur. This attitudinal change was intimately related to changing perceptions of sexual deviancy which served to create new and increasing fears over the pervasiveness of sexual immorality in American society.

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5 Social science research has emphasized that perceptions of a condition are as important as objective realities in determining a social problem. Howard Becker asserts that, more than an analysis of objective conditions, social problems are essentially what people think they are. See Becker in "Introduction," Social Problems, A Modern Approach (New York: John Wiley, 1966). Thus the emergence of a social problem can be viewed as dependent upon the organization of groups who perceive some condition as a problem, define it as harmful to society, and assert the need to change that condition. See Malcolm Spector and John I. Kitsue, "Social Problems, A Reformulation," Social Problems, XXI (Fall, 1973), 145.
Many explanations are possible for these developing perceptions, but it is useful to note the trend, pointed out by such historians of the nineteenth century as David Rothman and Joseph Hawes, for Americans to see private problems developing into endemic public issues and needing specific institutional remedies.\(^6\) Certainly, adultery, prostitution and illegitimacy had not always been ignored, and, prior to the nineteenth century, had been the object of public attention and sporadic legislation. But sexual habits such as masturbation and excessive copulation had not usually been viewed as causes for general alarm among the population. Similarly, insanity and juvenile delinquency, which were by no means new or always private problems, became, to the Jacksonians, problems of frightening dimensions deserving of entirely new remedies. Changing attitudes toward insanity and juvenile delinquency paralleled, in many ways, changing attitudes toward sexual behavior.\(^7\)


Chapter 1 looks at these changing attitudes, particularly those fostered by a group of moral physiologists who asserted that sexual misbehavior was widespread and defined it as harmful to society. Late eighteenth and early nineteenth century developments in the field of health and disease stimulated the emergence in America of a popular line of reasoning known as moral physiology. This theory stressed that debility and disease were induced by stimulation, and that health depended upon the regulation of all stimulatory agents. Dr. Benjamin Rush introduced the theory to Philadelphia in the 1780's and it exerted considerable influence over medical and public thought for decades. The moral significance of the theory became clear when Rush noted that the effects of liquor upon the body provided a perfect example of debility induced by stimulation. Overindulgence led to disease, and both moralists and physiologists could see that alcohol was only one example of disease-inducing stimulants. By 1830, Sylvester Graham, a leading exponent of the all-encompassing nature of the theory of moral physiology, was proclaiming that almost every influence of civic life encouraged debility and disease - diet, laziness, effeminacy, poor housing, clothing and exercise,

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8 Benjamin Rush, Medical Inquiries and Observations Upon the Diseases of the Mind, IV (third edition; Philadelphia, J. Grigg, 1827), 123-129.
artificial stimulants, sexual incontinence and even sexual thoughts. Consequently, good health could be defined as a product of obedience to moral principles. It followed that disregard of moral principles in the form of sexual misbehavior led inexorably to disease. Sexual misbehavior could thus be viewed, not only as sinful but as unhealthy, and promoters of the theme that health and morality were synonymous multiplied.

This theme was exemplified by the dissemination of numerous books and pamphlets concerning sexual behavior by physicians and clergymen who emphasized the dire physical and moral consequences of sexual abuse. Incontinent males were warned that disease, insanity and even death could result from nocturnal emissions, masturbation and non-creative sex. Masturbation phobia, initially confined to men, was gradually projected onto women as well, and by the 1860's, gynecologists were practicing radical surgery upon women's reproductive organs in an attempt to cure a variety of psychological disorders.

The increasing pervasiveness of masturbation phobia, particularly among middle-class men and women served to create a distrust of sexuality that was heightened by reports of rapidly increasing commercial prostitution and the

consequent spread of venereal disease. Chapter 2 suggests that the growth of prostitution, real or perceived, can be considered an important element in changing attitudes toward sexual behavior. It describes how police and medical personnel, as well as moral reform groups, became increasingly concerned with prostitution as the century progressed and sought paths of action to eliminate this and other forms of sexual misbehavior from society. Thus both changing perceptions of sexual deviancy and perceived increases in the extent of prostitution came together to generate widespread anxieties and pressures for reform of sexual attitudes and behavior.

The implementation of actual reform measures, however, was dependent upon more than a perceived susceptibility to the effects of sexual misbehavior. Irwin Rosenstock has pointed out that an individual's propensity to take action is determined largely by three kinds of beliefs: the extent to which he sees the problem as having a high probability of occurrence in his personal case, the extent to which he believes the problem would have serious consequences for him if it did involve him, and the extent to which he believes some reasonable course of action open to him would be effective in reducing the threat.\textsuperscript{10} The first two determinants

for action were enhanced by moral physiologists and opponents of prostitution, but, since control beliefs strongly influence the perceptual processes of a group or individual, reform action could not take place unless reformers believed in their ability to control behavior. However, significant currents of influence were at work during the ante-bellum years to spur optimism in the view that reform action was not only possible but could be effective.

Chapter 3 discusses two major influences upon control beliefs during the ante-bellum years that generated waves of optimism in the feasibility and possible effectiveness of moral reform action. Of particular importance was the introduction to America of the concept of Christian perfection and consequently the feasibility of sinlessness. The combination of revival measures and perfectionist aspirations stemming from the activities of the Second Great Awakening emphasized the quest for personal holiness and pressed American Protestantism into the belief that sin could be eliminated through social reform. In the light of these influences, the possibilities were gradually seen for America to be the moral individual "written large,"

for if human perfection was feasible, then so was the reformation of society and the elimination of misbehavior.¹²

The notion of Christian nurture also generated attitudes of optimism among reformers. After the 1830's, participants in a growing debate over methods of child nurture questioned the doctrine of infant depravity with its accompanying stress on conversion as the sole aim of religious and moral education, and established the idea of the parent's contribution to the ethical as well as the religious development of the child.¹³ Horace Bushnell recommended a wholesome, guided growth of the child's moral life by a virtuous and tender mother.¹⁴ By the 1850's, the idea that a child was redeemable was widely accepted, as was the feeling that parents were the best instruments for this task. Such ideas further stimulated the notion of a sinless society. If perfection was feasible, and the raw material moldable, then it should be possible to utilize educational techniques


See also: Wishy, op. cit., pp. 17-23, for an excellent description of the child nurture debate developing after 1830.

and conditioning measures to generate perfect individuals and consequently a perfect society. Sin would no longer have to be eradicated — it would not exist.

The convergence of optimism stemming from shifting control beliefs, and heightened feelings of susceptibility to the consequences of sexual misbehavior was propelled by a sustained interest in temperance. Chapter 4 shows how moral physiologists expanded the initial temperance message into a condemnation of all stimulants. They enjoined abstinence, or at least a general asceticism, in a wide range of human behaviors. Since sexual behavior was held to be a model for behavior in other spheres of life, it followed that if man were sexually continent he would also be thrifty, hard-working and temperate. Thus efforts, not only to persuade man to restrain himself sexually, but to stimulate numerous health-related behaviors were perceived as useful. Convinced that health and moral reform were synonomous, temperance workers could expand their efforts to a whole range of hygienic affairs. Touched by the vision of a perfect society, moral crusaders could seek to eliminate sin through health reform.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7, therefore, examine a variety of reform efforts emanating from a belief in the equation


Bryan Strong, op. cit., p. 130.
of sexual morality with health and hygiene. Though the roots of these reforms were found in the ante-bellum years, their popularity continued throughout the century. Diet and dress reform, and efforts to promote exercise and healthy recreation were strands of a continuing endeavor to purify the body as house to the soul. They acted to provide a cohesive core for the numerous strands of moral reform which eventually came to make up the Social Purity Movement.

Women played a key role in generating enthusiasm for health-related moral reform. As mothers and homekeepers, they saw health-reform as an important means of preserving and improving the race, and also as a means of emancipation. Dress reform clearly pointed up the double objective. Seeking to liberate the body from the bondage of restrictive clothing as a material sign of equality with men, women simultaneously advocated the removal of disease-inducing strictures and the abandonment of sensual adornments and frivolous fashions. They sought simplicity and rationality in clothes as a step in the direction of a simple and rational society. Habitual modesty in dress would encourage modesty in other forms of behavior.

Women also saw the possibilities of encouraging moral behavior through the establishment and practice of correct dietary habits. Initially stimulated by Sylvester Graham and his radical followers, medical and religious
thought converged to promote ascetic eating and drinking habits in order to eliminate dyspepsia and drunkenness and the sexual urges that were felt to be produced by over-indulgent appetites.

Exercise was promoted as an important deterrent to physical debility and sexual misbehavior. Nurture literature, health societies and water-cure institutions encouraged exercise as a useful technique for developing spartan habits of endurance and self-control. Organized games seemed to offer good possibilities for character training along with agencies and facilities which catered to the recreational and play interests of youth and children. Indirectly, the interest of moral reformers in physical culture gave impetus to the large scale promotion of sports and the development of the Play and Recreational Movements at the end of the century.

The aim of these health-related moral reform efforts was to condition the individual in correct habits and right behavior so that he might have a life-long, habitual ability to control his sexuality. Ascetic habits of eating and dressing discouraged over-indulgence; exercise helped to create the fortitude needed in resisting temptations of the flesh; and cleanliness of the body paved the way to cleanliness of the mind. Healthful habits, however, were only part of the total design that purity reformers came to elaborate for the moral re-armament of the nation.
The purification of society demanded a scheme of moral education which would educate children in sexual morality both through conditioning and by instruction. Instruction in sexual matters came to be seen as a crucial factor in regulating sexual behavior for it seemed that silence had been an insufficient indicator of the values of sexual repression. The final phase of this study, therefore, examines the development of a variety of strategies for sex instruction.

Chapter 8 shows how moral reformers came to recognize that parental instruction in how to carry out the moral education of the young was a pre-requisite to effective childhood education. The ante-bellum years saw the initiation of efforts by a variety of agencies to encourage the mother to fulfill the important duty of instructing her child in sexual matters. These efforts intensified as the century progressed. By the 1870's, women reform groups were organizing Moral Education Societies in Boston and other large cities whose aim was to preserve purity by educating for sexual morality. Rationalized and standardized child rearing was advocated as the point of departure for reformers who were convinced that the salvation of the race rested upon the salvation of the children and that this
could only be accomplished through moral education. Moral education would engender the development of a social character through right generation and Christian nurture in the hope that the child would consequently be able to provide social orientation to the nation. Character development, then, was perceived to be the primary weapon in purifying society and removing sexual immorality. Were it possible for children to be taught and conditioned in the values of sexual repression before they were perverted by the impurities of society, then their characters would be armed for the perpetual struggle against the emergence of their baser instincts. More positively, it was considered desirable to be initiated into the wonders of procreation, parenthood and the rewards of pure and untainted sex.

The dialogue of moral educationalists was maintained as the Moral Education Societies became absorbed into coalitions of numerous moral and health reform associations. The development of these Social Purity Alliances during the 1880's and 1890's allowed a more centralized voice to be established for disseminating information about positive

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16 Caroline Winslow, "Religion of the Body," *Alpha* (May 1, 1885), pp. 11-12.

*Alpha* was the Journal established by Dr. Caroline Winslow as a voice for the Moral Education Societies.
sex education. Silence concerning sexual matters was condemned by purity reformers as being too dangerous to continue. Positive sex education would say 'do' and not 'don't', instructing children about the dangers of their sexual eruptibility but at the same time presenting information that would aid in desexualizing behavior or diverting sexual energies into socially acceptable channels.

As a practical assistance to parents in sexually educating their children, numerous sex education books began to be distributed in the 1890's. Manuals were prepared for boys, girls, men and women in an attempt to present sexual information delicately and purely and disuade curiosity and experimentation in things sexual. As Michael Bliss has commented, the most prominent series of sex manuals to appear at this time were advertised as "Pure Books on Avoided Subjects," and epitomized "the determination [of moral reformers] to purify human life of everything that tempted or conduced to harmful mental and physical practices."17

The bulk of sexual literature produced or authorized by purity reformers proved to be less than effective, however, for it soon became clear that parents, even if enlightened, were not always able or willing to educate their children

about sex. As the century drew to a close, many reformers despaired that parents would ever fulfill their duty in this regard, and some were persuaded that the school could be utilized as the next stage of action. Dr. O. Edward Janney, a young Quaker physician who became President of the Social Purity Executive Alliance of New York in 1895, encouraged a more experimental attitude toward moral improvement, and suggested that school instruction might hasten the slow process of moral reform. Underlying this attitude lay the thrust of a new generation of educators and psychologists who were increasingly advocating the importance of school education to social progress and reform, and emphasizing the advisability of molding the school curriculum to the social, as well as the intellectual needs of the child. The teacher, John Dewey was to state, "is a social servant set apart from the maintenance of proper social order and the securing of the right social growth — in this way he always is the prophet of the True God and the usherer in of the true Kingdom of God." Dewey was at the forefront in advocating socially-based learning so that children might

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more easily understand moral purposes, social customs and social relationships.

At the same time, Prince Morrow and a group of conservative physicians were mobilizing to confront the ever increasing indices of venereal disease by advocating moral and educational influences as the most effective deterrents to sexual promiscuity.\(^{20}\) The traditional reluctance of the orthodox medical profession to deal with sexual problems was gradually overcome as men like Morrow encouraged local physicians to join and work with a Social Hygiene Movement bent on improving morals by educating for the prevention of venereal disease through sexual repression.\(^{21}\)

By 1913, the American Purity Alliance and the American Federation for Sex Hygiene had merged to form the American Social Hygiene Association.\(^{22}\) Though often in disagreement as to the form and method of sex education, purity reformers and social hygienists agreed that sexual information must be diffused and taught in order to sustain a traditional morality that demanded the repression

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\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 359.

of all sexual activities. Among educators the interest in
sex education had reached a point in 1911 where the Bulletin
of the Bureau of Education listed sex education as a bibliog-
graphical title for the first time.\textsuperscript{23} In 1912, the National
Education Association resolved that "we believe that the
time has come when Normal Schools and Teacher's Colleges
should give adequate courses of instruction in sex hygiene
with the view, ultimately, of the introduction of similar
instruction into the courses of study in public schools."\textsuperscript{24}
Physicians, moral reformers and some educators had reached
a point of agreement that some kind of sex education in the
schools was necessary in order to safeguard the nation's
health, protect the family and preserve the sanctity of
the family institution.

Chapter 9 examines the variety of sex education
strategies designed by purity forces and social hygienists
which eventually led to the adoption of sex education courses
in the public schools. School instruction in sexual hygiene,
of course, represented a failure of the purity reformer's

\textsuperscript{23}United States Bureau of Education, "Sex Education,"
Bulletin of the Bureau, No. 10 (Washington, D.C.: The United

\textsuperscript{24}National Education Association, Journal of
Proceedings and Addresses of the Fiftieth Annual Meeting
of the United States (New York: The Association, July 6-12,
1912), p. 43.
design for character development within the family structure, but it did indicate a partial victory of nineteenth century moral reform efforts to regulate and standardize sexual behavior on a national scale. Furthermore, moral reformers had shown themselves capable of adapting to a changing society and fruitfully utilizing the techniques of technology and medicine to their own purpose, slowing, rather than prohibiting change, and perpetuating traditional values in a secularizing world.

Any study of sexual morality contains vast problems. Conflict and confusion with regard to moral values and actual behavior have long been characteristic of American society, and the nineteenth century was no exception. Furthermore, the dearth of information on actual sexual behavior during the period compounds the problems. However, vast amounts of material are available for examining some of the agencies of influence over sexual morality, and the period between 1830 and 1914 saw the development of a large variety of such agencies. The reasons for their development, the extent of their influence, and the assumptions underlying their activities are instructive to an understanding of social behavior and the variables concerned with social change.

In the years around 1830 Americans began to change their attitudes toward sexual behavior. This was manifested by a flurry of publications and organizational activity which strongly asserted the need to regulate sexual behavior in the light of rapidly increasing indices of immorality. A perceived need to regulate sexuality was not, of course, a new attitude. For centuries the Christian church had emphasized the difficulties of sexuality. Biblical virtues had regulated sexual conduct by attempting to limit sex to procreation within marriage, and encouraging the concentration of all moral energies in resistance to the seduction of the flesh. This ascetic view of sexual behavior was sanctioned by the early Puritan settlers of seventeenth century New England who condemned profligate living as morally degrading and made self-control basic to their institutions. To the Puritan, asceticism in sex led to, and followed from, asceticism in other habits. Hard work, thrifty habits, piety and noble ideals were thus stressed
along with sexual restraint to form a constellation of values for the Puritan man. Indeed, the Colonial church involved itself intimately with sexual behavior. In an attempt to strengthen the marital institution, more persons were censured for sexual offences than for any other misdeemeanors.¹

During the eighteenth century, however, public pronouncements concerning sexual behavior lessened. Legislation was sporadically enacted to deal with prostitution, fornication, and illegitimacy, though in the latter case economic motives, the need to provide for the bastard child, were predominant. Some medical treatises dealing with the treatment and prevention of venereal diseases were published along with a small, but frequently reprinted group of books dealing with the facts of life called the Aristotle Books. These Aristotle Books were reprinted more than thirty times in America between 1766 and 1831.² There were also a few didactic works written


²Otho T. Beal, Jr., "Aristotle's Masterpiece in America; A Landmark in the Folklore of Medicine," William and Mary Quarterly, XX (April, 1963), 207-222.
by clergymen and directed against adultery, fornication and masturbation, such as Cotton Mather's sermon, *The Pure Nazarite*, published anonymously at Boston in 1723, and the reprint of an English text published in America a year later called *Onania: Or the Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution, And All Its Frightful Consequences, In Both Sexes Considered, With Spiritual and Physical Advice.* These publications particularly emphasized masturbation as the greatest sexual sin of all, basing their charges upon the biblical story of Onan. The eighty editions of *Onania* which appeared during the eighteenth century contributed to the popularity of the belief that masturbation was a crime punishable by God, but emphasized that the sexual urge was natural and that its indulgence within marriage was quite acceptable.

Thus, prior to the nineteenth century, those denunciations of sexual misbehavior which did occur generally took the form of criticisms of masturbation and extramarital sexual adventures. The absence of extended debate, however,

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4*Genesis*, 38: 8-10.

and the fact that criticisms of sexual behavior were often anonymous testified to the general feeling that though warnings were felt to be necessary from time to time, silence was probably the better defense against licentiousness, lust and prostitution.\textsuperscript{6}

In the light of this background of limited public discussion over sexual misbehavior, the flurry of early nineteenth century activity to promote sexual repression indicated more than an extension of traditional attitudes and efforts at control. Where adultery, fornication, and prostitution had drawn criticism in the previous century, all sexual activity, except for the purposes of procreation, began to be condemned by moral reformers. In their eyes, virtually all sexual behavior could be defined as deviant whether it took place within or outside of marriage, and a number of authors took pains to elaborate exactly how and when sexual activity was, or was not, deviant behavior. These changing perceptions of deviant sexual behavior were intimately related to a steadily increasing preoccupation with a whole set of behavioral problems.

\textsuperscript{6}The obvious reluctance of religious opinion leaders in America and England to discuss the indelicate problem of sexual misbehavior was lampooned in 1727 by Daniel Defoe. Sexual criminals, he wrote were unlikely to be castigated by the minister and they knew it. "You dare not speak a word of it in the pulpit; I am out of your reach there; why all the women would run out of the church and they would throw stones at you as you go along the street if you did but mention it." See: Daniel Defoe, \textit{Conjugal Lewdness; or Matrimonial Whoredom} (reprint edition; Gainseville, Florida; Scholar's Facsimiles and Reprints, 1967), p. 15.
Indeed, a number of historians have indicated that the ante-bellum years of the nineteenth century set the stage for a general change in American attitudes toward deviant behavior. Certainly, developing industrialization and urbanization posed new threats to a society traditionally concerned about the need for cultural conformity. Deviant behavior such as insanity, juvenile delinquency and sexual promiscuity which had generally been considered private troubles to be dealt with by family, friends, and sometimes charitable institutions, gradually became a matter of public concern. In the case of juvenile delinquency, for example, the impact of urbanization sharpened the problem. While there had always been delinquent children in the countryside, the dispersed nature of rural populations had not been conducive to concentrations of delinquency. In the cities, youthful offences were less diluted and more clearly observable, and public concern generated the problem into a social issue. Similarly, just as street crime led to


pressure for custodial institutions, the sharpened exposure of insane persons to city people pressured the public to seek new ways of identifying and dealing with the problem. Whether there was more insanity, juvenile crime, and sexual misbehavior, proportionate to the population during the ante-bellum years, than there had been in the eighteenth century is uncertain, but it is clear that many people believed there was too much and that something had to be done about it.

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8 See the discussions in Hawes, *op. cit.*, Rothman, *op. cit.*, and Grob, *op. cit.*

9 Whether or not actual sexual behavior was changing during these years is difficult to determine. It seems clear that practices are only rarely in consistent agreement with established codes of sexual morality. Carl Degler recently found a document at Stanford University describing a questionnaire on sexual attitudes and behavior which had been passed out to forty-seven middle-class women between 1892 and 1920 by Clelia Duel Mosher. "A Sex Poll," *Time* (October, 1972), pp. 57-8. Though most respondents agreed that sex should be restricted to procreation, several admitted to more frequent intercourse and their enjoyment of it. Such a sample, and from respondents of higher education, does not establish a guide to middle-class sexual practice. Yet it suggests an example of what Max Lerner describes as the "patterned evasion of moral codes" - a feeling that one may break the code in practice while accepting it in principle. [Max Lerner, *America as a Civilization* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), p. 669.] Documentation was provided by Kinsey in the 1940's and 50's to show that a large proportion of the men and women failed to show traditional patterns of sexual behavior. [Donald Porter Geddes, *An Analysis of the Kinsey Reports on Sexual Behavior in the Human Male and Female* (New York: Mentor Books, 1964).] In 1973, a national study by the Playboy Foundation enlarged upon the studies of Kinsey (Carl Degler, *op. cit.*, p. 58).

Though such statistical endeavors are useful for the study of actual sexual practices they are too recent to be of value in
While the effect of urbanization upon changing attitudes toward deviant behavior cannot be underestimated, particularly in reference to juvenile delinquency and prostitution, it is useful to note that society often supports its explanations for deviancy by referring to the prevailing state of scientific knowledge about the human body and human behavior. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, scientific, or pseudo-scientific observations in the field of medicine were generating new ideas concerning the cause of disease. The significance of these physiological observations lay in the inter-relationship which came to be established between physical and moral health. Since debility and disease were thought to be induced by various kinds of stimulation, it was concluded that health depended upon the regulation of all stimulatory agents. Alcohol was an obvious example of stimulation, and moralists were happy to join with the physiologists in denouncing liquor in the name of health estimating early nineteenth century sexual behavior. More useful is an understanding of people's perception of the parameters of deviant sexual behavior. Definitions of deviancy, even when inappropriate to social, psychological or biological reality can generate widespread anxieties and pressures for reform. (Caroll Smith-Rosenburg and Charles Rosenberg, "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Women and her Role in Nineteenth Century America," The Journal of American History, XL (September, 1973), 333.

as well as morality. Furthermore, both moralists and physiologists were quick to see that alcohol was only one example of disease-inducing stimulants. By 1830, Sylvester Graham, an ardent exponent of moral physiology, was proclaiming that too much food, insufficient exercise, fashionable clothing and sexual incontinence were all daily habits inducing excitement which caused debility and disease. In the name of health he entreated his audiences to employ a spare diet, regular exercise, simple clothing and sexual continence in their daily lives. Such a prescription suited moralists who decried the lack of modesty, over-indulgence and propensity for pleasurable pursuits that they saw around them. Under the assumption that health was a product of asceticism, it followed that a state of unhealthiness could be diagnosed as a result of immoral behavior. Consequently, sexual behavior had to be regulated in the name of health and a variety of diseases were felt to be the manifestation of sexually deviant behavior.

This line of argument was embodied in numerous books, pamphlets, and magazine articles on sexuality published in the years after 1830. The most popular of these

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was Sylvester Graham's *Lecture to Young Men on Chastity*, published in 1834 on the premise that it was time to speak out and disseminate the true facts and dangers of sexual misuse. Other widely disseminated tracts corroborating Graham's views were Samuel A.A.D. Tissot's *Discourse on Onanism*, Samuel B. Woodward's *Hints to the Young on a Subject Relating to the Health of Body and Mind* and J.M. Bolles' *Solitary Vice Considered*. Articles relating to sexual malpractice appeared in such divergent journals as the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* and the *American Annals of Education*.

The new sexual literature of the 1830's and 40's drew upon the traditional social arguments against sexual

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misbehavior. But more striking was their additional emphasis on the physiological character of sexual sin. Whereas eighteenth century literature had accepted the sexual urge as natural, requiring only stringent regulation of its practice outside wedlock, the new viewpoint emphasized the depravity of the sexual urge. Leading moral physiologist Sylvester Graham explained this point in his Lecture on Chastity. "It is specious," he said, "to justify frequent sexual activity on the grounds that it is the expression of a 'natural human' instinct... the urge which is satisfied by such activity is not natural at all; it is depraved instinct."16 Sexually deviant behavior, then, according to the promoters of moral physiology, was frequent and habitual sexual activity of any kind, marital or otherwise. It included masturbation, nocturnal emissions, infant handling of the genitals, prostitution, frequent marital intercourse and even the touch of a dance partner which so stimulated the nervous system as to induce disease.

An explanation of the extent to which the rationale of moral physiology was stretched does not, however, indicate why or how their ideas gained such popularity. Irwin Rosenstock, in his behavioral science investigations, has shown that people becomes concerned over a health issue when

16 Sylvester Graham, Chastity, pp. 79, 81.
they feel that, not only are they susceptible to the condition, but that its consequences are likely to be serious. By including almost every aspect of sexual behavior in their definition of sexual deviancy, moral physiologists stimulated increasing feelings of personal susceptibility. How many men, after all, could claim to have never handled their genitals, touched a dance partner or experienced nocturnal emissions. Further, by illuminating the supposed devastating and widespread health-related consequences of sexual misbehavior, they induced increasing concern over the seriousness of such activity. Those who came into contact with the numerous moral physiology publications or the extremely popular lectures of Sylvester Graham and his counterparts, were charged with an anxiety over the dangers to them and their children that they perceived in the apparently widespread and increasing problem of sexual misbehavior.

This personal fear of contamination, which was a kind of germ theory approach to sexual beliefs, was reinforced by a more general belief in moral contagion. The rowdy and delinquent behavior of the poor, for example, was frequently condemned on the basis that the germs of their

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immorality might spread to the better classes.\textsuperscript{18} The threat of expanding slums, and the life and behavior of the poor, which was seen as a manifestation of ignorance and immorality, called for intervention.\textsuperscript{19} The poor, many believed, needed rehabilitation and moral disinfection, in order to remove sources of moral contagion from society. When moral physiologists pointed out that much of the moral depravity and disease was attributable to sexual misbehavior, the resolve of the more privileged groups to preserve themselves from moral contagion was further strengthened.

Specific sectors of the Protestant population were particularly instrumental in spreading concern over sexual misbehavior in ante-bellum society. The antinomian preaching of the revivals of the Second Awakening often heightened a restiveness about sex and the monogamous family which was articulated in extreme form by the development of a number of communitarian experiments with specific sexual

\textsuperscript{18} 'Moral Disinfection' was a favorite term of Charles Loring Brace, founder of the Children's Aid Society. See: Charles Loring Brace, \textit{The Dangerous Classes of New York and Twenty Year's Work Among Them} (New York: Wynkoop and Hollenbeck, 1872).

organizations. Certainly, the way in which communitarian experiments utilized the theories of moral physiology exemplified the pervasiveness of distrust of sexuality in ante-bellum society. Radical experiments which professed to condemn certain, or all societal organizations, many times developed specific sexual arrangements. Thomas Lowe Nichols and John Humphrey Noyes, leaders of the Memnonia and Oneida Communities respectively, both condemned conventional sexual arrangements such as marriage, yet at the same time erected new ones as stringently circumscribed as the former. Claiming marriage to be an artificial institution, "a system of restraints and repressions," they argued that sexual relationships could only be purified through the abolition of marriage. "Marriage," said Nichols, "was sexual slavery, a breeding ground for salacity and obscenity,"

20 Phillida Bunkle, in her article "Sentimental Womanhood and Domestic Education, 1838-1870," History of Education Quarterly, XIV (Spring, 1974), 16-17, illustrates an interesting point relating to feelings of anxiety over individual and social behavior that were intensified by the second phase of American revivalism. She suggests that conservative opponents of revivalism believed that the revivals unduly stimulated people's emotions. The heightening of emotion threatened internal controls which were necessary for preserving social stability. Furthermore, the developing belief that Americans were especially prone to excitement meant that social institutions and order were in constant danger of disruption.

and was ultimately responsible for the prevalence of "masturbation, prostitution and general licentiousness." Outside of marriage, he continued, sex could be a rewarding and exciting activity, but a number of restraints were necessary in the name of health. To engage in intercourse, both partners should be mature, mentally stable, intellectually proficient, healthy, free from intoxicating influences and capable of adequately rearing the possible product of their act. Furthermore, women should be neither pregnant nor nursing a child. Amative excess of either partner was condemned as nervously debilitating.

The abuse of amativeness rapidly exhausts the nervous power. The generative function takes strength from the organic and animal powers. It fails and all fails -- all noble passions lose their force; the whole system is discord and disorder and ready to become a prey to disease.23

To the ideas of Nichols, Noyes added a new aspect, male continence. Seeing the sex act as two distinct physiological acts, he advocated intercourse for its health and sexual benefits but forbade orgasm as being merely sensual

22Ibid., p. 359.

and dangerous to the health. For both Nichols, and Noyes, therefore, distrust of sexuality led to its condemnation. At Memnonia, the short-lived free love community formed by Thomas and Mary Nichols, the ultimate solution was found to be the requirement of total and absolute celibacy for all members.

The distrust of sexuality which stimulated unconventional sex theorists of the Free Love Movement to view marriage as incompatible with a healthy society reflected many of the arguments of moral physiology. Sylvester Graham did not reject marriage as an institution, but he was acutely concerned with marital excess, or, as he termed it, prostitution within marriage. He insisted that sexual practices which were harmful caused no less harm by taking place in the marriage bed. "The mere fact that a man is married to one woman and is perfectly faithful to her will by no means prevent the evils which flow from venereal excess." He rationalized, however, that the sexual impulse would be significantly reduced within an institution where the

24 John Humphrey Noyes, Male Continence or Self-Control in Sexual Intercourse (Oneida, New York: Oneida Community, Office of Oneida Circulars, 1872).


26 Sylvester Graham, Chastity, pp. 73-4.
familiarity of the two partners would cause disinterest in each others' bodies and make sex less enjoyable. Thus, both he and the free love advocates expressed ideas far removed from the published eighteenth century views of Onania which recommended the indulgence of sex within marriage as the expression of a wholly natural instinct. To Graham, the sexual urge was a depraved instinct whether it took place within marriage or outside of it, and except for procreation, all sexual activity could be regarded as prostitution. Men such as Nichols and Noyes, influenced by such arguments, felt that the physical and moral consequences of sexual over-indulgence were heightened by a marriage in which sexual abuse could take place legally. In other words, advocates of free love sought to liberate the marriage partner, generally the woman, from her civil requirement to submit to sex at the will of her husband, and thus render herself subject to a diseased life. Consequently, they recommended a general limitation of sexual activity and the removal of an institutional practice which militated against this. Such thinking, then, helps explain the apparent paradox of condemning marriage in the name of sexual freedom and condemning the exercise of sexual freedom in the name of health. The Free Love Movement was, in many ways, a campaign to grant people freedom from sexual activity and therefore increase the possibilities for healthy and moral living.
Other communal experiments shared a distrust of sexuality, though their reasons were more religious than physiological. The Shakers, for example, were convinced that sexual relations, ever since Adam and Eve, were the root of all sin. At their community in Albany, procreation was forbidden since the Kingdom of God was held to be at hand. The sexes were strictly segregated and behavior carefully defined in the hope that man could be brought from the animal to the spiritual plane.\(^{27}\) The Society of the Public Universal Friend, first established in western New York in 1794, expounded celibacy for all. Similarly, the Rappite Communities in Harmony, Pennsylvania, New Harmony in Indiana, and Economy, Ohio were uninterested in procreation or marriage, seeking only to present a pure remnant to God on the 'Great Day'.\(^{28}\)

In addition to radical and millenial movements, other developments stimulated increasing concern over sexual behavior as the century progressed. Ben Barker-Benfield and Rowland Berthoff have stressed the effects of the developing industrial order and the homage paid to economic progress


\(^{28}\)Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *op. cit.*, p. 496.
upon early nineteenth century American society. The ideology of Jacksonian egalitarianism, whether real or imagined, stressed competition and the accumulation of capital. Man was born to strive in this competitive world and, in order to succeed, many felt that it was essential for him to develop self-sufficiency. Yet the development of this self-sufficiency was hindered by his sexual eruptibility which constantly interfered with his self-government. The coupling of insanity to habitual masturbation by moral physiologists thus allowed some to point out a particularly nasty manifestation of this problem.

The problems of male sexuality for self-government, and hence self-control, were identified in a stream of self-help and family management manuals emanating from physicians


30 Berthoff suggests that, though equality of opportunity and condition in the 1830's struck Alexis De Toqueville more forcibly than anything else in American Society, essentially the new creed of equality reflected the practical circumstances of a much earlier land-based age (Berthoff, op. cit., p. 177).

31 Edward Jarvis, "Of the Comparative Liability of Males and Females to Insanity and their Comparative Curability and Mortality When Insane," American Journal of Insanity, VII (1850), 158.
and clergymen from the early 1830's on. Claiming to outline a program of success for young men in the world of competition, the manuals emphasized, above all, the importance to man's health and economic well being of regulating sexual practice, thoughts, and feelings. At the heart of these self-help manuals lay a theory of sexuality which was an explanation of biological and intellectual growth, disguised as science, but in reality reflecting the dominant morality, since its actual function was to offer positive rewards for sexual repression. Part of the theory, based upon the observations of Samuel Tissot, emphasized the importance of conserving the male semen so that it could be reabsorbed by the blood and carried to the brain from whence growth and creativity would be stimulated. Probably utilizing Tissot's explanation, Sylvester Graham described the semen reabsorption process in his lecture on Chastity:

See for example John H. Todd, *The Young Man; Hints Addressed to the Young Men of the United States* (Northampton: Hopkins and Bridgman, 1856).

Bryan Strong's comments upon this point accord with Richard Hofstadter's views that, in the acceptance of social ideas, "truth and logic are less important criteria than suitability to the intellectual needs and preconceptions of social interests." Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (revised edition; Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), pp. 203-204; Bryan Strong, "Ideas of the Early Sex Education Movement in America, 1890-1920," *History of Education Quarterly*, XII (Summer, 1972), 130.

Samuel A.A.D. Tissot, *op. cit.*
the semen may be called the essential oil of animal liquors . . . the rectified spirit . . . the most subtle and spirituous part of the animal frame, which contributes to the support of the nerves; that the greatest part of this refined fluid is . . . reabsorbed and mixed with the blood . . . and imparts to the body peculiar sprightliness, vivacity, muscular strength and general vigor to the animal machine; and that therefore the emission of semen enfeebles the body more than the loss of twenty times the same quantity of blood . . . more than violent cathartics and emetics . . . and hence the frequent and excessive loss of it cannot fail to produce the most extreme debility and wretchedness of both body and mind. 35

Sperm was thus considered to be "the concentrated powers . . . of man's perfected being . . . the purest extract of the blood . . . [which according to] ancient belief was life." 36 Such a belief necessarily made any uncontrolled expenditure of sperm potentially dangerous to the individual. Ideas concerning the reabsorption of semen retained their impact throughout the nineteenth century. They were reiterated by Neitzche and later in Freud's theory of sublimation. In 1880, Neitzche wrote, "the reabsorption of semen by the blood is the strongest nourishment and . . . it prompts the stimulus of power, the unrest of all forces toward the overcoming of resistance, the thirst for contradiction and resistance. The feeling of power has so far mounted highest in

35 Sylvester Graham, Chastity, pp. 51-2.

36 Ben Barker-Benfield, op. cit., p. 49.
abstinent priests and hermits." Consequently, the belief was reinforced that repression was necessary in order that society might have a constant source of ideals and inventions, derived from reabsorbed semen. Newton, extremists claimed, never lost a drop of semen in his life.

According to this theory, then, sexual energy in itself was good, for through procreation the transmission of the life force was a creative achievement necessary for the furtherance of the race. The dangers lay in the misuse of sexual energy and the non-creative expenditure of valuable semen through masturbation, and physical excess in copulation. The dangers were indeed severe. Loss of semen meant loss of vigor, health and ultimately sanity. The ills resulting from habitual masturbation were held to be particularly gruesome.

Habitual masturbators have a dank, moist, cold hand, very characteristic of vital exhaustion; their sleep is short, and most complete miasmus comes on; they may gradually waste away if the evil passion is not got the better of, nervous exhaustion sets in, such as spasmodic contraction, or partial or entire convulsive movements, together with epilepsy,


38Edward Jarvis, op. cit., p. 158.
The effects of excessive copulation were almost as frightening.

Runts, feeble infants and girls would be produced by debilitated sperm, old man's prostrated sperm, business man's tired sperm, masturbator's exhausted sperm, debaucher's exceeded, contraceptor's impeded, coward's unpatriotic and newly wed's green sperm.40

Semen had to be conserved, for it was believed that the amount of vital energy was limited. Virility could be lost forever in a similar manner to virginity. Energy, then, was sexual, and the hoarding and concentration of it was necessary for manly perfection. Like a bank, the more sperm an individual used the less there was left. The whole idea was represented as the law of animal economy. Sex, work and making money were intertwined and interconnected characteristics.

Furthermore, there was held to be a fundamental law for the distribution of vital powers. According to Amariah Brigham, "when vital powers are increased in one part they


40 Ben Barker-Benfield, op. cit., p. 50.
are diminished in all the rest of the living economy . . . to increase the powers of one organ, it is absolutely necessary that they should be diminished in all others."\(^4^1\)

Michael Bliss has argued that since the mind was held to suffer most when vital force was expended in sexual activity, "the idea of a competition between sex life and intellect as the main consumers of vital force seems to have provided the physiological underpinnings for several nineteenth and twentieth century popular beliefs."\(^4^2\) Traditionally regarded as having small intellectual stature, Negroes, it was thought, compensated with expanded sexual activity. Nervous children and intellectuals were considered to be ripe customers for sexual problems. Female education was condemned on the grounds that intellectual activities undermined the optimal development of the reproductive organs, caused hysteria and nervous disorders, and led to the production of feeble-minded and inferior children.\(^4^3\)

\(^{4^1}\) Amariah Brigham, Remarks, pp. 45-6.


Though there was an element of female coeducation at the college level in the ante-bellum years, Jill Conway has emphasized that women were accepted for economic reasons only. Women students were useful as a domestic work force
The role of women in this all-embracing theory of sexuality was contradictory and perplexing, but it generated perceptions of the female sexual role in society which formed an important facet of the sexual tensions of the nineteenth century and heightened a general preoccupation with sex as the century wore on. Contradictory attitudes toward the woman emphasized both her sexless and sensual nature, and claimed both her inferiority to, and power over, the male. The nature of these contradictory assumptions bears examination for they sprang from the religious, medical, biological and economic considerations in vogue during the first half of the nineteenth century and created attitudes toward women and among women which purity workers tried to resolve through sex reform.

Though, prior to the Civil War, much of the concern over sexual misbehavior related to the male, female sexual behavior came increasingly under discussion. Nineteenth century opinion reinforced the idea that women lacked any kind of sexual desire, and the idea of women's natural frigidity reflected the general belief that "sensuality is

within the colleges and in contributing to the mental and emotional balance of the male students. "Women's minds, during and after college education were thus considered only from the point of view of the services they might provide for men." Jill Conway, "Perspectives on the History of Women's Education in the United States," History of Education Quarterly, XIV (Spring, 1974), 6.
unusual in the sex." A modest woman submitted to her husband's desires principally to gratify him and were it not for the desire of maternity would far rather be relieved from his attentions. The view that the decent woman had no sexual interest had encouraged the male to seek sexual partners outside of marriage. Since prostitutes apparently did feel sexual desire, or they would not have entered the profession, then the man could legitimately turn to them to satisfy his animalistic impulses, protecting decent women at the same time. Thus, the double standard allowed men to seek sexual gratification and emphasized fragility and purity as the most desirable characteristics in a woman. Some women viewed the double standard of behavior as resulting in the superiority of their own sex. Due to the enforced continence that many married women were required to experience they began to think of continence as "something desirable and something which, in a sense, made them superior to the other sex whose animal nature compelled satisfaction with other unfortunate females who became mere victims of their lust."  


The fragility of women was not a new theme, but it was re-emphasized in the early years of the nineteenth century. Calhoun, investigating the American periodical literature of this period, has pointed out that "girls languishing of broken hearts or dying of flower-like nature were an immensely popular theme, especially in Ladies' Magazines." Medical and biological arguments were used increasingly to demonstrate the fragility of women as compared to men. In 1839, a physician stated:

> The female sex is far more sensitive and susceptible than the male, and extremely liable to those distressing affections, which, for want of some better term have been denominated nervous, and which consist chiefly in painful afflictions of the head, heart, side and indeed of almost every part of the system.

In line with the distribution of vital powers effect, the female's nervous system was felt to dominate her rational faculties while in the male, the intellectual propensities took precedence. Consequently, the anatomical and physiological roots of the traditional sex role were emphasized to rationalize the physical and intellectual inferiority of the female to the male. Men were the 'head of the body politic', women

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its 'heart'. Men were born to concern themselves with the world of business, women to the domestic scene of caring for home and husband and producing and rearing children.

However, during the nineteenth century, economic and social forces at work began to compromise traditional social roles. Some women began to question the circumscription of their traditional sphere. Wealth began to allow a growing middle-class group of women freedom from some of the more arduous tasks of housekeeping and release them to play a role outside the home, often as a volunteer in the temperance, abolition and other moral crusades of the early nineteenth century. The publication of Charles Knowlton's *Fruits of Philosophy; or the Private Companion of Young Married People*, in 1832 emphasized new possibilities for birth control and stimulated some women to question their traditional role as many-time mother, and consider the possibility of controlling their own bodies. Though God had stipulated that woman


50 Phillida Bunkle, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15, explains the emerging public role of women as a function of the Second Great Awakening. The evangelists, in defining religious experience as an affair of the heart, felt that the affective nature of women made them particularly susceptible to religious appeal. By identifying women with spirituality in revival religion, revivalists implied a special female responsibility in the drive toward social salvation, and this included social action.

must bring forth her child in sorrow, the very real fear of
the painful, and often tragic consequences of childbirth,
coupled with the knowledge of new techniques for avoiding
it propelled some women to review their attitudes toward
sexual relations and toward their role in society as a whole.
John Humphrey Noyes gave the agony of childbirth as his
primary reason for advocating birth control in the 1840's.

In the course of six years my wife went
through the agonies of five births.
Four of them were premature. Only one
child lived. . . . After our last dis­
appointment, I pledged my word to my
wife that I would never again expose
her to such fruitless suffering. 52

Increasing female activism and the birth control
movement met strong opposition from the sexual purity reformers.
Birth control threatened the numerous and widely-held values
of sexual repression. Instead of retaining semen for pro­
creative and creative purposes, and encouraging self-control
and continence, it encouraged non-creative sexual expenditure
and unleashed the animal instincts of man. It militated
against the counsel of self-control and foresight in pro­
creation - a restriction necessary to purify and raise the
standard of the race. It further contradicted the Biblical
injunction to be fruitful and multiply, advocating what

52 John Humphrey Noyes, Male Continence, pp. 10-11.
Theodore Roosevelt later termed 'race suicide', birth control being but one step toward the final extinction of the nation. Sylvester Graham was sure that the publication of birth control books were "extensive, bold and efficient efforts to encourage illicit and promiscuous commerce between the sexes," and that they were in great measure responsible for the rapidly increasing amount of sexual misbehavior.

Birth control allowed women some control over the future generation—certainly in size and possibly in quality. Physicians warned repeatedly that artificial methods of birth control caused mechanical irritation and increased the lustful nature of both husband and wife. The resultant sexual excess caused nervous exhaustion which created gynecological lesions. Through reflex irritation, related damage occurred such as insanity, heart disease and nymphomania. Since the ills of the mother were popularly considered to be inherited by the child, the future generation was condemned to sickness and ill-health.

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54 Sylvester Graham, Chastity, p. 12.

55 Thomas Hersey, The Midwife's Practical Directory; or Woman's Confidential Friend; Comprising Extensive Remarks on the Various Casualties and Forms of Disease Preceding, Attending and Following the Period of Gestation, with Appendix (second edition; Baltimore: n.p., 1836), p. 80.
Furthermore, despite the assumption of woman's innate sexlessness, men such as Todd and Gardner regarded women as a potential threat to the vital energy theory. A woman was a sperm absorber, "a drag on the energy, spirits and resolution of her partner."56 "Desirous women represented man's loss of control over himself and consequently women were potentially antagonistic to the fundamental value scheme of society."57 "Rebellious women," said Todd, "were threatening to dismantle the family, the basic unit of order and substitute the vagrancy of desire, the rage of lust . . . and disease and desolation which follow the footsteps of unregulated nature."58 Since woman's function was reproduction, contraception was naturally a rebellion against the social order.

Gradual pressures for women's legal, physical and working rights caused similar concern to many men. The working woman, in effect, had the potential of doubling the already severe competition faced by the working man. Demands for wives to control their own property reduced the husband's legal control over his wife. Female demands to control their own bodies within marriage led to the view that excessive

57 Ben Barker-Benfield, op. cit., p. 555.
58 John H. Todd, The Young Man, p. 278.
passions and appetites of the husband may be sufficient cause for divorce.  

Traditionalists reacted to the threat of an emancipating womanhood by attempting to rationalize women's psychological and physical unfitness for participation in the world of men. Woman's function was to bear children and consequently the significance men attached to the body part of women increased in proportion to their devaluation of her mind. It was claimed that a woman's sexual organs totally dominated her mind and that any malfunction or disease of the reproductive organs could lead eventually to insanity. It was a line of reasoning entirely consonant with ideas concerning the effects of male masturbation. Now the phobia could be projected onto both sexes. In 1848 Dr. Charles Meigs, a prominent Philadelphia gynecologist, explained to his pupils that a woman's generative organs exercised a strange influence over her heart, mind and soul. A woman was, in fact, a "moral, a sexual, a germiferous, gestative and parturient creature." All womb, women were prisoners to their reproductive function which determined their behavior


Charles D. Meigs, "Lecture on Some of the Distinctive Characteristics of the Female," delivered before the class of Jefferson Medical College (January 5, 1847).
and their personality. By 1870, Dr. Holbroook was explaining that "the Almighty, in creating the female sex, had taken the uterus and built up a woman around it."61

Thus an apparent paradox existed where the womb identified the woman yet women were entirely sexless beings. In fact, one was a function of the other. Around mid-century, male masturbation phobia was being increasingly projected onto the woman. The fear of her sexual explosiveness and her ability to absorb precious male energy caused a reassertion of woman's sexlessness by those who felt threatened that a female's loss of sexual control represented social disorder in general. Defining the absence of sexual desire as normal, some doctors came to view psychological indications of its presence as a disease, and surgical techniques were developed to deal with the problem.62 In the 1860's, or earlier, gynecologists began to practice radical surgery upon women's reproductive organs in an attempt to cure psychological disorders. In 1872, Dr. Battey from Georgia went even further in recommending female castration for "neurosis, insanity,


62 Carol Smith Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg, op. cit., cite numerous references to support the argument that ideas concerning gynecological therapy were widely held among the medical profession in the latter half of the nineteenth century.
abnormal menstruation . . . troublesomeness, eating like a
ploughman, masturbation, attempted suicide, erotic tendencies,
persecution mania, simple cussedness and dysmenorrhea." Like a bull or a colt, a castrated woman lost her sexual
appetite and became tractable, manageable and undemanding. By 1906, it was estimated that at least 150,000 women had been sterilized.

Though gynecologists were male, and their surgical techniques developed in large part as a consequence of male anxieties, women tended to share or at least be strongly influenced by male attitudes toward sex roles and social order in general, and looked increasingly at their reproductive organs as the source of numerous problems. Sexuality came to be viewed by many women as a cause of a large variety of physical and psychological disorders and they themselves helped to expand the popularity of gynecological surgery. The desirability of sexlessness was further represented by an increasing delicacy toward all actions and objects even remotely connected with sex. References to child-birth became indelicate. Pregnant middle-class women sought to hide their imagined shame as long as possible by tightening

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their corsets and remaining indoors. Menstruation was an infirmity which had to be closely hidden, most especially from the husband. Such bodily functions as sweating and excreting were animal aspects of existence which had better be described delicately or not at all. Verbal sensitivity toward bodily functions was but a further indication of an increasing tension toward sex among both men and women.

Shifting perceptions of the woman's sexual role in society engendered a surge of concern over sexual misbehavior unprecedented in that it emphasized the problems of sexuality for the female as well as the male. Though often for entirely different reasons, both men and women re-examined traditional views concerning woman's latent sexlessness, her role as wife and mother, and her role in society at large, and reached the similar conclusion that controlled sexuality was necessary for a healthy society. Gynecologists carried the idea to its logical conclusion; female castration was the ultimate control against the abuses of female sexuality. Some women reformers were to become equally ready to advocate male castration as a technique for freeing man from his criminal drives and returning him, pacified, to society under the assumption that "no genuine freedom of love can

be realized until the tiger of abnormal amativeness has been subdued and the normal passion trained into obedience to an intelligent will." 66

By the 1870's, changing perceptions of sexual deviancy had created widespread fears over the pervasiveness of sexual immorality in American society. Though urbanization and the effects of industrialization had an important effect upon changing perceptions of deviant behavior in general, the tenets of moral physiology provided a specific scientific or pseudo-scientific explanation for new perceptions of sexually deviant behavior. Moral physiologists led the way in asserting the widespread existence of sexual misbehavior in ante-bellum America and defining it as harmful to society. The popularity of this line of reasoning was evident in the number of diverse groups who emphasized the problems of sexuality to the female as well as the male. Yet these changing attitudes toward sexual misbehavior were based upon the observation of objective phenomena as well as subjective perceptions. While subjective perceptions were of great importance in creating increasing fears over the manifestations of sexually deviant behavior, the growth of prostitution can be considered as an important element and visible example of the changing attitudes discussed in this

chapter. Commercial prostitution was a phenomenon which flourished and became more observable in the urban scene, and which created further concern over increasing indices of sexual misbehavior as the century progressed. More specifically, the clearly observable abuse of sexual traffic as a collective menace, as opposed to the somewhat hazy and less clearly defined parameters of individual sexual misbehavior served as a catalyst to intensify moral indignation over sexual immorality.
Chapter 2

THE DEVELOPING CONCERN OVER PROSTITUTION

To many reformers, the rapid expansion of commercial prostitution they perceived occurring during the ante-bellum years represented an important and blatant manifestation of increasing sexual immorality among Americans. Prostitution was not, of course, a phenomenon new to the nineteenth century. It had flourished during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the larger urban areas, especially in seaports such as Boston and New York, and periodically provoked bursts of public opposition and police action.¹ Prior to the nineteenth century, however, normal law enforcement practices, a few public whippings and some sermonizing from the pulpit appear to have been generally considered adequate coping mechanisms for the problem.² Under the assumption that ignorance and innocence were twin companions,


silence was felt to be the most effective deterrent to those not already involved or aware of the abuse.  

By the nineteenth century, however, a new consciousness of the proliferation of prostitution in urban areas had appeared. Bostonians were particularly aware of the problem. In 1800, John Lambert, a concerned citizen, asserted that prostitutes amounted to one thirtieth of the population of that city, and measures began to be taken by 'Friends of the City' and by members of the Society for the Moral and Religious Instruction of the Poor, to give moral education to the poor and corrupt. Biblical tracts were distributed to sailors who were considered ready customers of the brothels. Other societies sought to rescue the prostitute herself. The New York Magdalen Society, founded by the Reverend John McDowall in 1830, led the way in such efforts. Horrified by the conditions of prostitutes in the Five Points area of New York City, McDowall campaigned widely to stimulate concern over their plight and their swelling ranks. He reported the names of scores of Houses of Prostitution and estimated the number of New York prostitutes to be twenty

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thousand. His efforts were soon supported by the American Reform Association and the New York Female Moral Reform Society, which, by 1837, had two hundred and fifty groups throughout the country. Though McDowall eventually became publicly ostracised for his methods of creating concern over prostitution (collections of obscene books, drawings and instruments from brothels which he liked to display to groups of clergymen), he stimulated a concern over prostitution that women reformers carried forward and magnified into the predominant issue of the Social Purity Crusade at the end of the century.

Following the initial interest of the 1830's, interest in the rescue of prostitutes waned until the 1850's when a series of exposés of the extent of prostitution appeared. Observers revealed a picture of frightening dimensions. Gentlemen's Guides to Houses of Prostitution in 1859 listed one hundred and six brothels in New York; fifty-seven in Philadelphia, and between five and fifteen in other major cities. A statistical survey compiled by William

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7 A Free Loveyer (ed.), *Directory to the Seraglios in New York, Philadelphia, Boston and All Principal Cities in the Union* (New York: Printed by the Trade, 1859).
Sanger in 1858 showed there to be six thousand prostitutes in New York and that this number had increased by twenty per cent from the previous year. Buffalo had eighty-seven brothels, Philadelphia one hundred and thirty, and Pittsburgh, a conservative estimate of nineteen. One-fourth of the male population was said to regularly visit prostitutes and their illicit sexual gratification cost New York alone seven million dollars a year. Such was the extent of prostitution, said Sanger, that every day makes the system of New York more like that of the most depraved capitals of Europe, and it remains for the good, innate sense of the bulk of the American people to say how much farther we shall proceed in this frivolous, intriguing and despicable manner of living; or whether we will not strive to perpetuate the stern morality of the Puritan fathers, our great moral safeguard so far, and thus put an effectual barrier against the inroads of a torrent that must undermine our whole social fabric and finally crush us beneath the ruins.

There were other reports, too. In 1866, Bishop Simpson, in a public New York address, stated that the number of prostitutes in that city was equal to the entire female

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9 Ibid., pp. 612, 614, 606.

10 Ibid., p. 571.
Dr. Bellows numbered the prostitutes on Manhattan Island at from twelve to twenty thousand in the same year. Though the Superintendent of Police, John A. Kennedy, claimed that such reports were exaggerated, he was forced to admit to a knowledge of six hundred and twenty-one Houses of Prostitution, ninety-six Houses of Assignation and seventy-five Concert Halls of ill repute. Susan B. Anthony, a leading woman reformer, indignantly claimed that the five hundred brothels of Chicago contained thousands of prostitutes. Dr. George H. Napheys estimated that Chicago contained twice as many prostitutes as New York and that there were twelve thousand in Philadelphia and seven thousand in Cincinnati.

The exposes revealed more than the dimensions of commercial prostitution. They initiated widespread concern over the related health hazards of prostitution, in particular, venereal disease. The Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, in one of his popular lectures to young men in 1860 described the horrors of syphilis in dramatic fashion:

Every year, in every town, die wretches scalded and scorned with agony. Were the sum of all pain that comes with the last stages of vice collected, it would rend the very heavens with its outcry. . . . Ye, that are listening . . . come hither, look upon her fourth ward . . . its vomited blood, its sores and fiery blotches, its prurient sweat, its dissolving ichor and rotten bones! Stop, young man!15

The medical profession, especially, was becoming increasingly familiar with venereal disease and its devastating effects. "Here is a disease," said Dr. Samuel Gross, a physician of national reputation who became a leading supporter of regulations for prostitutes,

a thousand times worse than the most deadly epidemic, doing its work slowly, and, as it were, in darkness and disguise, ruining entire families, destroying many of our best men and women, and laying the foundation of untold misery, wretchedness and woe, not unfrequently extending through several generations, and literally poisoning the very foundations of life.16

A further medical danger was indicated by the number of women seeking abortions. Dr. Macrae, a Scottish visitor to America in the 1860's, asserted that it was impossible to ignore the frightful prevalence of advertisements and facilities for abortions.17 He listed thirty doctors in New


16Dr. Samuel Gross, quoted in William Sanger, op. cit., p. 699.

York who performed nothing but abortions. For those who did not seek medical facilities, daily advertisements of 'Sure Cures for Ladies in Trouble' and 'Portuguese Female Pills' emphasized the availability of other, more devastating methods.  

In the desire to combat some of these problems, police and some members of the medical profession looked favorably upon the possibility of introducing civil and medical regulations for prostitutes. Such regulations would legalize prostitution in order to stem venereal disease through compulsory and regular examinations of prostitutes. Prior to the Civil War, police in Boston and New York had made some attempt to seek out and close down brothels in the poorer sections of towns in an attempt to prevent their spread. Inconsistent enforcement of anti-brothel legislation, however, had little effect on prostitution or its related health effects and many of the police were willing to try regulatory measures under the assumption that they protected the home and decent women from the evils of prostitution.  

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19 David Pivar, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

The idea of regulation stemmed from Europe where municipalities of the larger cities had developed prostitution districts under police and medical supervision. Paris, Berlin and Stockholm served as models of the system. In Paris, prostitutes were issued with a weekly health certificate or sent for medical treatment at La Maison de St. Lazare. Medical literature and visitors to and from Europe disseminated the view in America that regulation was effective in stemming venereal disease, and also operated to preserve marital purity by allowing limited prostitution for male sexual needs.

In 1867, the New York Police drew up a plan of police and medical supervision which was endorsed by the editor of the Nation. Since only the moral regeneration of the individual could defeat prostitution, he wrote, and that this was unlikely in the near future, no present effort to eradicate the evil would stop the source of the vice—lust. The most useful remedies for the present, then, were police and medical regulations for prostitutes. Many physicians agreed. Feeling that their inability to treat or prevent syphilis stemmed in large part from the public's attitude of treating venereal disease as a secret and unmentionable

21 David Pivar, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

disease, they hoped that an acceptance of legalized prostitu-
tion might create a more pragmatic approach toward the control
of the disease. By 1877, some members of the medical
profession were calling for legal measures to impose sanitary
regulations upon prostitutes, claiming that these would
contribute to the preservation of the public health.23

The idea of the regulation of prostitutes, which
implied a toleration of the evil institution itself, horrified
moralists, especially women reformers. The whole question
of women's rights was intimately linked to the fight against
the sexual domination of the husband. In 1860, Elizabeth
Cady Stanton wrote to Susan B. Anthony that "woman's degr- 
edation is in man's idea of his sexual rights. Our religion,
laws, customs are all founded upon the belief that woman
was made for man."24 The sexual domination of husbands led
to a multitude of evils, chief among which was prostitution.
Lustful men sought out the brothel to requite their ungodly
desires or approached their wives for pleasure, turning
their marriage into what was frequently described as
'legalized prostitution.'25 Either way, all parties suffered,

Journal of Medicine and Surgery, XX (1877), 175-183.

24 Theodore Stanton and Harriet Stanton Blatch (eds.),
Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and

25 William A. Alcott, The Young Husband (Boston:
Light and Stearns, 1839), p. 248.
but the greatest blight was the damage caused to the righteous woman and the institution of marriage. Prostitution, caused the

moral and social degredation of a woman who otherwise would live rightly; the dangers of causing disease in such a woman; the encouragement, by example, of a practice which stands pre-eminent as the great cause of social unhappiness; ... the possibility of the propagation of illegitimate children; the strong probability of contracting venereal disease; the danger of transmitting physical and moral blight to one's offspring; the development of vicious habits; the cultivation of an immoral society; the wasting of time and energy in unprofitable company; the social harm to one's self and one's family; the moral harm which springs from acting in secretiveness and shame; the contracting of the concommitant vices which go hand in hand with venery for venery's sake; and the weakening of the strength of the most potent factor in the solidarity of society - the home.26

Thus, prostitution was an institution which discriminated against women since it implied that women were obligated to satisfy the animal desires of men. But, said Stanton, "man in his lust has regulated long enough this whole question of sexual intercourse."27

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Elizabeth Blackwell, the first American female physician, rushed back from England to America when she heard of the schemes for regulation which were being promoted in various cities. Though she had noted the unpleasant effects of venereal disease in her work in the syphilis ward of a Philadelphia hospital and wished to combat its spread, she felt that any law which did not firmly suppress vice would only educate the community in evil.\textsuperscript{28} She therefore proposed to promote the virtues of chastity as a force against the regulatory organizations employed in the direct promotion of immorality.\textsuperscript{29} Emphasizing the determination of chastity as a healthful state by moral physiologists, Blackwell insisted that man should have no need for prostitution and that, without it, groups of women should have neither the desire nor the opportunity to turn 'bad'.\textsuperscript{30}

women reformers joined ministers in an attempt to defeat regulation efforts there, and collected thousands of signatures on their petitions. In Philadelphia, they were supported by women physicians, and in New York, the Women's Social Educational Society took credit for defeating regulation efforts. Following these successes, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lydia Mott and Julia Ward Howe travelled widely to consolidate and expand their initial victories and helped to transform an anti-regulation platform into an abolitionist scheme containing a positive program of social purity measures.

Pivar, in his admirable description of the Purity Crusade, has demonstrated how the frequency of ideological exchanges over regulation led many reformers into an expanded interest in social purity. "Prostitution, as an issue, was subsumed by the larger concern for social purification, and the feminist leadership willingly participated in its suppression." Women came to seek the demise of prostitution as a reformatory measure for the whole of society, and particularly as a means of upgrading, though not radically changing women's traditional role in relation to men. Those women who came to dominate the Social Purity Movement tried

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31 Aaron Macy Powell, Regulation Efforts in America (New York: Wood and Holbrook, 1878), pp. 54-71.

to reject traditional social roles of women as passive, non-thinking, non-sexual, breeding housekeepers, yet they advocated the adoption of an ideal female role where the pinnacle was still motherhood, the main arena still the home, and the basis for values still sexual repression. The significance of the new viewpoint lay in the possibilities that came to be seen for elevating the over-all status of women toward the proposed ideal role by utilizing the techniques and institutions of the world of men. In line with the view of spermatic economy, Julia Ward Howe suggested that society could accumulate moral capital in much the same way as capital acquired through conserved semen. Far from being irresponsible absorbers of semen, women could be champions in subduing such tendencies (in the brothel and the marriage bed), and in sponsoring endeavors to acquire a sum of moral capital which would 'buy' the new society.  

In it, men and women would be equal, with different but equally valuable roles, harmoniously related, and animalistic impulses would be repressed by all, irrespective of age or sex. The final triumph of such an endeavor would be that of spiritual and brotherly love over animalistic lust.

Fears that prostitution was not only increasing but might become legally entrenched in society, combined with the

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increasing pervasiveness of masturbation phobia among middle-class men and women to enhance a distrust of sexuality which female reformers heightened rather than diminished. Afraid of the animalistic element of human nature, they sought to protect themselves from both men and their own kind by encouraging the further suppression of sexuality through a stringent and single standard of sexual morality. Prostitution, they believed, undermined the whole moral foundation of society, and efforts to eliminate it spurred the dissemination of social purity objectives to repress vice and cultivate morality through Christian asceticism.\textsuperscript{34}

Such aspirations for the abolition of prostitution represented a rejection of the notion of the inevitability of sin among society. The eighteenth century view that crime and sinful behavior were endemic to society and thus could not be eliminated had, during the nineteenth century, undergone a transformation that was of immense significance to moral reform. Nineteenth century Americans perceived growing sexual immorality and simultaneously viewed the possibility of its elimination with optimism. Fears of increased susceptibility to the ravages of immoral behavior were

counterbalanced by enthusiastic efforts to control and remove the sources and manifestations of immorality from society. Before investigating some of the forms which these efforts took, it is therefore pertinent to explore those influences which stimulated waves of optimism for a sinless society. As with changing perceptions of deviant behavior, many of the influences stimulating shifting control beliefs can be located in the ante-bellum years of the nineteenth century.
Heightened perceptions of deviant behavior during the Jacksonian era were intimately related to the changing American scene. Developing industrialization in the ante-bellum years spawned urbanization and a host of social problems for which traditional forms of social control seemed totally inadequate. The problem, as some reformers perceived it, was that the rapidity of economic growth was creating an intolerable strain upon the social structure. Indeed, the acceleration in the rate of economic progress was so great that by the 1840's, instead of buttressing the material foundations of American society, it shook apart the institutions of the old social order.¹ Tumultuous population growth caused by fecundity and massive immigration was transforming the make-up of the country as both cities and western boundaries expanded. Communications were

facilitated by the construction of railroads and canals, developed in turn to facilitate the growth of textile and other industries. All encouraged an unprecedented social and geographical mobility which went hand in hand with the development of voluntarism, freedom and personal initiative.²

Many Jacksonians, states Rothman, used eighteenth century criteria of an ordered society to judge the changing scene, and, as a result, defined the fluidity and mobility of society as necessarily corrupting. They saw that, in the squalid conditions of the city, crime, alcoholism, prostitution and rowdyism flourished.

It was almost as if the town, in a nightmarish image, was made up of a number of households, frail and huddled together, facing the sturdy and wide doors of the tavern, the gaudy opening into a house of prostitution or theater filled with dissipated customers; all the while thieves and drunkards milled the streets introducing the unwary youngster to vice and corruption.³

After the 1830's the city imposed itself upon America's consciousness mainly as a problem.⁴ In 1840 one twelfth of the


Population lived in cities of more than eight thousand people. By 1860, the percentage had doubled and continued to increase as rural people and immigrants sought industrial work.

Reflecting this sense of urban chaos, reformers claimed that traditional forms of social organization and control were disintegrating and that physical and moral deterioration was inevitable. The cement for the social bond, previously supplied by religious orthodoxy seemed to have disintegrated in the individualistic pursuit of wealth and property. Theological doctrines had been based upon a static conception of the universe where institutions and human nature were fixed and immutable but the progressive individualism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century belied the reality of such doctrines. The belief that human effort was all that was necessary to climb the economic ladder made it difficult to promote an orthodoxy that sin and evil were persistent elements in human life and that there could be no permanent gains of good over evil. Indeed, men who had succeeded economically were impatient with a doctrine of human depravity which denied them the possibility of attaining salvation through their own efforts. If one could not rise above one's innate sinfulness, there was, perhaps, not much point in striving to be moral.

When feelings of fatalism predominate in a community, the benefits of a reform action are not likely to be seen
and this has always tended to be one of the major obstacles faced by change agencies. However, the introduction to America of the concept of Christian perfection brought about a change in control beliefs during the ante-bellum years which was of immense significance to the future of moral reform, for it gained popularity at precisely the point at which Americans seemed most fearful for the social order. Furthermore, it stimulated the conceptualization of methods of behavioral manipulation which were to become a prime ingredient of moral reform efforts.

The concept of Christian perfection was brought to America by John Wesley who, strongly influenced by German Pietism, was responsible for developing the dynamic religious movement of Methodism in the eighteenth century. Methodism was a revival movement directed at making man's relation to God experientially and morally meaningful as well as socially relevant. By calling upon the individual to seek salvation through his own efforts, Methodism allowed that spiritual and earthly callings could be reconciled and that not only wealth, but sinlessness could be achieved.

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As revivalism increased in scope and tempo, the popularity of the perfectionist message spread. Fatalism was discarded as people were emotionally persuaded that they could change their own condition and develop a perfect society. Indeed, perfectionist sentiments, combined with the revivals of the Second Great Awakening, were largely responsible for generating the climate of optimistic idealism and enthusiasm which promoted such fertile pastures for moral reform in the decades prior to the Civil War. When Ralph Waldo Emerson attended the Boston Convention for the Friends of Universal Reform in 1840 he noted with astonishment the fertility of projects for the salvation of the world.

Madmen, madwomen, men with beards, Dunkers, Muggletonians, Groaners, Agrarians, Seventh Day Baptists, Quakers, Abolitionists, Calvinists, Unitarians and Philosophers — all came successively to the top and seized their moment, if not their hour, wherein to chide or pray or protest.

The enthusiasm for a perfect society reached a high tide in the 1840's and 50's. Timothy Smith has ably documented how the combination of revival measures and perfectionist aspirations flourished increasingly in ante-bellum America in all the major denominations, and when combined with millenial hopes, served to create a mighty force for

social reform well before the events which followed the Civil War. Robert Bremner, in his study of shifting nineteenth century attitudes toward poverty, also notes that the popular emancipation from authoritarian puritanical theology combined with the acceptance of religious creeds that emphasized the dignity and perfectibility of man to loose a tumult of energy for the cause of moral and humanitarian reform.

The sense of perfectionism cut across most Protestant groups. It was clearly seen in the activities of Charles Grandison Finney, an independent Congregationalist. Sometimes regarded as the 'Father of Modern Revivalism', Finney's revivals were a powerful force in the developing anti-slavery movement and the rise of urban evangelism for he demanded of his converts some kind of relevant social action. He was an excellent salesman, taking every advantage of publicity, and was enormously successful in spreading his ideas concerning the possibility of holiness in urban and rural areas.

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In 1830, William Emery Channing gave impetus to the Transcendentalist view concerning the need to reform society and renovate man's spiritual condition by stating: "Christianity should be comprehended as having but one purpose, the perfection of human nature, the elevation of men into nobler beings." Ralph Waldo Emerson carried the argument further, insisting that men were capable of virtually infinite perfectibility.

Perfectionist sentiments also formed an important part of the philosophy of many of the communitarian experiments whose origin stemmed from the revivals of the Second Great Awakening and whose activities frequently mirrored the tensions of the age. To John Humphrey Noyes, who considered that the millenium was at hand and that he himself was living in a state of perfect holiness, perfectionism represented the whole tone of the age.

The development of late nineteenth century 'Social Christianity' and one of its components, purity reform, must


13 John Humphrey Noyes, The Doctrine of Salvation from Sin, the End of Christian Faith (Oneida: Oneida Community, 1876), p. 28.
be understood against this background of idealistic impulses as well as in the light of the disruption of America's agrarian dream. The aspiration for Christian perfection, the rebirth of nationalism after the War of 1812, and the enlightened rationalism stemming from eighteenth century thought were all intensified by a phase of revivalism which emphasized the nation's sense of millenial expectancy and stimulated the development of the great moral crusades of the ante-bellum era. Within the crusade for the abolition of Negro slavery lay the seeds for the organization against the white slave traffic which came to form a foremost part of the activities of purity reform and indeed the volatile issue of the whole question of women's rights. The activities of the Temperance Movement, whose origins and influences will be discussed at greater length in another section, informed a century's efforts at health and moral reform and gave direction and exposure to those health-related aspects of moral reform which purity reform came to espouse and promote.

The crusade to abolish slavery was of particular significance to the development of purity reform for many abolitionist personnel were utilized after the Civil War to form a caucus for developing a new abolition platform against prostitution and the white slave traffic.  

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Historically, advocates of Christian perfection had criticized all forms of human slavery, but after the 1830's increasing emphasis upon perfectionist sentiments stimulated greater efforts to eradicate slavery.\(^{15}\) The revivals of Charles Finney became inseparably linked with abolitionism at Oberlin College.\(^{16}\) William Lloyd Garrison, who became the most radical leader of the Anti-Slavery Movement, was editing a Baptist Temperance Journal when he was converted by Quaker Benjamin Lundy to the abolitionist cause. The articles on 'organic sin' written by Edward Beecher, President of Illinois College in 1845 further emphasized the incompatibility of slavery to a perfect society.\(^{17}\) Influenced by the popular publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* the north came to contend that slavery was a violation of holiness and moral purity, and abolition became a spearhead of moral reform.\(^{18}\)

The career of William Lloyd Garrison provided an excellent example of how the abolitionist crusade came to be


diversified to include campaigns against a variety of forms of human abuse. Initially concerned with temperance, Garrison soon became an opponent of Negro slavery and of other types of human bondage. His association with John Humphrey Noyes, accentuated his belief in the perfectibility of society and sustained his impulse to fight for the abolition of slavery.\(^{19}\)

During his editorship of the *Liberator* he developed a concern over related abuses of human freedom. Influenced by McDowall's *Magdalen Report* of prostitution in the Five Points area of New York, he compared the lot of the ten thousand prostitutes in that city with that of half a million slaves in the South whose masters subjected them to enforced prostitution.\(^{20}\)

His association with the Grimké sisters, as well as his concern over prostitution, further expanded his initial interest in women's rights which became, in many ways, a corollary to the abolition campaign.\(^{21}\) Indeed, during the 1830's and 40's, Garrison claimed to be the champion of women's rights and the hope of their cause.\(^{22}\)

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20 Ibid., p. 50.


Historians have denigrated Garrison's claim of influence over the developing Women's Rights Movement, for his fight against oppression was not matched by any firm conviction or practical efforts in promoting female equality. There is no doubt however, that the anti-slavery debate aroused numerous questions concerning the origin of human rights and the prolonged slavery of women - questions which became increasingly popular topics of discussion among women reformers. In 1840, the anti-slavery associations of Massachusetts and Pennsylvania sent delegations to the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London that included eight women. The convention denied the women the right to debate. Partly as a result of this exclusion, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, both staunch Quakers, took a leading part in the organization of a convention at Seneca Falls in 1848 to discuss the social, civil, and religious rights of women in America. The Women's Rights Movement spread rapidly and information was disseminated through several journals: The Una; The Woman's Advocate, The Lily, published by Amelia Bloomer and Revolution, the work of Susan B. Anthony. "Trust me," wrote Anthony, who attempted to extend the anti-slavery campaign to the realm of women, "that as I ignore all law to help the slave,


so will I ignore it all to protect an enslaved womanhood."²⁵

"All through the Anti-Slavery struggle," said Emily Collins in 1848, "every word of the denunciation of the wrongs of the Southern slave, was, I felt, equally applicable to the wrongs of my own sex . . . and I was surprised that all Abolitionists did not see the similarity in the condition of the two classes."²⁶

The perfectionist sentiments that stimulated the Abolition Crusade and the Women's Rights Movement were also apparent in the Temperance Movement. Concurrent with the Anti-Slavery Crusade the Temperance Movement was developing into a full scale campaign for moral living and providing the initiative for a variety of moral and health-related reforms. The initial impulse of the perfectionist doctrine was to purify man of sin and, just as this was possible, so also was it possible for him to be purged of his bad habits, especially intemperance and immorality. Since such vices made salvation impossible they were among the first to be attacked by moral reformers, and efforts to eliminate intemperance waxed and waned throughout the nineteenth century and into the next. The Temperance Crusade became particularly popular among women. It gave them broader scope to prove

²⁵Ibid., p. 50.

²⁶Ibid., p. 49.
their value as moral reformers at a time when Christianity was emotionally awakening. As health reform came to be seen as an important adjunct to moral reform, women adopted, in large measure, the responsibility for implementing it. Temperance reform, coupled with perfectionist aspirations and joined by enthusiastic women reformers, stimulated dress reform, maternal associations, prison reform, efforts to suppress the brothel and a variety of measures aimed at sex reform. Temperance reform gave direction and stimulus to the philosophy, structure and activities of purity reform as the inter-relationship between liquor and sexual misbehavior became increasingly obvious to moralists.

The moral and health-related reforms stimulated by evangelical, perfectionist and millenial hopes laid the basis for late nineteenth century efforts directed at controlling and redirecting American sexual behavior. Such efforts achieved their fullest institutional expression in the Social Purity Movement of the 1890's. It was before the Civil War, however, especially in the two decades before the outbreak of hostilities, that the philosophy of the movement was developed and its theory of social action delineated. An important reason for the movement failing to gain institutional form in this period was the primitive organizational condition of the Women's Rights Movement, a movement that became the principal agent of purity reform. Temperance, abolitionism and revivalism were positive steps
toward socializing and democratizing religion, although divisions among religious denominations still tended to mitigate against the co-operation needed for social reconstruction.

By mid-century, however, a new surge of revivalism culminating in the awakenings of 1858 further blurred denominational distinctions and united evangelists in renewed efforts at social reconstruction. Both the Young Men's Christian Association and the United States Christian Commission were institutionalized during this period. By 1860 there were two hundred and three Young Men's Christian Associations throughout the country.27 The Sunday School had become a familiar and wide-ranging American institution. The resurgence of evangelism stemming from the awakening of 1858 sustained itself during the war years so that "the symphony of salvation filled the atmosphere of Christianity . . . [and] . . . the most avid proponents of revival measures regarded themselves as civilization's most indispensable agents."28 Ethical concerns increasingly predominated and dogmatic distinctions between the sects lost their importance in the face of an enthusiastic expansion of lay participation


28 Timothy Smith, op. cit., p. 78.
and control. "It is now more thoroughly understood," wrote a Baptist pastor of the times, "that the love of Christ in the heart will constrain the life, not merely to acts of sobriety, temperance and godliness, but to a self-sacrificing zeal in good works." 29

Periods of optimism during the ante-bellum years were, of course, coupled with times of pessimism, but religious jeremiads seemed directed more toward stimulating fervent optimism and increasing reliance upon human measures in perfecting man than toward society's falling into sin. 30

Even the catastrophe of the Civil War failed to shatter this optimism for "the triumph of Yankee arms," as Timothy Smith puts it, "restored the faith of even Princeton conservatives that Christianity and civilization were marching forward toward perfection." 31

The belief in the possibility of transforming society bridged the immediate ante and post-bellum years. The steadily increasing acceptance of revivalist and evangelical values strengthened the belief in Christian perfection while growing concern over social issues provided a secular base for these religious values. The complementary nature of

30 According to Berthoff, the high years of Revivals were, 1830-32, 1842-3, and 1857-8, op. cit., p. 243.
personal salvation and community improvement fashioned before the war stood strong in its aftermath. The optimistic message which purity reformers disseminated to post-war society was one which had strong roots in the streams of thought characterizing the ante-bellum years, and most especially the pervasiveness of perfectionist aspirations for a new Kingdom of God on earth.

Perfectionist thought dramatically altered American's views on controlling sin. Closely related to it was a widespread feeling that traditional methods of child nurture were inadequate to cope with the conditions caused by the disruptions in cultural continuity in early nineteenth century America. Child nurture writers claimed that parents were bewildered by the apparent need to prepare children for the blast of competitive individualism in the economic world while simultaneously educating them to resist the innocuous and sinful temptations of a materialistic society. Since the child often had to seek an employment or mode of life different from that of his father, independence was a useful characteristic to cultivate. Yet, the long-standing Calvinist belief in infant depravity which had demonstrated remarkable staying power despite the infiltration of the enlightened

ideas of Locke, Rousseau and others, advocated submissive obedience, and discipline aimed at breaking the will, which was quite contrary to independence. Furthermore, the theory of infant depravity clashed with ideas on perfectionism which held out hope that conversion could be a process of growth, and that sin, far from being inevitable, could be eliminated.

During the eighteenth century, early educational theorists such as Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson stressed the utility of education as a civic, political and social instrument designed to advance republican values and skills. Though their views helped modify traditional conceptions of human depravity, they did not lead to any widespread faith that education could be an instrument for social engineering and broad social and moral change.

By the 1830's, however, a transformation in attitudes toward children, their behavior and their education was becoming apparent. A growing body of 'experts' on early education, or child nurture, claimed that the corruption and disorderliness of the American home, the inadequacy of the parent's guidance through ignorance or corrupt habits, and increasing indices of the violation of Christian order throughout society necessitated a new approach to Christian nurture based more squarely upon the exigencies of the outside

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world. Children of the 1830's, both American and foreign observers complained, were spoiled, corrupted and unruly. Many Americans came to believe that increasing mobility and long hours of industrial work contributed to a disintegration of traditional family organization, lessened the ability of the father to be an effective head of the household and undermined community support for the mother in performing her educational functions. In fact, Alexis de Toqueville, in his observations on American society, noted the irrelevance to men of the mother's educational function. Not only did the effects of changing conditions seem to dictate the necessity of reconsidering methods of child nurture, the streams of perfectionist thought which undermined the severity of the Calvinist outlook flowed naturally into discussions of infant depravity.

W.A. Alcott, The Young Mother (Boston: Light and Stearns, 1836), pp. 236-7.


Oliver Wendell Holmes, Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe were all children of Calvinist ministers who had grown to feel and advocate that the doctrine of original sin was unspeakably cruel. Elizabeth Oakes Smith, who became a Unitarian, liked to announce that at age five she had denounced the falseness of the Calvinist creed to her orthodox family on the assumption that if God never loved the creatures he made, then he was not a good God. Other popular writers of the time, such as Fanny Fern, Lydia Sigourney and Sarah Hale, emphasized the same theme through their prolific writings on domestic matters and female virtues. Ann Douglas Wood, in her examination of numerous works of these female writers during the ante-bellum period, remarked that the sentimental themes of such works all dealt, although in a disguised way, with a power struggle against the sexes, by asserting the biological supremacy of the female and the richness and resourcefulness of womanhood. By extolling the virtues of the female role, these writers also asserted the right to guide their offspring, and logically could not accept the rigidity of a doctrine of original sin, imposed, one

37 Gall Thain Parker, "Sex, Sentiment and Oliver Wendell Holmes," Women's Studies, 1 (1972), 50.


39 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
could suggest, by an unyielding and rigid father figure and depriving women of their opportunity to use tenderness and resourcefulness in child rearing.

Thus, women writers and many others who became connected with the emerging Women's Rights Movement stressed the positive aspects of the female role as mother and moral guide of the family, as a means of gaining more influence over the education of their children. The stimulus of perfectionist thought, implying that immorality was not inherent in human nature, further contributed to the idea that better mothering could produce more moral people. The child, born a sinner, could only strive to overcome his handicap, and even then, he could not be assured of the success of his efforts. If, however, the character of the child could be perceived as a clean slate, then the right kind of impulses could be utilized to form that character into a vibrant Christian personality.

Initially, the new nurture experts, many of whom were women, did not reject, out of hand, notions of infant depravity, but rather meliorated the harshness of the older orthodoxy. Dr. Heman Humphrey's Domestic Education, though accepting infant depravity, advised parents to reject overly demanding methods in training the child and to stress the ethical as well as the religious development of the child.40

40 Heman Humphrey, Domestic Education (Amherst, Adams, 1840).
Lydia Sigourney and Jacob Abbott both emphasized that the future of the child depended, perhaps, more upon the parents and the environment than upon his intrinsic nature.\(^4\) Echoing Rousseau, Lydia Sigourney pleaded for a greater respect for the child and emphasis upon the happiness of his childhood years. Love, example, and proper environment, she suggested, would be the ultimate determinants of the destiny of the child.\(^4\)

The idea of Christian nurture found its greatest theological ante-bellum expression in Horace Bushnell, a Congregationalist, who attempted to mediate the extreme messages of dogmatic theology and emotional revivalism. In *Views of Christian Nurture* (1847), he denied that children were lost in sin until converted. Conversion was a life-long process of growth, a matter of development and deepening awareness.\(^4\) Nurture was hence a means of evoking the goodness in human nature by counteracting tendencies to depravity in infancy. Though Bushnell never abandoned the notion of infant depravity entirely, his ideas on the need for a well-guided growth of the child's moral life by a virtuous mother

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\(^4\) Lydia Sigourney, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

became a foundation stone for the development of future techniques for moral education.

Increasingly, the view of the child as a willful sinner was replaced by a confidence that the character of the child could be molded "like wax to receive, but like marble to hold, every impression made upon it for good or for evil." Transcendentalists, Swedenborgians, evangelicals, and others interested in child nurture tended to unite in the belief that the freedom of man and a new era of rational and guided child rearing would lead the young to the "residence of God." By the 1850's, the new realism in attitudes toward nurture was conceiving of the child as a plot of ground, wherein the primary need was to sow good seeds and eliminate, where necessary, the weeds. Since much of the child's nature was now felt to be under human control, rather than God's, the belief was gradually strengthened that the

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perfection of human nature was humanly possible and with it the perfection of society. If perfection was feasible, and the raw material moldable, then a new significance could be attached to the process of childrearing and methods of moral training. Action, not only to modify, but to mold behavior from the very beginning, was consequently increasingly perceived in American society as a very real possibility, and one requiring the development of specific and carefully controlled techniques for conditioning behavior. A fundamental aspect of this conditioning lay in the realm of the sexual aspects of behavior, and experts determined to clarify and advise upon every habit which could be developed to offset the conditions that bred deviant behavior, and establish decency and order among society.
Figure 1. Harry T. Peters, Currier and Ives; Printmakers to the American People (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., Inc., 1942), Plate 86.
Chapter 4

THE STIMULI OF MORAL PHYSIOLOGY AND THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT UPON HEALTH-RELATED MORAL REFORM

Many of the techniques designed to construct a moral society during the nineteenth century had their basis in ideas generated from recent scientific developments in the field of health and disease. Before the turn of the nineteenth century, developments in anatomy, physiology and pathology allowed theories of disease causation to be defined more clearly and the 'humoral' physiology of Galen, that had exerted such tremendous influence over medical thought for more than two thousand years, was gradually discredited as various new vitalist theories were propounded. One of the most significant of these developments stressed the basic importance of the nervous system as the life force, and was adopted by a Scotsman, William Cullen (1712-1790) as the basis for a general theory of health and disease. Cullen held that any significant increase or decrease of nervous energy, whatever the cause, would result in conditions of debility in the muscles and blood vessels. It followed
that the work of the physician was to relieve the excitement
in order to cure the debility by means of drugs, blood-letting
purges and diet.¹

It was a modified version of this theory that Dr.
Benjamin Rush introduced into the medical circles of
Philadelphia in the 1780's, and his ideas came to exert con­
siderable influence over medical and public thought during
the first half of the nineteenth century. In Rush's view,
disease was caused by debility. Since debility was induced
by over-stimulation rather than lack of it, therapeutic
measures should be designed to reduce the stimulation. Such
measures included reduced diet, blood-letting and temperance.²
The intestinal area, he noted, was particularly susceptible to
over-stimulation since it not only possessed a large supply
of nervous tissue, but also came into regular contact with
such external agents as food and drink. Thus he concluded
that regulation of food and drink was an important element
in the prevention and treatment of disease. Most especially,

¹William Cullen, quoted in Benjamin Rush, The
Autobiography of Benjamin Rush; his "Travels Through Life,"
together with his Commonplace Book for 1789-1813 (Princeton:

²Benjamin Rush, "Defence of Blood-Letting as a
Remedy for Certain Diseases," in Medical Inquiries and
Observations upon the Diseases of the Mind, IV (third edition;
Philadelphia: J. Grigg, 1827), 181-258.
Rush noted the effects of liquor upon the body as providing a perfect example of debility induced by stimulation. Temperance, he held, was advisable, and in 1785 he wrote the first temperance tract to be published in the United States, *Inquiry Into the Effects of Ardent Spirits on the Human Mind and Body.*

Rush requested temperance, not abstinence, and when the first temperance societies were formed in the early years of the nineteenth century they were designed to moderate the excessive drinking of hard liquor, not to prohibit alcohol consumption. The churches displayed little enthusiasm for these early societies until Lyman Beecher, a Presbyterian minister from Connecticut, became involved in temperance work. As early as 1813, he was decrying the lax moral standards of Americans and the consumption of liquor by children. By 1826 he had produced a new handbook for the Temperance Movement to replace Benjamin Rush's *Inquiry Into the Effects of Ardent Spirits*. Beecher's *Six Sermons on Intemperance* presented a new element to temperance. "Daily drinking" he stated "marks the beginning of a habit which . . . will not be pursued by one hundred men without producing many drunkards . . . . The

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driving need for liquor is picked up as easily as the plague."^6 Thus Beecher took the lead in making the habit of drinking, rather than intemperance, the sin and in demanding total abstinence. In doing so, he repudiated the principle, formerly held by temperance societies, that moderate drinking was harmless, and laid the basis for a new and popular phase of the Temperance Movement. In 1826, the National Philanthropist was proclaiming that "temperate drinking is the down-hill road to drunkenness."^7

Though it was Beecher who introduced the connection between temperance and moral behavior, the medical profession interjected further evidence to support and extend the argument. Dr. John Bell of Philadelphia, a keen temperance worker, used the physiological studies of Joseph Broussais to demonstrate the effects of intemperance upon health and the relationship of health to morality. In the preface to his translation of Broussais' work, Bell explained that "there could be no health for the sensualist . . . no permanently pleasurable emotions for him who passes the bounds of moderation in the indulgence of his appetites."^8 It followed,


he concluded, that the rules of hygiene could not be infringed without punishment.

In order to broadcast his views on the relationship of temperance to health and morality, Bell, with another temperance worker, Dr. Charles Condie, established the *Journal of Health* in 1829. Disease, Bell claimed in the first edition, could only be prevented by "temperance, pure air, exercise and the subjection of the animal passions." By 1831 the journal was condemning, not just spirits, but all types of alcohol, and promoting the idea that the only drink fit for man was water.

Though the harmonious conjunction of medical temperance injunctions and moral principles stimulated a surge of popular temperance feeling after 1826, external conditions also played their role. An obvious reason for the attention given to temperance reform by preachers and physicians alike was the extent of intemperance in America. Rum was an important factor in the economy of New England and distilled spirits were regularly served at community gatherings and celebrations. "There was no merry making," wrote Horace Greeley of his childhood in early nineteenth century New Hampshire, "..."

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[and] scarcely a casual gathering . . . without strong drink. Cider, always, while it remained drinkable without severe contortions of visage; rum at all seasons and on all occasions, were required and provided. In 1810 it was estimated that there were 14,000 distilleries in the country, annually producing three gallons of drink for every man, woman and child. Furthermore, liquor was cheap, lightly taxed and readily available to all ages.

Such disturbing facts gave added impetus to temperance reformers as the movement spread. By 1831, there were 2,200 local branches of the American Temperance Society, mostly in New England, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania, and a total of 170,000 members had agreed to renounce liquor. In 1836, the American Temperance Union claimed to have one million pledges to abstain from alcohol, and noted that many factory owners and farmers had been persuaded to withdraw liquor from their premises.


In addition to denouncing liquor, the Temperance Movement gave impetus to a variety of health-related moral reforms which eventually came to provide a cohesive core for the numerous strands of the Purity Movement. From its inception, purity reform demonstrated a dependence upon temperance reform. The ideology and organizational structure of the Temperance Movement were readily adopted by purity reformers who reached, with the aid of moral physiology, beyond the drink problem to the deeper issue of sexual morality, and connected the saloon and the brothel as twin evils which had to be removed before society could be saved.

As Chapter 1 explained, the connection between alcoholism and other types of deviant behavior was commonly made. Reformers investigating the penal system, for example, noted that many of the criminals masturbated in prison and had been drunkards upon arrival. Poverty and delinquency were frequently blamed upon liquor consumption. In the 1830's, one commentator estimated that seventy-five per cent of American pauperism resulted from drink. Another claimed that a diet of water would be the best cure for poverty and indolence. William Sanger noted, "as an almost invariable

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14 Rowland Berthoff, op. cit., p. 268.


16 Ibid.
rule, that courtesans are in the habit of using alcoholic stimulants to a greater or lesser degree in order to maintain that artificial state of excitement which is indispensably necessary to their calling. Not one per cent of the prostitutes in New York," he continued, "practice their calling without partaking of intoxicating drinks."\(^{17}\)

The scientific, or pseudo-scientific basis for such assumptions, however, was disseminated by Sylvester Graham who provided a seemingly logical argument to condemn all stimulants in the name of health. The physiological theories of Rush and Broussais had emphasized that alcohol should not be drunk because it irritated and inflamed the body and caused debility and disease. Physiologists therefore enjoined abstinence in the name of health. However, there were clearly a number of other substances which were equally irritating to the body and should also require abstinence, or at least continence. Bell pointed this out in the *Journal of Health* in 1829 and Graham adopted and expanded his views.\(^{18}\) Soon after beginning a series of temperance lectures in Philadelphia in 1830, Graham expanded them into a complete series of talks about the avoidance of all intoxicating substances. Entitled


the *Science of Human Life*, his lectures included discussions about chastity, courtship and marriage, the prevention and treatment of cholera, and diet. Temperance was transformed, in his mind at least, into a general critique of human behavior. "Almost every circumstance and influence in civic life," he lamented, "encouraged a preternatural and diseased sensibility of the body."\(^{19}\) Such influences included improper diet, indolence and effeminacy, poor habitation, clothing and exercise, and artificial stimulants such as alcohol and tobacco. In his opinion, however, the worst offenders were sexual incontinence and sexual thoughts. Sexual excess and disease, he concluded, were intimately connected and sexual control could only be achieved through careful hygienic regulations.\(^{20}\) Such regulation was essential he insisted for:

> ... while we continually violate the physiological laws of our nature, our systems will continue to be living volcanoes of bad feelings and bad passions, which however correct our abstract principles of morality may be ... will continually break out in immoral action.\(^{21}\)

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\(^{21}\) *The Graham Journal*, 11 (July 7, 1838), 212.
Graham's analysis of health as a product of obedience to moral principles became extremely popular. He was invited to repeat his lectures in New York where he received "pressing invitations from every quarter." When a cholera epidemic hit New York in 1832, he was given further scope to explain his ideas to frightened audiences. The ability to resist disease, he explained, depended upon the voluntary conduct of an individual in maintaining his organic health. Those who violated the laws of health, particularly in the areas of diet and sex, rendered themselves subject to disease. Graham pointed out that cholera hit such countries as India where the population was known to be committed to drunkenness, fornication and homosexuality, and France where the prostitutes of Paris were the first to succumb. By emphasizing prevention rather than cure, his views gained popularity at a time

Graham's analysis was not, of course, original. Most of his ideas stemmed from the works of Rush and Broussais. What was new was the extremity of his preventive and therapeutic recommendations and their popularity. See, S.W. Nissenbaum, "Careful Love; Sylvester Graham and the Emergence of Victorian Sexual Theory in America, 1830-1840," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1968), pp. 115-133.


Ibid., pp. 60-62, 49, 69.
when people anxiously sought methods of staving off epidemic
diseases.

Most useful, however, was the fact that his message
was well suited to moral reformers. Since he had shown that
health and moral reform were synonomous, forces of popular
medicine and religion might be able to unite in erecting
measures to purify the body as a house to the soul. Temperance
workers could expand their sights to a whole range of hygienic
affairs. All crusaders with perfection in mind could seek
to eliminate sin through health reform.

Many women became particularly enthusiastic champions
of health-related moral reform. They were already becoming
accustomed to the work of organized philanthropy through
voluntary associations. Indeed, in many of the evangelical
voluntary associations growing out of the Second Awakening,
the support of local women's groups became essential. Mrs.
Charles Finney complemented her husband's preaching by running
'Mothers Meetings' and by organizing the New York Female
Moral Reform Society in the 1830's. As the popularity of
these meetings increased, numerous maternal associations were
founded by women as organized efforts to strengthen the family
institution. By the 1840's, maternal associations in New
England were calling for a rededication to the holy, healthy,
hearth.26 The American Female Moral Reform Society emphasized

26 "Maternal Associations," Parents Magazine, 1
(May, 1841), 205-206.

See Also: Robert Sunley, "Early Nineteenth Century
American Literature on Childrearing," Margaret Mead and Martha
Wolfenstein (eds.) in Childhood and Contemporary Culture
this rededication by opposing prostitution, intemperance, dancing, theatres, novels and fashionable clothes. Advocates were also pressing for higher education for women. Emma Willard established a Female Seminary in Troy, New York in 1821, and Mary Lyon founded Mount Holyoke College for women in 1836. Well before the Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls in 1848, women were taking the initiative in many reform movements. Health reform was no exception.

Women saw health reform as a most pertinent issue since they were the guardians of home conditions and the mothers of future generations. For mothers, the notion that healthy habits would contribute to a moral life lent a new importance to their child-rearing role. Furthermore, the scientific argument that sexual excess should be controlled in the name of health was particularly attractive to those women who sought to eliminate the double standard of sexual morality that allowed men to seek sexual gratification through prostitution. Mary Gove (later, wife of perfectionist Thomas Nichols), was in many ways a female counterpart to Graham and she gave impetus to these concerns by explaining the arguments of moral physiology in her 'Lectures to Ladies on

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27 For a discussion of higher education for women in this period see Jill Conway, "Perspectives on the History of Women's Education in the United States," History of Education Quarterly, XIV (Spring, 1974), 5-7.
Anatomy and Physiology' at Boston in 1838. During the next year she repeated the highly popular lectures throughout New England, New York and Pennsylvania and a year later she founded a Boston periodical entitled Health Journal and Advocate of Physiological Reform.28

Elizabeth Blackwell, the first American woman to graduate as a physician, was particularly energetic in stimulating women to undertake health measures, primarily by "reforming the home as the first step in the path of action to attain an ideal perfection which embraced the wholistic perfection of body and soul."29 Women, she felt, should pay more attention to doctrines such as moral physiology, and one of their primary responsibilities was to establish correct habits in their children. Ante-bellum nurture experts, again mostly physicians, were also stressing that the laws of nurture were important parts of the laws of health. Humphrey, Dewees and Alcott emphasized the inseparable nature of physical care and the nurture of mind and soul, stressing the connection between daily tactics and moral strategy in child rearing.30

28 Mary S. Gove, Lectures to Ladies on Anatomy and Physiology (Boston: Carter and Mussey, 1842).


Sarah Hale, founder and editor of one of the most popular women's magazines of the century, *Godey's Lady's Book*, took a leading role in providing mothers with detailed rules on the daily problems of rearing children to be moral individuals. Clothing, feeding, play, nursery conditions, and the child's relationship with the environment were all carefully investigated in *Ladies Magazine* and *Godey's Lady's Book*. Harriet Martineau gave extensive, and rigorous advice on daily care to mothers in *Household Education*, urging more breast feeding, simple diet, clean nurseries and increased exercise. Andrew Combe and W.A. Alcott, both doctors, and Catherine Beecher stressed the same themes. Alcott paid particular attention to diet, drawing up lists of natural foods that would best contribute to the healthiness of the moral child.


Embedded in this advice was the moral physiologist's belief that by inculcating habitual obedience to hygienic law, children could be enabled to control passions, emotions, appetites and desires. This belief impelled purity reformers to envision a conditioning process for the child which would encompass the total personality of each individual and included the minutest detail of every-day life. If the child could be conditioned in self-control and restraint in all things, then he would be armed with the will-power to resist temptations of the flesh and the fortitude to strive toward pure habits of right living. Right living was Godly living, and a society of individuals committed to this Christian way of life was the society for which purity reformers came to strive.

Thus, the tenets of moral physiology underlay numerous efforts at health-related moral reform during the ante-bellum years. By contributing scientific legitimacy to the ideology of the temperance crusade, moral physiologists helped popularize and diversify the movement. Temperance personnel frequently joined health societies and assisted in the development of a variety of health reform measures, which became, in turn, an important aspect of purity reform. Since moral physiology helped inform the basic premises of both crusades, it was logical that they remain intimately related throughout the century.
Though the Civil War and Reconstruction slowed the development of both movements, an effective temperance revival took place in 1874 through a sensational series of demonstrations by women against liquor stores. Moral physiologist Diocletian Lewis was in large measure responsible for the organization and enthusiasm of these visitation bands. An earnest temperance worker and author of numerous books concerning hygiene and morality, Lewis made whirlwind tours throughout the United States during 1873 and 1874 to encourage the further participation of women in temperance and other hygienic reforms. Events such as this led to the formation of the Women's Christian Temperance Movement in 1874 at Cleveland. Under the leadership of Frances Willard, women claimed an increasing role in the direction of public policy, seeking to inculcate into the people a "taste for higher things" while attacking the sexual drunkard. The law and order societies of the Temperance Movement were reflected in the vigilance committees against prostitution organized by purity workers.

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36 *National Temperance Advocate*, XII (August 1877), 122.

37 *Philadelphia Times* (April 12, 1885).
Frances Willard originally believed that the Woman's Christian Temperance Union would lead the Social Purity Movement through the Department for the Suppression of the Social Evil, which she headed. The Department soon fragmented, however, to include separate departments for pure literature, mother's meetings and social purity, the latter led by Dr. J.H. Kellogg and his wife, Emma. Kellogg, the inventor of breakfast cereals, was also Kellogg the temperance worker and the leading hydropathist of the time. His dietary views were thus given broader scope as part of his numerous reform activities now reached expanded audiences. Social purity workers within the Woman's Christian Temperance Union co-operated with other social purity activists and extended their sphere of influence to include mother's meetings, purity pledges, distribution of pure literature, interest in public education and the Playground Movement, Working Girl's Societies, Children's Rescue Homes and Travellers' Aid Societies. 38

In many cities, however, Social Purity Alliances developed independently of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. 39 Moral Education Associations fostered purity reform. The Society of Friends lent assistance to many purity reform

38 *Union Signal* (January 2, 1890), p. 12.

39 *Alpha* (April 1, 1886), p. 11.
efforts. The Women's Rights Movement strongly supported efforts at purity reform, as did the National Council of Women, The Association for the Advancement of Women, and The Women's Suffrage Movement. The Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations frequently added social purity work to their activities. However, the basic importance of the Temperance Movement to purity reform remained substantial, for it provided the direction and stimulus to the philosophy, structure and activities of social purification. Temperance and sexuality were as intimately related after the Civil War as they had been earlier when William Sanger related prostitution to alcohol.

When the American Purity Alliance was created in New York in 1895, the committee included numerous temperance workers, people who had learned from Frances Willard the possibility of utilizing diverse political strategies to deal with a wide range of social issues. Though the Temperance Movement eventually narrowed to focus specifically on the

40 Woman's Journal (February 23, 1889), p. 64.
Woman's Journal (June 1888), p. 190.

41 Philanthropist (October 1887), p. 8.

closing down of all saloons and total prohibition, temperance injunctions remained closely related to purity reform. School text-books, physiology handbooks, sex education pamphlets and numerous other hygienic tracts recommended by the Purity Alliance continued to relate intemperance to physical debility and sexual misbehavior. "If you desire to preserve your bodily vigor and virtue," said the Reverend Sylvanus Stall, in his highly popular series of sex education manuals, "be warned against intoxicating drink... Liquor and Prostitution in our cities go hand in hand... the use of liquor leads to vice and violence and plunges its victims into temporal and eternal ruin."  

If this was not sufficient warning, there were always the vivid graphics of Dr. Sewell's Stomach School of Temperance Art to fall back upon. Dr. Sewell's six detailed drawings of the "progressive hell through which the digestive apparatus of dram-takers went their dreadful way from light pink (healthful) through an arresting cerise... (after a long debauch), to a deep purple streaked with ominous brown and black... the terminal stage (Death by Delirium Tremens)," were used extensively in school physiology textbooks in the

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Harry T. Peters, Currier and Ives; Printmakers to the American People (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., Inc., 1942), Plate 90.
last decades of the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth century.\footnote{44}

James Timberlake has noted that new scientific data concerning the physiological effects of alcohol gave temperance reform a new urgency after 1900.\footnote{45} Though this was probably true, it would be a mistake to ignore the same phenomenon which occurred some seven or eight decades earlier. Many social workers of the Progressive Era were convinced by scientific data that prohibition was an important part of their work. In the earlier decades of the nineteenth century, many reformers began as temperance workers and were persuaded by the arguments of moral physiology to expand their sights to a larger arena of health and moral reform. In both cases, science provided a legitimacy for moral reform. Certainly, the effects of the Temperance Movement, from its earliest stages, upon health-related moral reform and the Purity Movement cannot be underestimated.

Specific elements of health and moral reform which were stimulated by the convergence of temperance and moral physiology points of view will be examined in the following

\footnote{Ibid.}, p. 40.
chapters. Diet and dress reform, and efforts to promote exercise and healthy recreation demonstrated a growing belief that morality, especially sexual morality, was dependent upon proper hygienic practices.
Chapter 5

D I E T  R E F O R M

One of the most popular elements of health-related moral reform in the nineteenth century was a persistent and many-sided campaign to control behavior through conditioning eating habits. Panaceas and nostrums ranging from Graham Crackers to Kellogg's Cornflakes were advocated as a means of purifying the body and purging sexual urges. The theme that diet was to be controlled and simplified for moral purposes was a constant one throughout the century. Initially advocated by Sylvester Graham and the early nurture experts, a spare diet continued to be promoted by the cereal industry at Battle Creek, and in the detailed injunctions to abstemious and temperate eating to be found in every sex hygiene manual at the turn of the twentieth century.

As a specific campaign in pre-Civil War America, diet reform was largely initiated by Sylvester Graham whose interest in temperance and moral physiology convinced him that proper habits of nourishment were a primary ingredient
of morality. His lectures and publications epitomised the alarm of moral reformers over what they saw as increasing indices of luxurious and sensual living, and emphasized the moral imperative of preserving simplicity of diet in an urban age. Though somewhat extreme in his demands for universal vegetarianism, Graham commanded a large audience for his views which permeated efforts at dietary reform throughout the century.

The use of diet as a means to control sexual activity was by no means a phenomenon of nineteenth century thought. Graham and his followers obviously drew many of their ideas from a tradition of science and folklore dating back to Hippocrates. The idea of certain foods possessing aphrodisiac qualities, for example, has been popular in many ages and cultures. Dietary suggestions appeared during the eighteenth century in Onania, a tract which recommended a combination of preventive and therapeutic measures to aid people to resist the temptation to sexual misbehavior.  

The novelty of Graham's approach lay in the emphasis he placed upon the relationship between dietetic habits and

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1Sylvester Graham, A Lecture to Young Men, On Chastity, Intended Also for the Serious Consideration of Parents and Guardians (third edition; Boston: C.H. Peirce, 1837), p. 79.

2Anon, Onania, or the heinous sin of self-pollution, and all its frightful consequences in both sexes considered (10th edition, Boston, 1724), pp. 33, 41-44.
moral character and his stress upon vegetarianism. Sexual excess and disease, he felt, were intimately connected, and digestion was the first physiological process to suffer as the nervous system transmitted debility throughout the body. Since he held that sexual morality was first and last a matter of hygiene, he concluded that sexual control could be achieved by the careful regulation of man's personal and especially his dietary habits. Wantonness was caused by the free use of 'flesh meats' and could be cured by the timely substitution of a vegetable diet. Meats, spices, sweets, coffee and tea intensified the sexual drive and were calculated to irritate and debilitate, and inflame the alimentary canal. Substances such as alcohol in all its forms, tobacco, opium, and spices like mustard, pepper and salt, provided only stimulation and no nutritional value, and were to be "entirely avoided, with the most rigid and inflexible scrupulosity." Only slightly less dangerous were tea and coffee which were "decidedly pernicious to health."

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3 Sylvester Graham, *Chastity*, p. 179.


5 Ibid., p. 59.

6 Ibid., p. 70.
To be truly healthy it was necessary for a food to contain a proper mix of nutriment and bulk. Those foods with too much nutritive content were to be avoided, such as soups, cream, butter and above all bread made from refined flour. The ideal food was bread made from a "good unbolted wheat meal, coarsely ground" and served "when at least 12 hours old."\(^7\) This was the recipe that ultimately became associated with Graham and was popularized for posterity as the Graham Cracker.

Thus, the doctrine of moral physiology was utilized by Graham to emphasize diet and sex as those areas of human behavior which most frequently debilitated the bodily system. "Like alcohol, spices and animal food," he suggested, the "excitement of sexual activity is able to provoke irritation, inflammation and organic debility."\(^8\) Food, drink and sexual appetites must be contained "strictly within the range of their constitutional design" to remain harmless, for over-indulgence inevitably led to disease and suffering.\(^9\) "The truth of the matter is simply this - a pure and well regulated vegetable diet serves to take away or prevent all morbid or preternatural sexual lust, and to bring and keep the instinct

\(^7\)Ibid., pp. 55, 56.

\(^8\)Ibid., pp. 49-50.

\(^9\)Ibid., p. 49.
more in a truly natural state, and in strict accordance with the final cause of man's sexual organization, and thus enable him to be chaste in body and spirit."¹⁰

Graham's ideas were incorporated in his Boarding Houses in New York and Boston where the daily routine revolved around a strict schedule of meals that were vegetarian, non-alcoholic and prepared according to strict Graham principles. Mary Gove Nichols, convinced of the moral utility of Graham's principles, put them into practice at her Graham Boarding House in Lynn, Massachusetts.¹¹ The American Physiological Society and the Graham Magazine of Health and Longevity, though both short-lived, were enthusiastic disseminators of Graham's ideas. William A. Alcott matched Graham's enthusiasm for hygienic principles by producing prolific writings upon the subject of diet and sexual hygiene: "No man has ever become an adulterer, a fornicator or an idolater," he said, "by eating simples such as plain wheat, corn, rye, potatoes, rice, peas, beans, turnips and apples."¹² As a prominent

¹⁰Sylvester Graham, Chastity: p. 187.


Alcott also produced, Tea and Coffee (Boston: Light and Stearns, 1839); The Laws of Health (Boston: Jewett, 1843); The Young Mother (Light and Stearns, 1836); The Young Housekeeper (Boston: Light and Stearns, 1839); and many others.
member of the group of nurture experts in the three decades prior to the Civil War, Alcott particularly stressed the perils of a "distorting" diet upon the character development of the child. In line with Grahamite thinking he maintained that milk, cold water, wheat bread and vegetables formed an adequate diet for children, and condemned cakes, pastries, spices, liquor, tea, coffee and meat. Harriet Martineau also urged that rich, sweet foods, and spices be removed from the child's menu.

The dietary injunctions of these nurture specialists naturally stressed the importance of educating the mother to establish correct eating habits in her children. Since the child received his first nourishment in the home, it was the mother's responsibility to improve the standards of nutrition for her family and thus improve the health of the nation. Her first responsibility was to cultivate the habit of breast-feeding, not only for nutritional reasons, but also for the possibility that breast milk might aid in transferring the mother's moral virtues to the child. Harriet Martineau, a strong proponent of breast feeding, provided further guidelines


14 ______________________, *The Young Housekeeper*, p. 161.


which suggested that, in order to cultivate the habit of obedience, the child should not be fed on demand.\textsuperscript{17}

Sylvester Graham added the baking of bread to the mothers' primary responsibilities in nurturing the child and tending to the family. The one who should bake the bread, Graham advised, was the wife, and mother, "who rightly perceives the relation between the dietetic habits and moral conditions of her loved ones, and justly appreciates the importance of good bread to their physical and moral welfare." She was the only one who could attain "that maturity of judgement and skilfulness of operation, which are the indispensable attributes of a perfect bread maker."\textsuperscript{18}

Most of the communitarian organizations of the ante-bellum years practiced Graham's dietary principles. The dining room at George Ripley's Brook Farm had a Graham table. Thomas and Mary Nichols were both aggressive exponents of Graham's vegetarianism and unbolted wheat flour. The short-lived Fruitlands Community at Harvard, Massachusetts, founded by Bronson Alcott in 1843 was composed of strict vegetarians who also shunned butter, eggs, milk, cheese, coffee, tea and

\textsuperscript{17}Harrriet Martineau, "How to Make Home Unhealthy," Harper's Monthly, 1 (October 1850), 602.

molasses. Furthermore, at Fruitlands, the members ate only their home grown 'aspiring' vegetables, as opposed to those degrading types of root vegetables which burrowed into the darkness of the earth. 19

The dietary principles of moral physiology reached a wider audience in the 1840's and 50's through two particular movements, phrenology and hydrotherapy. Phrenologists held that there were thirty-seven elements which made up the individual character, temperament and ability, and each of these were controlled by a distinct area of the brain. By referring to the work of Franz Gall, phrenologists placed the origin of lust or sexual desire in the cerebellum. 20 Many felt that phrenology and moral physiology were entirely compatible. Orson Fowler combined the two enthusiastically - as he saw it, animal food and other stimulants tended to inflame that area of the brain which controlled the physical drives and emotions. 21 Becoming a fervent vegetarian, Fowler branched out to become an authority on trait number one of his phrenology chart, 'amativeness,' and wrote a number of


widely read manuals, two of which were *Love and Parentage* and *Fowler on Matrimony*.

A devoted supporter of Fowler, and his architectural views on the 'octagon' was Henry Stephen Chubb who carried the combination of phrenology and moral physiology to perhaps its most extreme conclusion. His stated aim was to erect, in the center of the United States, a permanent home for vegetarians, "a font from which should flow beneficient influences to make all Americans worthy of their great destiny." Land on his Kansas development was sold only to vegetarians who pledged themselves to abstain from tobacco and alcohol, but despite the hopeful intentions of Mr. Chubb, the venture rapidly ended as a fiasco.

The 'science' of phrenology gained widespread popularity in mid-nineteenth century America for it supplied to educators, reformers and others interested in behavioral modification, a further optimism in human perfectibility. The theory of phrenology confirmed ideas about conditioning for it allowed that the desirable faculties of the mind could be cultivated through their exercise and the undesirable

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22 For Fowler's views on the Octagon, see, *A Home for All; or the Gavel Wall and Octagon Mode of Building* (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1854).


24 Stewart Holbrook, *ibid.*, p. 49.
faculties inhibited by the reverse. It promised, therefore, good possibilities for improving the character of the child. The sweeping popularity of phrenology thus provided a more heterogenous public for many of the ideas of moral physiologists.\(^25\)

The second movement to incorporate the dietary principles of moral physiology was water-cure, or hydrotherapy - a therapeutic system based upon the external application of cold water on different parts of the body. During the 1840's hydrotherapy became more popular when Joel Shew enlarged the system to include the hygienic regimen of moral physiology.\(^26\) Influenced by Shew, the American Hydropathic Society was renamed the American Hygienic and Hydropathic Society in 1850. The society advocated vegetarianism and exercise as important hygienic measures.\(^27\)


\(^{26}\) Joel Shew, *Hydropathy; or the Water Cure* (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1844).

Impressed by the dietary measures promoted by hydropathists, leading women reformers such as Amelia Bloomer, Lucy Stone and Susan B. Anthony pressed Russell Thacher Trail to aid in their efforts at diet reform. Trail, temperance worker, prominent hydropathic physician and co-founder of the American Hydropathic Society consequently wrote *The New Hydropathic Cookbook* in 1853, which was intended to help mothers, along with Lydia Child's *American Frugal Housewife*, to improve the dietary practices of the family. For the more well-to-do, Hydropathic Institutes were established where visitors could take the water cure, experience proper hygienic practices and consult physicians about their sexual problems. At Russell Thacher Trail's Hydropathic and Hygienic Institute in New York City, a spartan regimen prevailed. Meals were served and baths taken only at specified hours. The use of tobacco and alcohol was strictly forbidden as was "all lounging on the sofas." Public rooms and gymnasiums were available for exercise. In addition, the kitchens manufactured "all kinds of farinaceous preparations . . . pure and proper articles of wheaten grits, hominy, oatmeal, farina, crackers etc.," not only for residents but for sale to outsiders. Physicians were in attendance at Trail's Hydropathic Institute to give advice on water treatment and

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diet, and especially to interview and treat people who
suffered from various maladies as a result of sexual abuse.\footnote{Russell Thacher Trail, \textit{Sexual Physiology} (New
York: Fowler and Wells, 1864), pp. 48-51.}

Taking advantage of the growing popularity of
hydropathic institutes, and catering to the demand for health
foods and sexual advice, James Caleb Jackson established a
resort-type institution in 1859 in upstate New York called
"Our Home on the Hillside." In addition to the facilities
found at Trail's Institute, concerts, theaters, outings and
lectures were provided for guests, many of whom did not
necessarily go to receive treatments. Health foods were also
prepared for outside distribution, among them a particular
concoction of Graham flour and water which became known as

\textquotequote{Granola} was not a commercial success and the project may have been
forgotten had not a group of Seventh Day Adventists from
Battle Creek, Michigan visited 'Our Home' to consult with
Dr. Jackson about his methods. Upon their return to Battle
Creek they established, in 1866, a Health Reform Institute
to serve the needs of their group. Ten years later, a member
of this group, John Harvey Kellogg became Superintendent of
the Institute and renamed it the Battle Creek Sanitarium.
According to one of Graham's biographers, "The 'San', as it familiarly became known to thousands of debilitated persons who visited it in the course of the next sixty years, was, in a sense, the final incarnation of the Graham Boarding House."  

Kellogg was the protégé of Ellen G. Harmon, later Mrs. James S. White, the prophetess of the Adventist Movement. After the 'great disappointment' of October 1844 when the millennial prophecies of William Miller failed to materialize, Mrs. White was responsible for the re-organization of the Adventist Movement which took the name, in 1860, of the Seventh Day Adventists. She claimed to have numerous visions, and turned out a nine volume work entitled 'Testimonies' which explained her doctrinal teaching and special views on health and diet. Kellogg became the prime instrument in disseminating these views which were, in fact, a restatement of the Graham position, and was responsible for turning Battle Creek, the headquarters of the Seventh Day Adventists into the nation's breakfast cereal center.  

Kellogg's writings on sex and diet were prolific. He and his wife Emma took leading roles among purity reformers.


of the latter part of the nineteenth century in the attempt to control excessive and unnatural indulgences of food and sex.\(^{34}\) When Kellogg explained his position to a convention of purity workers in 1895 he was elaborating on the theme presented earlier by Sylvester Graham; "The exorbitant demands of the sexual appetite encountered among civilized people are not the result of a normal instinct, but are due to the incitements of an abnormally stimulating diet, the seduction of prurient literature and so-called art, and the temptations of impure associations."\(^{35}\)

As heirs to the ideology of Sylvester Graham, the Kelloggs stressed frugality and temperance in diet, emphasizing that "there shall be nothing on our tables to awaken the appetite of the reformed."\(^{36}\) However, the Kelloggs felt that they directed their efforts beyond those of Graham by attempting to transform diet into a science for application

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\(^{34}\) Among others, John Harvey Kellogg produced, *Plain Facts About Sexual Life* (Battle Creek, Michigan: Good Health Publishing Company, 1877); *First Book in Physiology and Hygiene* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1888); and *Ladies Guide in Health and Disease* (Battle Creek, Michigan: Good Health Publishing Company, 1901).

\(^{35}\) J.H. Kellogg, "Chastity and Health," delivered at the National Purity Congress, Baltimore, Maryland, 1895, in Collected Reprints, National Medical Library.

\(^{36}\) A popular Purity phrase coined by Mary G. Smith, *Temperance Cook Book* (San Jose, California: Mercury Book House, 1887), preface.
to everyday life. The title of Emma Kellogg's new cookbook, *Science in the Kitchen*, illustrated their efforts. Eating was for providing strength and endurance, not for enjoyment. Hence, natural foods were advocated along with economy in preparation and intake. Vegetarianism continued to be promoted since excessive animal foods were held to be a causative factor in arousing the 'animal passions'. Kellogg held that religion proscribed the selection of foods which could be categorized as good or evil, moral or immoral, and, in order to increase the category of moral foods, Emma Kellogg continued Graham's search for new health foods in the kitchens of Battle Creek Sanitarium in Michigan. She was, no doubt, influenced by scientific developments in bacteriology and chemistry which revealed the large scale adulteration of general foodstuffs. Bread, for example, was adulterated with sulfate of copper, with inferior flour and accidentally with ashes from the oven and grit from machinery. Butter was found to contain copper, excess water, 


excess salt, other fats and starch. Milk was adulterated with water, burnt sugar, yellow dye, sand and dirt. In 1875, the Board of Health of New York City found one hundred per cent of the samples of cream of tartar they tested to consist largely of poisonous terra alba.

Cognizant that America was a "nation of dyspeptics" in addition to being subject to the health hazards of food adulteration, Emma Kellogg's first preparation was a bland "dyspeptic wafer" for use in the treatment of stomach ailments. More far reaching were her experiments to design a breakfast cereal for Americans. In 1887, Kellogg began to market a cereal she had devised called 'Granola' but Jackson of "Our Home" quickly took the Kelloggs to court for copying his product. Undeterred by this setback the Kelloggs went on to devise new and better products. Their next cereal, a primitive version of cornflakes, was "Elijah's Mannah." Within the cereal boxes, like fortune cookies or the free gadgets of today, were religious tracts discussing the relationship between health and morality. The Cornflake


43 Ibid., pp. 279, 257.
Crusade, as it has been described by Carson, was effective in establishing a large market for breakfast cereals. Promoters of this new type of breakfast, emphasized that not only were cornflakes efficient, by saving preparation time for the housewife, but were also natural, healthful foods. The dietary injunctions of moral physiology flowed into a cereal industry; Graham's principles "had become transformed into a commercial product."

In a further reiteration of an old theme, the Kelloggs pointed out that there was more to diet reform than preparing the right kinds of foods. The important task of the wife in training the appetites of the family had to be considered since she was the family steward, who must select and prepare the best foods for the physical and spiritual needs of her husband and children. Holding that character was the result of training, specifically training of the appetite, they utilized the conditioning theories of Pavlov to support their views. Through their experiments at Battle Creek Sanitarium, and their emphasis upon the popular theme

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45 S.W. Nissenbaum, *op. cit.*, p. 239.


of science, they were able to gain a broad following for their dietary injunctions.

Impressed by the definitive studies of the Kelloggs on the relationship of diet and morality, purity reformers were convinced that proper, hygienic habits of eating could assist in character development as well as creating strength against sexual misbehavior. Not only food habits, but all daily habits came under close scrutiny. Of particular interest to women reformers was the feeling that delinquencies of dress contributed to a fair proportion of immoral behavior and female diseases. Furthermore, the cumbersome clothing, that was the fashion of the age, impeded the activities of women, both at home and in their efforts to compete with men in the industrial arena. Just as the conditioning of eating habits promised to promote moral living, the application of morality to matters of dress heralded hopes for a fitter society.
Chapter 6

DRESS REFORM

Like diet reform, dress reform promised to become a technique for controlling behavior through the conditioning of daily habits. During the nineteenth century, moral reformers came to see healthful clothing and daily decisions on matters of dress as necessary ingredients in purifying the body as house to the soul. As they saw it, Christian dressing should involve cleanliness, neatness, modesty and simplicity, the ability to resist the lure of distasteful fads and fashions, and a functional knowledge of the laws of health.

The distasteful effects of fashion had been commented upon early in the nineteenth century by an observer who described the fashions of ordinary citizens as ludicrous and lascivious. "Reputable ladies," he commented, "dressed more indecently than prostitutes, their appearance serving, not only to entice, but almost to force the male of ardent passions to acts of violence." Worse, he continued, were the clothing habits of female children who, "before nature supplies them with real, . . . exhibit, as substitutes, in
the usual form, artificial breasts." By the 1830's, moral physiology doctrine was able to lend a scientific tone to such protests over immoral and indecent clothing habits. Sylvester Graham pointed out that improper clothing encouraged disease and sexual problems and that health demanded simple, modest clothes.

His message that the simplification of dress was mandatory for healthy and moral living found a small but ready audience. The early nurture experts, for example, readily identified the need to simplify the clothing of the child for moral purposes. "Fashion," said Mrs. Graves, had turned the child into an artificial spoiled doll," and she was one of several authorities who exhorted mothers, not only to set a better example themselves, but to stop swaddling and over-dressing their children. Dr. Humphrey warned that too many clothes prevented a child from creeping. Harriet Martineau reiterated his warning when she complained of "the excessive pinning of children's clothes." She, and


5Harriet Martineau, "From a Mother's Diary," _Ladies Magazine_, IV (June, 1831), 129.
other nurture experts, pleaded for a return to simple clothes, since, in their view, fancy dress encouraged vanity and irresoluteness, rather than simplicity and directness of character.6

Since it was an issue which held promise of suiting a variety of purposes, women reformers became particularly interested in applying the laws of health to dress reform. It supplied them with a clearly identifiable means of advertising their quest for simplicity of habits, for day to day healthful living, and also for their liberation from subjection to traditional ideas concerning their position in the home and the industrial work arena. Since it restricted her physical movement, female dress, especially long skirts and tight corsets, impeded the working woman. Functional clothes promised to become a symbol of the emancipating woman's quest for equality. In fact the ongoing relationship between moral reform and the Women's Rights Movement was clearly illustrated by efforts to rationalize dress.

The need for modesty added a difficult dimension to the problem of rationalizing clothes. While the American Female Moral Reform Society complained in 1839 that the long skirts of women trailed in the dust and collected garbage, they still felt compelled to disregard the obvious solution of

shortening skirts in the name of modesty. Discussions of clothing were further complicated by the demands of etiquette. Mrs. Trolloppe, in Domestic Manners of the Americans cautioned her male readers against the use of the word 'corset' in the presence of ladies. Godey's Lady's Book of 1852 advised that legs be referred to as 'women's extremities' and that women's underclothes be termed unmentionables. In an age where many references to clothes or parts of the body were considered immodest, where bifurcated undergarments were shown carefully folded in advertisements, and where any medical complaint between the neck and the knees was often referred to as the 'liver', lady reformers clearly had a problem of magnitude in attempting to redesign female clothing to suit their purposes. At times, therefore, dress reform had its bizarre and ludicrous dimensions.

The first major discussion of alternative clothing was centered in The Lily, a magazine edited by temperance and women's rights advocate Amelia Jenks Bloomer. During

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9 Godey's Lady's Book, XLII (March, 1852), 16.

Figure 3. Harry T. Peters, Currier and Ives: Printmakers to the American People (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., Inc., 1942), Plate 95.
her editorship of this magazine in the 1850's she was persuaded to wear "bloomers", a kind of bifurcated garment inspired by that worn by women taking the water cure. The bloomer dress, in fact, was very similar to the dress worn by the Perfectionist women at Oneida, and though the costume was not primarily designed as a female right's protest, it became so at the Third Convention for Women's Rights at Syracuse, New York. Lucy Stone, Susan Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Amelia Bloomer and others all sported bloomers at the convention, protesting that "nature never intended that the sexes should be distinguished by apparel."\(^\text{11}\)

To counter attacks of indecency, reformers pointed out the decorousness of trousers, since they concealed the legs to perfection, which was not necessarily the case with hoop-skirts. Mrs. Jones commented on the fashionable lady who "frantically grasping her skirts in front with one hand, with the other lifts hoops and all behind her and tiptoes across the street, with her clothing in the rear at an altitude of which she has no conception, and revealing, not only feet and ankles, but even limbs to an extent which a neatly-clad bloomer would blush to think of."\(^\text{12}\)

\(^1^\text{1}\) Helena Maria Webber, in Frances E. Russell, "A Brief Survey of the American Dress Reform Movement of the Past," The Arena Magazine, VI (June, 1892), 491.

Despite the appeal of bloomers as a symbol of emancipation, and indeed of comfort and rationality, they did not become popular. Antoinette Blackwell advised her friends not to become martyrs over a short dress, and once the novelty had passed most women reformers relinquished the bifurcated garment in favor of the more conventional skirt.

In addition to the use of dress reform as a symbol of emancipation, it was increasingly advocated as a necessary health measure. Those concerned with the laws of health in relation to morality were particularly upset at the physical and moral damage they felt was caused to women by fashionable clothes. The years after the Civil War saw an increasing number of vigorous efforts to remove these abuses. Dr. Mary Walker, a temperance worker, a tireless speaker against the 'nicotine evil', and an ardent supporter of women's rights (thought she strongly disliked women reformers), felt that "the greatest sorrows from which women suffered were caused by their unhygienic method of dressing — the want of a ballot is but a toy in comparison."\(^{13}\) Dressed in the trousers, frock coat and silk hat that she had worn as an Assistant-Surgeon during the Civil War, she campaigned for the Mary Walker Reform Dress, which included a soft, one-piece

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undergarment. Dr. Diocletian Lewis was another ardent campaigner for women's rights in the form of more hygienic clothing for women. He protested against corsets, and advocated shorter skirts and suspenders to take the strain off the pelvic regions, thus to save them for more worthy purposes. "An immense loss of female power," stated Dr. Edward Clarke, "may be fairly charged to certain delinquencies of dress." Convinced by these and other arguments, purity reformers integrated dress reform to their movement. They perceived that it could be usefully employed to educate mother and child in morality. Furthermore, here was a subject which could be exploited to disseminate social purity ideas in and through the women's movement.

The latter idea proved to be more complicated than they had supposed. Though the goals of dress reform efforts of purity reformers and members of the Women's Rights Movement


15 Diocletian Lewis, Chastity; or Our Secret Sins (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1874).

16 E.H. Clarke, quoted in Julia Ward Howe, Sex and Education (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1874), p. 118.

converged at many points, contradictory assumptions arose concerning the role of the body in matters pertaining to the pursuit of perfection. Purity workers concerned with women's rights wished to use dress to demonstrate the rise of utilitarian values and the achievement of woman's freedom. They preferred sex differences to be minimized rather than emphasized by clothing. Color in dress for both sexes, for example, was encouraged by some reformers who held that black was depressing and not contributory to the pursuit of purity. At the same time, purity reformers such as Josiah Leeds insisted upon modesty and propriety in matters of dress, favored plain and somber clothing, and passionately campaigned against nudity in real or art form.

Nudity posed a particularly difficult problem to purity reformers. If the body was to be a temple of God, an instrument to be admired and perfected, then nudity could not be regarded as sinful or disgusting. On the contrary, perhaps the body should be regarded as beautiful. Yet, it was felt by many moralists that nudity in real or art form evoked


21 G.R. Taylor, op. cit., p. 86.
such powerful stimulants to sexual thoughts and feelings that it was bound to lead to vice and immorality. The large scale emergence in America of reproductions of French paintings containing nudes in the 1880's particularly frightened many purity workers. Five hundred women protested an exhibition of reproductions at the Pennsylvania Academy of Art which was forced to remove the offending paintings. When the New York Telegram printed some of the photographic copies, Josiah Leeds went personally to the streets in Philadelphia and had a peddler arrested for selling copies of the newspaper.

In this endeavor, purity forces represented a common feeling of the age against nudity in art. Mark Twain in *A Tramp Abroad* condemned the exhibition of Titian's *Venus* in Florence as "painted for a bagnio." The women painted by popular artists such as John Singer Sargent, Abbot Thayer and George de Forest Brush were all virginal and beautifully clothed. As Henry Adams commented, post Civil War America was a society in which "an American Venus would never dare exist."

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Despite the fact that some purity workers were much more extreme than others in condemning nudity, most agreed upon the importance of simplicity and hygiene in dress. The moral consequences of lascivious dressing were discussed at length by Dr. Kellogg. In his opinion, simplicity in dress was necessary since any departure from the simple habits of life could lead to corruption. Josiah Leeds produced a pamphlet on the same subject entitled, "Simplicity of Attire in Relation to Social Purity," in which he emphasized the role of simple habits of dress in maintaining a pure morality.

To attain simplicity it was felt that luxury and fashion, manifested by irrational and costly clothes must be combatted by reforms attempting to rationalize dress and keep morals in restraint. Unfortunately, fashion did not aid the reformers, since the trend toward the "whirling skirt, low corsage, bare arm, lured men," they felt, and caused the "boiling over of passions and corruption." James Parton had already lent emphasis to this view by condemning, "the


moral impotence of almost all women to resist the tyranny of fashion and the necessity that appears to rest upon them to copy every disfiguration invented by the harlots of Paris."\(^{29}\)

Indeed, said John Spalding Lancaster, "a fashionable woman can hardly create a happy home or be the mother of true men."\(^{30}\) Even interest in fashion was felt to be corrupting since it intensified self-consciousness which was the antithesis of the social identity sought by purity reformers.\(^{31}\) Furthermore, it led to the mistaken belief that dress made the lady when in reality it was character that made her. "Dress, indeed all outward environment," said Elizabeth Powell Bond, "must be subordinated to personality; to character, and in this secret is a law for guidance."\(^{32}\) Mothers were consequently warned not to surrender their daughters "in the very bloom of their youthful powers, to the unintelligent dominion of fashion," and to pay attention to the laws of health in


\(^{32}\) Elizabeth Powell Bond, "Beauty and Simplicity" (MSS, Swarthmore College, November 27, 1896), p. 10.
relation to clothing habits. Freedom from moral corruption was associated with freedom from the strictures of the cumbersome and non-functional clothing of the past, and such delinquencies of dress had to be eradicated.

One of the most dangerous pieces of clothing which fashion had imposed upon women was the corset, against which reformers campaigned ceaselessly. The penance of the corset was strictly for the female, women reformers pointed out, therefore it was not only unhealthy, but unfair. Furthermore, the crippling effects of the corset should overshadow any enjoyment reached from improving the contours, which in any case was unhealthy and immoral. "By far the most frequent difficulty with our women" said Julia Ward Howe in 1874, "arises from uterine displacement and ... the utter disuse of the muscles ... which are kept inactive by the corset, weighed upon by the heavy skirt and drawn down upon by the violent and unnatural motion of the dancing at present in vogue."

When the whalebone corset was replaced by the all-metal corset the results of bruises, cuts, displacement of inner organs, occasional miscarriages and disfigurement continued to occur. Purity reformers such as Lewis and

33Julia Ward Howe, Sex and Education, p. 10.
34Ibid., pp. 28-9.

Advertisement from Harper's Bazar, 1886.
Kellogg protested strongly against the needlessness of these crippling effects which damaged the child-bearing apparatus of women. Kellogg embarked upon a series of researches to prove scientifically that dress was a factor inducing disease. Claiming proof that women breathed costally rather than abdominally, he concluded that corsets caused chest and pelvic diseases. He therefore advocated removal of the stricture of corsets to allow increased freedom of movement.  

Fashion, however, proved a formidable enemy. The corset was considered a most important part of every fashionable woman's wardrobe and many women were reluctant to relinquish its aesthetic effects, despite the unpleasant consequences. As Julia Ward Howe repeated sadly, a very estimable young lady said to me the other day, in answer to a plea for dress reform, "It is better to look handsome, even if it does shorten life a little." Furthermore, reformers noted, physicians could not necessarily be relied upon to condemn the corset. Commenting upon the attitudes of some doctors, Grace Greenwood reminisced:

No girl in the physiology class had so small a waist. I had occasional fainting fits which rendered me interesting.

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36 Julia Ward Howe, Sex and Education, p. 28.
For these, and the ugly pain in my side, the cough and palpitations, physicians were called in. If they 'thought' corsets they did not mention them. Doctors were delicate in those days. Not knowing what to do, they bled me.37

Other physicians held quite a different view. Believing corsets to be of therapeutic value, some went into business for themselves. In 1880, for example, Dr. George Scott put on the market an unbreakable electric corset guaranteed to cure paralysis, rheumatism, spinal complaints and kidney troubles.38

For those women who did seek respite from restrictions of the corset, alternatives were offered in the form of new undergarments. Some ordered, "Dr. Jägers Sanitary Woolen System of Dress." This German dress reformer advocated woolen underclothes, since wool symbolized purity and woolen garments balanced human emotions and body odors.39 The success of his woolen clothes was short-lived, however, since his advice that a shirt could be worn six to eight weeks without washing, and that there was no need to dry the body before putting on underclothes resulted in an obvious imbalance to


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TRIAL

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In ordering, kindly mention this publication, and state exact size of Corset usual worn; or, where the size is not known, take a tight measurement of the waist over the linen. This can be done with a piece of common string, which send with your order. Make all remittances payable to

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Dr. Scott's Electric Hair Balm in new prices $1, $1.50, $2, $2.50 and $3—sent postpaid on receipt of price.

Figure 5. Harper's Bazaar, 1883, in Rudofsky, op. cit., p. 107.
the wearer of body odor over human emotion. Another kind of woolen garment known as the 'alpha undergarment' was placed on the market by Mrs. Susan Converse. She invented, or possibly copied from Dr. Mary Walker, "the soft, warm and healthful material" that extended from neck to ankles. Popularized in the Woman's Journal it apparently proved very marketable.

By 1891, it was apparent to women dress reformers that further effort was needed to persuade women to change their clothing habits. Thus, the International Council of Women decided to give major consideration to the topic. The Council emphasized the value of loose clothing as opposed to tight garments which caused physical illness, and advocated that women should make a special effort to overcome the notion that beauty was a corollary to fashion. It was pointed out by some that the waspish waist of fashionable women was objectionable since the apparent lack of an abdomen carefully scored away any trace of woman's real mission - motherhood. Dr. Kellogg raised the question of why women should have smaller waists than men and answered it in the negative. The ideal he pointed to was the abandoned waistline of Venus de

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Milo. The magazine *Arena* was utilized to publicize a quest for morality in dress, and a series of articles was run discussing the search for an ideal form of dress for the American woman. The choice, later symbolized by Isadora Duncan, self-styled heroine of dress reform, though certainly not regarded by women reformers as such, was the Greek ideal, symbol of Republican virtues.

The success of purity reformers in imposing simpler patterns of clothing upon the female population is difficult to estimate. The female silhouette did change after the 1870's when the voluminous and heavy hoop skirt was gradually supplanted by the bustle. Skirts remained long, however, modestly covering the leg and continuing to hamper female movement. Where women's rights advocates scored the most


Note: In an attempt to return to the spiritual and bodily freedom of ancient Greek civilization, Isadora Duncan rejected the stylized fashion and movement patterns of her time, and swathed in yards of white muslin and bare-footed, she set out to create a modern dance form based upon classical music and art. Her success, at least in America, was minimal in her time, but she did claim to have helped liberate women from the corset. A more practical explanation for the demise of the corset lay in the war efforts of 1914 when Alice Longsworth decided that corsets were non-essential requirements for women. As a result, a member of the War Industries Board revealed that the American women's sacrifice had released 28,000 tons of steel during World War I - enough to build two battleships. [Alice Longsworth, quoted in Rudofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 189.]
success, perhaps, was in the sporting field. Though, prior to the twentieth century, a woman's bathing suit rendered swimming not only difficult but dangerous, and dress for tennis and bicycling was rather cumbersome, the trend of popular female participation in sport had begun and would bring with it a new outlook upon clothing for movement. Thus purity reform, through its strong component of women's rights leaders, acted, perhaps accidentally, to urge the liberation of the human body from the bondage of covered limbs.

Most important to the purity reformers, however, was the fact that discussions of a topic so interesting to women drew their attention to the purity aspects of dress reform. As prospective mothers they were exhorted to discard the damaging corset. As wives they were shown that fashionable clothes stimulated male sexual interest and encouraged vanity and irresoluteness. Above all, as mothers, they were asked to carefully consider the effects that dress could have upon their relationship with the child and on the child himself. A mother who herself disregarded the laws of health in her clothing habits could only set a poor example to her child. Plainly and comfortably dressed, however, the mother could rear her child in the same mode, in an atmosphere of healthful simplicity. Thus, dress reform seemed to purity reformers an excellent method of educating the mother and child in morality. As a technique for controlling behavior through
the conditioning of daily habits, dress reform was viewed in the same light as diet reform. Simply dressed and plainly nourished, the obedient child of purity reform would be internally strengthened to live a moral, Christian life.

This emphasis on the physical aspects of daily life also found expression in the attitudes of moralists toward exercise. Just as correct habits of diet and dress promised to help purify the body, physical activity came to be viewed as an excellent method of training the character, developing self-control and curbing immorality.
Since moral physiology stressed the importance of physical culture in the inculcation of healthy and moral habits, purity reformers came to view exercise as an important deterrent to physical debility and sexual misbehavior. Strenuous muscular activity, they hoped, would develop habits of self-control and endurance. Well developed habits of exercise, formed early and repeated regularly, would help form a character which could withstand the temptation of the human appetite for sex, bawdy entertainment, rich foods and frivolous clothes. In a sense, therefore, reformers felt that muscular activity would refrigerate the passions, and at the same time, contribute to the well-being of the nation by providing strong and healthy parents for the future.

As with many of their techniques for purifying society, Americans often imported their ideas concerning exercise from Europe. From Germany came Gymnastik Fur Die Jugend, a handbook designed by Guths Muths in the late eighteenth century to stress the moral and physical utility
of planned exercise. Muths held that the utilization of gymnastics was a means to a better race and a united father-land. In his estimation, control over bodily functions would contribute to the faith and self-confidence of the individual, which in turn would lead to a good moral attitude. Asserting that the nature of a nation's pastimes were a reflection of its national character, he pressed for physical exercise in order that it might serve as a prophylactic for the physical and moral welfare of the future generation. His views were also disseminated by his disciples, primarily three German refugees who immigrated to America in the 1820's. These men, Charles Beck, Charles Follen and Francis Leiber, stimulated the American public to a wider interest in organized exercises by helping to establish gymnasia at Northampton, Cambridge and Boston, Massachusetts, soon after their arrival. Enthusiasm soon waned, however, and in 1830, Dr. John Collins Warren, who had helped to establish a gymnasium at Harvard, reported that "the exercises were pursued with ardor so long

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1 Guths Muths, Gymnastics Fur Die Jugend (Schneplenthal: Im Vertage der Buchhandlung der Erziehungsanstaldt, 1793).

2 Nicolaas J. Moolenijzer, "Johann C.F. Guths Muths' Contribution to Athletics" (paper read at the National Convention of the National College Physical Education Association for Men at San Diego, California, December, 1966), p. 5.
as their novelty lasted, but owing to not understanding their importance . . . they have gradually been neglected or forgotten."

Although few public gymnasia were established until the latter part of the century, interest in gymnastics was sustained at the hydropaths and health resorts and through the various self-help manuals disseminated by moral physiologists. Sylvester Graham advised that sedentary habits were to be avoided at all costs since they caused the blood to accumulate in the lower regions of the body and gave rise to undesirable sexual thoughts and feelings. He therefore recommended the gymnasium as an excellent place for a man to subdue both his lust and maintain his strength in the face of a radically reduced diet. The Reverend John Todd's Student's Manual was typical of a number of treatises urging physical exercise as a means to combat sexual urges and the loss of semen. First published in 1835 the popularity of the book was such that there were seven editions by 1837 and twenty-four editions by 1854. Todd perceived a subtle

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relationship between exercise and energy conservation. A
certain amount of physical exercise was a necessary part of
his total scheme of discipline, yet too much exercise could
interfere with the distribution of vital powers by drawing
away energy from the brain.  

Moral physiologists also advocated physical exercise
for women. Amariah Brigham and, later, Isaac Ray both claimed
that girls needed exercise to become robust mothers. They
urged that women develop a "bodily constitution possessing
extraordinary powers of endurance." Dr. Augustus Kinsley
Gardner advocated exercise for women as an aid in the produc-
tions of sons of a new 'national physique' and emphasized
the desirability of persuading parents to reproduce on stock
breeding and stock raising principles.

Indeed, a constant and increasingly popular theme
of nineteenth century physicians, educators and publicists
was the expression of concern about the physical deterioration

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Amariah Brigham, Remarks on the Influence of Mental Cultivation and Mental Excitement (Boston: Marsh, Capen and Lyon, 1833), p. 16.

7 Augustus Kinsley Gardner, Conjugal Sins Against the Laws of Life and Health and Their Effects upon the Father, Mother and Child (New York: Dewitt and Davenport, 1870), p. 192.
Female education was frequently blamed for this deterioration by those who believed that intellectual activity absorbed vital energy that was required for the optimum development of the reproductive organs. The results of female education, said Dr. Edward Clarke, "are monstrous brains and puny bodies; abnormally weak digestion; flowing thought and constipated bowels..." Those who supported female education were criticized for contributing to the degeneration of the race by valuing the development of the mind over that of the body.

To counteract this trend, a number of health reformers called for physical exercise to play a larger role in American education. Dr. Diocletian Lewis, a fervent moral physiologist, attempted to introduce light gymnastics for both sexes into the public schools and popularized the use of wooden dumb bells and bean bags. His Normal Institute for Physical Education established in 1863, was, in fact, the first attempt to prepare teachers of physical education in

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the United States. Other reformers advocated a more active participation in housework for the girl who was too used to having servants do all the work. Bed-making, sweeping, and scrubbing were especially recommended.

Womens' rights advocates, of course, tended to attack the notion that education was to blame for the poor health of American womanhood, and placed the blame upon the dress and fashionable habits of ignorant women, and the lack of physical exercise among females. Girls were not allowed enough freedom of movement in the open air, complained Julia Ward Howe, and pointed out that "some instances of remarkable robustness in women have been the results of giving the girls a chance, through athletic sports and unrestricted exercise in the open air."

Equally enthusiastic to include physical exercise as part of healthy growth were the ante-bellum child nurture experts who wished to improve the physical and therefore the


12 George Everett, Health Fragments, or, Steps Toward a True Life: Embracing Health, Digestion, Disease and the Science of Reproductive Organs (New York: J.S. Redfield, 1874), p. 37.

13 Julia Ward Howe, Sex and Education (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1874), p. 29.
moral development of the child. Harriet Martineau attacked the notion that "a little gentle amble with a hoop for severest exercise" was adequate for good physical and moral development. She also criticized, along with Dr. Humphrey, such excessive dressing of young children as restricted their freedom of movement. Robust physical activity was declared to be a natural tendency of the child, and one which would help "harden the body against the effects of animality and prevent moral flabbiness and laziness." The need for exercise had already been pointed out by Dr. Dewees who specifically mentioned the use of games as a means of circumventing "the precocious development of the sexual instinct." Implicit in these injunctions was a developing moral justification for play, which, in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, was to blossom into a major area of professional child study.

The spartan approach to the nurture of children in the years prior to the Civil War went hand in hand with the


16 Ibid., p. 74.

admonitions of moral physiologists to subdue the animal
instincts of the body through physical exercise and exertion
as part of a rigid, daily routine. Gymnasia were consequently
constructed at Graham boarding houses, and later at hydro­
pathic institutes where well-ordered exercise formed an
indispensable part of the strict routine of sleeping, eating
and bathing. As health resorts took the place of hydropaths,
the gymnasium remained a popular feature of the regular
facilities, and recreative exercise was stressed as a remedial
measure for sexual disorders. The clientele, however, was
limited. Health resorts catered to the more wealthy, upper
and middle class, and few working men had the opportunity
to participate in gymnastic activities. Convinced that
exercise did indeed help to restrain sexual excess and its
related characteristics, purity reformers looked to other
modes of exercise to accomplish their goals.

The concept which attracted them was organized
games. Prior to the Civil War, the enthusiasm of the English
for organized games, and the apparent constructive and pro­
ductive aspects of involvement in sports, had attracted the
attention of a group of New England clergymen and intellec­
tuals.18 Dr. Thomas Arnold of Rugby Public School claimed
that sport contributed to the development of character, and

18 John Lucas, "A Prelude to the Rise of Sport
in America, 1850-60," Quest, 11 (Winter, 1968), 59.
stimulated courage, loyalty and energy. Furthermore, as the popularity of such games as rugby and cricket increased, English public school masters claimed that games and sports were a safety valve for exuberance and immorality, and could be an effective means for reducing the amount of masturbation and other sexual offences at male boarding schools.\textsuperscript{19} As the concept became popularized and disseminated in America, purity reformers welcomed this new mechanism for its apparent value in training the character, developing self-control and reducing immorality.

Thus, from the 1870's on, sports and exercise came increasingly to be viewed as far more than a harmless diversion for young children, and for adults on public holidays. The possibilities were gradually seen for recreational exercise to become a positive and constructive force through the development of 'Christian muscle', and the type of sports which purity reformers came to promote were naturally those which they considered to be the most conducive to healthy and moral living.\textsuperscript{20} Golf, cricket, and their derivative, baseball, were all strongly recommended as healthful forms of exercise. In 1871, the National Association of Baseball

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Peter C. McIntosh, Physical Education in England since 1800} (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1952), p. 126.

Players was formed in New York and baseball was launched as one of the most popular sports on the American scene. As dress reform progressed, bicycling became popular for both sexes along with walking, climbing, ice skating, fishing, bowling and tennis. Swimming came to be extolled as an excellent sport, always provided that the bathing costume was modest. From the health and character points of view, cold bathing was regarded as a particularly good tonic for the circulation, and the moral effects of plunging into cold water and supporting the body in deep water were useful since they reduced overtenderness to sensory discomforts. Towards the end of the century, G. Stanley Hall strengthened this view by arguing that "nothing so directly or quickly reduces to the lowest point the plethora of the sex organs." Sea bathing was recommended to women with menstruation pains and as a means to increase fertility. With its educative effects of cultivating the will-power and its predicted possibilities of increasing fertility as well as the added bonus of cleanliness, no sport was nearer the heart of the purity reformer than swimming.

The forces giving rise to the expansion of healthy modes of recreation were intimately tied to the development


22 "Effects of Seabathing," The Practitioner, VIII (December, 1895), 205.
Figure 6. Harry T. Peters, Currier and Ives; Printmakers to the American People (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., Ltd., 1942), Plate 80.
of leisure and to economics. The early settlers had found little time to pursue recreative activities other than working bees and occasional church socials. As industrialization progressed, long factory hours and low pay denied, at first, the leisure and purchasing power needed for participation in organized sports and entertainment. Not until industrial productivity enabled working hours to be cut and wages to be increased could the sporting pastimes of the leisured aristocracy be adopted by the working man. During the second half of the nineteenth century the diversions of the rich became gradually democratized. Though modern civilization and industrial work habits began to provide the necessary ingredients for leisure pursuits, Americans did not necessarily pursue 'healthy' activities. On the contrary, purity reformers believed that urbanization and industrialization had bred unnatural conditions for human living and created alienation from the natural, rural environment. Where the highest moral purity of the farmer was seen to be beyond question, the conditions of city life were felt to breed only the grossest sexuality.\(^\text{23}\) Overcrowding had led to physical as well as mental degeneracy, denied access to rural pastures and out-door activities, and tampered with the home as a center of character training. Long hours and

\(^{23}\text{Robert D. Cross, op. cit., pp. 13, 19.}\)
monotonous working conditions had led the working people to indulge in their free time in vicarious forms of public amusements. Indulgence in many of these activities, reformers felt, debilitated people's health and undermined the moral standards of decent behavior. Commercial interests, quick to note the potential source of profit to be gained from organized entertainment, had expanded their activities in all directions, most particularly in passive spectator amusements of dubious moral value.

In conjunction with the development of their policies for the expansion and popularization of healthy modes of recreation, purity reformers felt a particular obligation in disrupting the more vicious types of public recreation. Their stand against commercial entertainments resulted partly from a desire to remedy the perceived mal-effects upon the morality of the adult population, but a more persistent reason was the potential threat they represented to the child. The young, who were not yet wise to worldly temptations, had to be both protected from them and prepared to defend themselves against future exposure. Born to parents debilitated by immoral entertainment and reared in an atmosphere devoid of hygienic practices, the child could only capitulate to impure habits and society would inevitably be doomed.

Since they believed that the brutality of many sporting events, especially prize fighting and football,
militated against the development of healthy, moral individuals, these events became a particular point of concern for purity reformers. College football spectaculars damaged the reputation of the sport as a healthy, manly activity. Frances Willard was quite serious when she raised the topic in the *Woman's Journal* of 1894, and insisted that differences between Harvard and Yale should be settled by arbitration rather than through football.\(^24\) Prize fighting was particularly repugnant for it appealed to the animal in man and was completely contrary to all the Christian virtues cherished by purity reformers. When Nevada licenced prize fighting in 1897, reformers declared it the 'Nevada Disgrace'.\(^25\) At the forefront was Josiah Leeds, strong opponent of nudity and obscene literature, who used great determination to halt, at least temporarily, prize fighting exhibitions in Philadelphia. In this effort he was assisted by the Moral Committee of One Hundred of the Citizens Representative Committee of that city who also helped him to prevent policemen from attending roller skating matches.\(^26\)

Gambling and the theater were passive types of entertainment which could in no way contribute to health and


\(^26\) *Philadelphia Ledger*, April 7, 1885.
morality. Gambling militated against the very essence of the life style advocated by purity reformers - that hard work led to success. Gain by chance was an anathema to the religion of work since it encouraged slothfulness and bad habits and a discontentment with the necessary drudgery of every day life. Furthermore, the habit of speculation acquired in the gambling hall or on the race track could easily lead to "speculation in sex," and hence a rapid decline in morality. The debasing influences of the theater were vividly portrayed by Lyman Beecher. "If any man can invent a more speedy way for sinners to go to hell than the theater, he ought to have a patent-right for his infernal ingenuity." Here in the theater, complained the Reverend Sylvanus Stall, "under the influence of exposures and postures which bring the blush of shame to the cheek of delicacy, previously pure young men feel the awakening power of ungovernable passion, and fall an easy prey to the bar-rooms, the gamblingsdens and the brothels which cluster under the shadow of every theater." A frequently criticized aspect of the theater was ballet, which

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Josiah Leeds was sure would provide customers for the brothel and increase the crime rate.30 Introduced in 1887 by the National and American Opera Companies, ballet was considered especially demoralizing since the dancers wore so few clothes. In a letter to the Philadelphia Press, Leeds described the ballet as "dancers in their immodest, scant attire," and the swimming scenes as "shameless bathing scenes."31 A group of Presbyterians added to the complaints by condemning ballet as an "injury to Public Morals." Methodists, Episcopelians, Baptists and Quakers all condemned the sensuous and debasing performances and a year later the National Opera Company was forced to discontinue the ballet.32

Purity reformers were also dedicated to closing down the dance halls, and indeed preventing dancing of any kind. In 1893, the Southern Presbyterian Assembly made dancing a valid grounddfor excommunication.33 It was an extreme view, and one reflecting what Samuel S. Hill has described as a peculiar variety of evangelical Protestantism, yet many purity


32 Christian Statesman, June 16, 1888.

reformers felt equally strongly about dancing.\textsuperscript{34} They were convinced that those who danced could not remain pure. Misfortune followed those who danced, said Julia Ward Howe, in giving the example of a lady, who, married and childless for many years confessed that a ball attended in her youth was the cause of this misfortune.\textsuperscript{35} Dr. Kellogg quoted the New York Chief of Police as stating that three-quarters of all prostitutes in New York owed their downfall to dancing.\textsuperscript{36} A contributing factors was held to be the fact that ninety percent of all dance halls in New York were located over saloons and the halls were usually furnished free as places to drink and meet women. Theyververyact of changing partners was seen to be promiscuous.\textsuperscript{37} "Hands off is a wise old rule," commented Joseph Lee, "for physical contact marks a danger line."\textsuperscript{38} A particular problem, said Gardner, lay in the sexual stimulation caused to both partners when dancing

\textsuperscript{34}Samuel S. Hill Jr., "Southern Churches in Crisis," p. xii, quoted in Ahlstrom, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 717.

\textsuperscript{35}Julia Ward Howe, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 19.


\textsuperscript{37}"Ball Funds for Charity," \textit{Philadelphia Times}, March 18, 1884.

together, especially if the woman was menstruating. A further danger of the dance was seen to be rhythm which aroused the emotions and weakened the moral and intellectual faculties, acting somewhat as a narcotic. It was suggested that rhythm had the power to manifest itself in orgies and the gratification of chance emotions of the moment. Josiah Leeds was therefore extremely satisfied when he succeeded in closing down the 'Broadway Gardens', a Philadelphia dance hall notorious as a center for prostitution.

Dancing, theater or art forms of any kind provoking sensuous thoughts were so reprehensible to many purity reformers that they were kept constantly occupied trying to suppress the numerous innovations of commercial entertainment. Reformers such as Josiah Leeds spent a life-time battling to suppress immoral amusements, just as Anthony Comstock made the suppression of obscene literature his life goal. Yet purity reform was only partly purgative in nature. Many reformers placed more hope in substituting healthy recreation for the commercial amusements they condemned.

Their efforts went hand in hand with the urban revival movement of the 1870's and 1880's which was personified by

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Dwight Lyman Moody, the "new model circuit rider in the urban wilderness." Though Moody himself made little effort to respond to the peculiar difficulties of urban culture, his type of big-city revivalism heralded the development of various functional substitutes for church life, some of them innovative forms of urban concern such as the Salvation Army and the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Association. The Young Men's Christian Association reflected the growing tendency of the churches in post-bellum America to recognize the fact that they must attempt to substitute their own social programs for the commercial amusements they condemned. Professional revivalists such as Moody recognized the need of masses of city folk for a measure of excitement in their lives, and urban revival meetings, in fact, provided theatrical entertainment to people who regarded the theater itself as sinful. Sunday schools remained a strong force in urban areas, providing both youth and adults with Sunday activities and orienting the youth into the values of "practical Christianity". In New York, the Sunday School Union tried to allocate to each downtown church responsibility for visiting eleven people in a certain territory every week, in order to bring them into active Christian life.

41 Sydney E. Ahlstrom, op. cit., p. 744.
42 Robert D. Cross, op. cit., p. xviii.
It was the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, however, which stimulated the growth of church-related social programs encompassing a variety of activities and catering particularly to urban youth. Purity reformers encouraged and endorsed the programs of the Association as being one of the most powerful agencies for spreading the word and practice of healthful sport and exercise. Starting in 1851 as an evangelical movement to persuade young men to make clear cut decisions in favor of Christian living, by 1860 there were two hundred and three associations with about 25,000 members in North America. Six years later, the first Young Women's Christian Association was formed in Boston. In 1881, younger girls were given their own group in Oakland known as the Little Girls Christian Association. The development of a Christian character was a primary objective for all the various branches of the organization, but a strong emphasis was laid upon physical well-being as an asset to the building of a Christian character. The Young Men's Christian Association became a pioneer in the large scale fostering of physical pursuits, and, under the leadership of Luther Gulick, expanded its programs to include recreational gymnastics, organized sports, play activities and numerous social programs for men and boys throughout the country. Women's associations

paid particular attention to health and hygiene; "Health for Women has been the slogan of the Association in every country and usually it has been a new but welcome one." At the first Young Women's Christian Association in Boston in 1886, cooking classes and calisthenics were provided and these became popular activities for all ages.

Stimulated by the success of these programs, numerous youth clubs began to be established by churches or other organizations for religio-recreational purposes. The Young Men's Christian Association had pointed up the special needs of many unattached people who were moving to the city and who lacked the security of an established home and the direction of their parents. Further, the programs of the Association emphasized the problems caused by urban living to youth as a whole, and paved the way for a new set of attitudes towards the physical and spiritual needs of urban youth.

Well before new attitudes became established, however, reformers mobilized to confront two pressing and related problems. One was the widespread problem of juvenile delinquency, and related to it was the realization that adolescence

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was a stage of growth fraught with moral dangers second to no other age, and hence needing particular attention. Studies by G. Stanley Hall in the latter part of the nineteenth century served to bring a new depth of understanding to the critical age of adolescence - the period between fifteen and twenty-five years of age which was seen to be particularly receptive to the adaptation of the social heritage and one which appeared to be prolonged as a result of civilization. The rapid growth, noted by Hall and others, which characterized the onset of adolescence, was felt to cause a disturbance of the whole mental, moral and physical constitution of the individual. The resulting psychological manifestations led the adolescent to seize every opportunity to bring emotional life to a higher intensity, often by resorting to artificial modes of stimulation. One of the greatest dangers perceived to occur during the adolescent stage was the difficulty created by the development of sexual characteristics and feelings. The enormous temptation at this stage to indulge in the secret vice of masturbation threatened to lead to grim consequences and to effectively disrupt the passage of youth to virile manhood and marriage.  

Adolescent feelings of adventure, rebelliousness and restlessness were thought to be particularly conducive

to anti-social and criminal behavior and the criminal career was generally thought to have its beginning in adolescence. Groups of youngsters, formed into gangs, would turn to criminal activities when their needs for adventure and activity were not satisfied by legitimate means. Rural youth had been able to cope adequately with the difficulties of adolescence by being constantly occupied in the physical tasks of the farm and field, but the youth of the city lacked such provisions. Without occupation they became quickly demoralized. Thus, organized activities, meeting houses, youth clubs, nature trips and adult guidance were advocated to combat the dangers of adolescence and assist the boys in their "physical, mental and moral progress." Reformers emphasized recreation as an aid to health and morals by pointing out that the development of parks and gymnasium in cities bore a direct relationship to a reduction of juvenile crime. At Boston's first Municipal Gymnasium, the first year of city management in 1889 saw 65,000 in attendance and police noted that there was a marked diminution of lawlessness in the area.

Playground developments stemming from Boston's initial efforts in 1887 had, as their primary rationale, the need to reduce


juvenile delinquency by keeping youth off the streets and occupied in some physical activities. Many hoped that juvenile delinquency could be substantially reduced by providing play facilities for city youth. They were reassured by magistrates who testified to the immediate reduction of delinquency once a playground had been opened in the neighborhood. As Judge William H. Staake of Philadelphia pointed out, "the public playground is the greatest deterrent of juvenile delinquency and lawlessness among children. It stands for body and character building, and produces better children, homes, morals and citizens." 49

It was felt that healthy amusements and athletics for youth either made impossible or drove away the morbid frame of mind and body which brought passion to the height of unlawful practices. By fortifying the body, well directed, health-building recreation would aid in controlling the sexual instincts most particularly at that pre-marriage age when sexuality created such difficulties for the individual. 50

Implicit in the Societies of the 'Captain of Ten', for example an association typical of a number of boys' and young men's clubs in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, was

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the emphasis upon the fingers. This brought to mind the
constant temptation faced by youth to masturbate and the
dangers involved in "bleeding away the life fluid from the
Male Part." The name, 'Captains of Ten' referred to the
need to keep the ten fingers employed in whittling, weaving,
scrap-book making, or any worthwhile pursuit which kept the
hands occupied. The motto was "the hand of the diligent shall
bear rule," and the object of the society was to work for
Christ's Kingdom through charitable and recreative activities.

Reformers became convinced that youth needed activi­
ties to work off the brute and animal element within them
in a healthful and 'normal' way, and guided sport and recrea­
tion gained increasing popularity as an excellent technique.
It was hoped that, through such activities, the general level
of vitality of children and youth could be raised to fit
them to withstand more easily the strain of modern civilization.
Theodore Roosevelt was certain that youthful sport was the
best possible training for a moral manhood. Walter Rauschenbüs­ch,
Jacob Riis, Jane Adams and Frederick Howe all gave an important
place to physical activities for youth in their plans for

51 Michael Bliss, "Pure Books on Avoided Subjects:
Pre-Freudian Sexual Ideas in Canada," The Canadian Historical

52 L.W. Bacon, Young People's Societies (New
social reform. Similarly, leaders of the Playground Movement were sure that their greatest success would be encountered in crowded city slums with adolescent youth.

To purity reformers, play seemed to be a most germane area which could be utilized for the moral education of the child. Horace Bushnell and Jacob Abbott had already stimulated traditional thinkers to alter stern attitudes toward children's play.\(^53\) The widespread dissemination of the ideas of early childhood educationalists in the latter part of the nineteenth century lent further credence to the utility of play as an instrument of moral education. The works of Friedrich Froebel were particularly popular. Froebel stressed the significance of early childhood upon adult life, stating that "the plays of childhood are the germinal leaves of all later life, for the whole man is developed and shown in his innermost tendencies."\(^54\)

Child's play was consequently seen as a serious business, a rehearsal for adult life and a means of preparation for a wholesome and moral development. Though it was accepted by many that the play of children was the spontaneous

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recapitulation of activities of ages gone by, the need was felt for guidance through these activities to make sure that no stage was left out and that a complete basis was laid for the main tasks of life. As Joseph Lee pointed out:

The child is trained to play, not merely to make a living but to fulfill all the essential relations of a human life. It is the supreme seriousness of play which gives it its educational importance. . . . We aim to develop power; we train the muscles and the mind; but we are no longer content unless these serve as avenues to something deeper. The question is not of learning, nor yet of power, but of character. 55

In light of these views, many purity reformers strongly backed the Playground Movement. Not only could playgrounds be regarded as an antidote to delinquency, they could also be a constructive source of moral values. The playground, it was hoped, could assist the mother in utilizing the young child's impulse to play for the development of pure and moral habits, and thus a strong character. Consequently, the cultivation of virtue through directed play would result in a triumph over animalistic impulses and unhygienic habits. It would allow daily drudgery to be borne with a sense of duty and responsibility and strengthen that sense of social

obligation which every pure-minded individual should harbor toward his society.

As in athletic recreation, the Young Men's Christian Association was also a pioneer in defending the values of play, and many recreational leaders began their careers as Association instructors and playground organizers. From the lowly beginnings of a few sand piles in Boston city parks, city playgrounds spread rapidly. In 1876, the first playground was established in Chicago at Washington Park. Eleven years later, New York City began to make provisions for municipal playgrounds in all city parks. During the 1890's most American cities began to provide playgrounds on an extensive scale. From the start, playground facilities developed as an adjunct to the City Parks Movement - a further effort to offset urban alienation from the supposed moral values of the rural American scene.  

The City Park Movement, which developed toward the end of the nineteenth century, justified its expansion upon the presumed moral value of natural beauty and space for recreation and fresh air. It was part of a number of efforts to alleviate miserable city conditions by providing scenes of rural peacefulness. Purity was to be sought in the 'back

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to nature' movement where urban man and child could be redeemed through solitary communion with nature. Initially, both city and country parks were designed along natural lines combining "green pastures and still waters, the restful and life-giving glance of nature." 57 To landscape artists like Charles Eliot and Frederick Olmsted, city parks were "appropriated for the recreation of the people by means of their rural, sylvan and natural scenery and character." 58 Through popular literature, bird watching was exemplified as a 'purifying experience' and birds emerged with an artistic and moral purity which both sentimental nature lovers and ornithologists were sure they possessed in real life. 59 As in real life, of course, birds fell into two categories - good birds and bad birds. Judged by the conceptions of morality held by some purity reformers, good birds were those who had pleasant songs, attractive plumage, built handsome nests and mated once a year, giving the appearance to all the world of family unity and harmony with their surroundings. Bad birds were those out of tune with the wild, such


59 Peter J. Schmidt, op. cit., p. 44.
Figure 7. Peters, *op. cit.*, Plate 109.
as the urbanized sparrow whose feeding and mating habits seemed barbarically primitive, and somewhat disgusting.  

City parks developed rapidly. Minneapolis acquired 1,400 acres of park land between 1880 and 1890. From an initial six acres in 1880, Los Angeles increased its park space to 3,700 acres by 1905. New York City led the City Park Movement by enlarging its parks from 1,500 acres in 1880 to more than 10,000 in 1926. Even so, the facilities of the parks were regarded as inadequate by many. Leaders of the Playground Movement such as Luther Gulick, Henry Curtis and Joseph Lee campaigned to increase the utility of city parks by providing facilities for play and games. Children had been left out in the planning of the cities, they stated. By denying opportunities for play, stunting and perversion were held to be the absolute and inevitable results. They complained that cleverly landscaped parks were the "front parlors of the cities"; that they "ministered only to the overwrought nerves of business barons and their middle class clerks"; and that 'keep off the grass' signs were "despotic restrictions which kept the poor from enjoying their games


61 Peter J. Schmidt, *op. cit.*; p. 70.

so that the rich could have their scenery." Parks were for play, they argued, and the best kind of play was that which was organized and directed, making for the development of a wholesome moral and ethical life. The knowing supervisor of play would see that children were led toward the better purposes of recreation rather than toward the demoralizing features of unguided, meaningless play.

Emphasized at first as a substitution for the physical pleasures and activities of the country, the play motif became gradually urbanized as the Playground Movement gained popularity as an educational and social preventive technique. Educators attempted to bring social awareness into child's play, stressing cooperation and obedience to a higher authority. "The individual child at play disappeared in a whirlwind of directed activity," consisting of games and contests with rules and leaders. "Play was no longer a means of exercise but an end in itself, a science conforming to the needs of an urban culture." Consequently, in many cities, playgrounds were gradually passed from the Parks Board control to the City Departments of Education.

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65 Peter J. Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
By the end of the nineteenth century, successive stages of growth were all recognized as requiring specific types of physical activity for a balanced emotional, physical and spiritual development. Sylvester Graham's admonition to exercise as an antidote to sexual urges was enlarged to include emphasis upon the educational aspects of physical culture. If a child was properly directed in his play activities, then his character was already strengthened to ward off sexual urges and thoughts. After all, said Stoyan Tsanoff, "the more playgrounds the fewer the hospitals, asylums and prisons." Remedial measures lost favor as educational techniques promised the formation of a Christian character capable of withstanding all types of vice and corruption. Gymnastics, organized sports, healthy recreational activities and directed play came to occupy a fundamental role in the pursuit of good health and physical efficiency - sterling attributes for good, Christian living.

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Although the careful conditioning of daily habits in matters relating to food, clothing, exercise and recreation might go far in priming the child for the part he must play in a moral society, many moralists recognized that some instruction in sexual matters might also be necessary. Rejecting the traditional notion that silence would repress sexual expression, ante-bellum moral reformers concerned with the sexual aspect of the child came to believe that, despite its delicacy, sexuality could not be ignored. The developing popularity of the notion that a child was born innocent and that his subsequent moral behavior depended upon the example, conditioning and information he received, demanded, they felt, educational strategies beyond behavioral conditioning which could help to create a positive and attractive morality. By instructing the child from an early age about the dangers of sexuality, contamination from the environment would not affect him for his moral code would already be developed.
Those concerned with the formulation of strategies for sex education demanded the demise of the policy of silence. A recognition of the dangers of silence and ignorance concerning sexual matters was not, as historians have often assumed, a revelation of the Progressive Era.\(^1\) As early as the 1830's, Sylvester Graham was condemning the policy of silence as leading to increasingly open and shameless sexual abuses. The introduction of the new ideas of physiology into the ethical realm of sexual morality stimulated a host of tracts purporting to educate the young in matters of sex and to lay bare the dangers inherent in the misuse of sexual energy and the non-creative expenditure of semen through masturbation, prostitution and other forms of sexual misbehavior.\(^2\) These tracts warned repeatedly of the dangers


which an immoral society held for the young child and advocated numerous strategies for protecting children from impure impulses. Parents were warned to keep corrupt nurses and wicked companions away from their children, for a child overhearing an improper expression might retain it in his mind and it could prove the germ from which habits of profanity subsequently sprang. A particular danger was infantile masturbation which Beecher, Dewees, and others felt was the first sign of moral and physical degeneracy in the child. 

All means must be invoked, they insisted, to prevent such perversity and danger. Apart from removing undesirable companions, numerous devices were suggested for preventing children from accidental or deliberate sexual misuse - metal chastity cages for boys, hands tied behind the back and sleeves pinned to the bedclothes. Above all, writers on these topics


were beginning to suggest that consultation, rather than confrontation with the child about sexual matters might lead to a more positive and enduring attitude toward sexual morality.  

Sex education of any kind, however, could not take place without adequate parental guidance from the earliest age. Without such guidance, the advantages that the right generation of the child might confer upon the individual, and society, might be lost. Help was therefore held out to parents, particularly mothers, by a variety of agencies, established during the ante-bellum period, to aid them in the moral nurture of their children. Maternal associations disseminated pertinent information for mothers through the *Mother's Magazine*. Sunday Schools and Infant Schools aimed at supplementing parental efforts in the moral education of the child. More generally, the enthusiasm of educational reformers like Horace Mann, and the spread of the common school, enhanced a growing belief in the power of education as a panacea for personal and social ills. "Educate, only educate enough," said Mann,

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5 Jacob Abbott, "The Importance of Sympathy between the Mother and Child," *Mother's Magazine*, XII (April, 1844), 119.


"and we shall regenerate the criminal and eradicate vice; through the schools we shall teach mankind to moderate their passions and develop their virtues."^8

Yet, despite the possibility that extra-familial agencies could participate in the moral education of the child, the home and mother were still considered to be pre-eminent. Moral reformers repeatedly emphasized the sanctity of motherhood, and the home as the legitimate arena for the education of morals. William Greenleaf Eliot was sure that a Christian mother was worth more to her children "than all Sunday schools and churches, preachers and libraries put together." Schools, many worried, might facilitate evil associations; teachers, however well trained or well meaning, could not impart a mother's love and attention to every child. Basically there was no school like the family school. Indeed, repeated Gardiner Spring, "Christian families are the nurseries of the

^8Horace Mann, quoted in George E.P. Hardy, Literature for Children (New York: Scribners, 1892), p. 5.

^9Jacob Abbott, Duties of Parents to The Schools Where the Children Are Instructed (New York: American Institute of Instruction, 1834), pp. 81-98.


Divine Kingdom." Certainly in matters of sex, the mother came to be seen as the only one who could be trusted with imparting delicately, and purely, such sexual matters as she considered it necessary for the child to know. After all said Sarah Hale, "Woman is God's appointed agent of MORALITY, for her nature is of purer essence and more in harmony with the things of heaven than man's."  

The movement to educate the mother to fulfill her duties of sexual instruction intensified during the 1870's. Despite the spread of evolutionary thought, which, taken rationally, could have dispelled some of the optimism of reformers in the panacea of moral education, societies devoted specifically to moral education began to appear. In 1870, a Moral Education Association was established by women reformers in Boston to aid the mother in the moral education of her child, and women in other large cities quickly adopted the idea. The Associations established their own journal, Alpha, the name symbolizing what they considered to be a new

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13 Sarah Josepha Hale, Woman's Record; or Sketches of All Distinguished Women, from the Beginning Till A.D. 1850. Arranged in Four Eras: with Selections from Female Writers of Every Age (third edition; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1853), p. 65.

beginning on ideas concerning child rearing. With what was really more a renewal of optimism than the initiation of a new idea, Alpha expressed the hope that by striving for the preservation of innocence, means for conditioning and education could be employed to extend "a baby's freshness throughout life." Since sexual morality was the key to innocence, moral educationalists determined that sexual instruction was essential, for only by educating people about sexual morality could purity be preserved.

The Moral Education Societies did not achieve a mass following, relying as they did upon the leadership of a few highly educated women, most of whom were physicians. They were found only in the most populated urban areas and were dominated by Elizabeth Blackwell, who, as the pioneer woman physician, held a position of paramount influence among moral educationalists. Her book, The Moral Education of the Young, was, after some initial difficulties, reprinted frequently in the United States and became a handbook for moral reformers. The influence of the societies, however, was enhanced by the publication of Alpha and by their interest in reforms allied to moral education. Members of Moral Education

15 Caroline Winslow, "Religion of the Body," Alpha (May 1, 1885), pp. 11-12.

Societies often belonged to Temperance and Vigilance Committees, and *Alpha* published articles relating to numerous aspects of moral reform, especially in the area of sex. Dr. Caroline Winslow, editor of *Alpha*, was instrumental in organizing the American Committee for the Prevention of Legalized Prostitution in 1877 under the auspices of the Young Women's Christian Association at Washington.

Many moral educationalists became increasingly active in opposing legislation for the regulation of prostitution. They felt that any law which did not firmly suppress vice would educate the community in evil. Efforts at moral education were clearly inadequate if society was not committed to remove such abuses as prostitution. In fact, this justification for fighting legalized prostitution became the most frequently used argument in the ensuing campaign for abolition, and promoted the unification of moral educationalists and anti-regulationists. As the intensity of the ideological debate over the regulation of prostitution deepened, many reformers became interested in a whole range of social purity ideas. Moral educationalists tended to be among them. The Woman's Christian Temperance Movement reflected this trend by establishing a Department for the Suppression of Prostitution and introducing instruction for child rearing through its Mother's Meetings.

By the 1880's, women reformers from numerous organizations were uniting in the larger cause of social purification.
The combination of moral education, anti-regulation, mother's meetings, suppression of impure literature and entertainment, and many other related reforms, was institutionalized by Aaron Macy Powell and Abby Hopper Gibbons who established a National Committee in New York to coordinate purity reform activities. At the local level, Moral Education Societies sought reform coalitions in order to establish larger and more comprehensive Social Purity Alliances, a logical absorption and coalition for each of the varied reforms which made up the Alliance had "functioned with the object of controlling and counteracting the effects of growing social impurity."\textsuperscript{17}

The Washington Social Purity Alliance was formed by moral educationalists, temperance workers and members of the White Cross Society in 1885. Philadelphia moral educationalists soon became part of a Social Purity Alliance in that city.\textsuperscript{18} Leading moral educationalists such as Julia Ward Howe, Caroline Winslow and Elizabeth Blackwell actively participated in forming Social Purity Alliances and defining wide-sweeping objectives for social purification. Yet, as moral educationalists and purity reformers, they were instrumental in maintaining the dialogue of the former societies - that the salvation

\textsuperscript{17}"Moral Education Society Report," \textit{Alpha} (March 1, 1880), p. 6.

of the race depended upon the salvation of the children and that this could only be accomplished through moral education.

Increasingly, purity reformers became convinced that, integral to the total philosophy of the purification of American society, were ideas on the regulation of sexual behavior through moral education. Moral education would help to reconstruct a social character, and the child would subsequently provide social orientation to the nation. Through him would be taught the "proper relations of life and its holiest sanctities in the light of health, of growth, of usefulness of character, so that the thought of vice [would] become instinctively repellant and abhorrent." If the home failed then the school could possibly become the second line of defence. The family, however, was held to be primarily responsible for the process of character formation. The mechanics necessary for this process were drawn from ideas on child rearing which reflected a convenient interpretation of Darwinian theory and its subsequent application to the educative process. Through G. Stanley Hall's 'general psychonomic law', physical life and individual behavior were assumed to develop through a series of stages which corresponded more or less to the stages through which the race

\[\text{Antoinette Blackwell, "Comments," Philanthropist, 11 (March, 1887), 7.}\]
was supposed to have passed from pre-savagery to civilization. The child, therefore, was seen as a savage to be civilized, and he was to be led through the struggle to rise above the brute and animal elements of his nature and establish ascendency of the human, spiritual side of his life.

Perceiving the sexual influence behind all the struggles of civilization, purity reformers naturally stressed the sexual aspect of social evolution. The theory of recapitulation located the source of lust in childhood, where it was seen to begin with infantile masturbation. The animal instinct of lust had thus to be suppressed early and supplanted by thoughts and deeds conducive to the instincts of spiritual love. Since there was always the possibility of the re-emergence of the brute instincts, the character had to be armed for the perpetual struggle of the dualistic nature of man. Love, even sexual love, was not disparaged. Purity reformers maintained the essential purity of the sexual nature, and connected the sentiments of religion with those of sexual experience. Sex was the bond of the home, and pure love

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was a religious sentiment, thus both represented the human aspects of man. Only the misuse of sex, the emergence of the brute for passionate and sensual purposes was dishonorable. Even these impulses were not always considered inherently evil. While recognizing that such appetites existed naturally, reformers nonetheless saw the need to control them in the higher interests of civilization. Children had to be taught the value in, and necessity of sexual repression before they became acquainted with erotic notions and impure ideas, but they also had to be initiated into the wonders of procreation, parenthood and the rewards of pure and untainted sex.

Thus, prior to the opening years of the twentieth century, positive sex education came to be regarded by many purity reformers as essential to the perfecting of the family as a social institution. Children had to be prepared for parenthood and the superstition of sex-shame had to be eliminated. Like a plant, the child was seen to develop at certain stages, and at each point of development or blooming, he had to be instructed in the sexual knowledge appropriate to the stage. If the teaching was positive, then the negative elements of the child's character would wither.

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24 Family Culture, 1 (April, 1896), 4, 9.
Positive sex education was construed as the dissemination of information aimed at desexualising behavior or diverting sexual energies into socially accepted channels. Thoughts and habits of thought were to be cultivated as preventive devices to control appetites and 'Keep the soul on top'.

Thus,

... good thoughts, love, kindness, gentleness, harmony, sweet temper, patience, amiability, forgiveness, trust, cheerfulness, justice, truth, honesty, industry, economy, reverence, dutifulness, humility, self-denial, temperance, tee-totalism, purity, chastity, virtue, self-control, and continence

were the sought for qualities which in totality comprised the ideal of the 'higher nature'. Through the incessant suggestion and practice of pure and useful thinking and acting, evil thoughts could be excluded. Positive and constructive sex education would say 'do' and not 'don't', orienting its teaching around the positive re-inforcement of desirable traits.

The stress laid upon parental instruction emphasized the need felt by purity reformers to conserve "the great truths that were lapsing in prosperous days, the silent

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25 "Teaching the Children," Philanthropist, IV (June, 1889), 2.

26 Union Signal (April 22, 1886), p. 2.

erosion of principles from the Republican period and the substitution of . . . sloth, luxury, selfish interest and low purpose." On a more practical level, the necessity of proper instruction was compounded by the continuing belief that the natural curiosity of youngsters would lead them to discuss sex with their peers without the necessary propriety, and that this would increase the possibilities of misinformation and dangerous experiment. Purity reformers would not tolerate sexual information being learned by accident, and Elizabeth Blackwell warned against such dangers in her *Counsel to Parents*. The most common cause of misinformation was held to be the fallacy that chastity was dangerous to man, since without physical excitation the sexual member might atrophy. "This false and ruinous idea," said the Reverend Stall, "comes from the knowledge of the fact that the muscles are strengthened and developed by exercise," but "instead of being developed . . . the sexual member is itself impaired . . . and the result is the dwarfing and wasting of the organ itself and the complete shattering of the nervous system." Parents had the responsibility of


counteracting the exchange of such types of misinformation between their child and his peers and were guilty of grave neglect by losing their best opportunity for establishing the mind of the child in purity and virtue. Pre-school conditioning was thus held to be more effective than any out of home instruction which might generate undue gossip among peers.

Pivotal to the need to impart sex education to the child was the necessity of educating the parents for the task. Parents must be trained, exhorted Mrs. Birney, and mothers must be organized to pioneer in sex education. Mrs. Kellogg suggested that parents be co-workers with God in the development of the "little pilgrim." Attempts were made to transform Mother's Meetings into Parent's Meetings as purity reformers strove to apply the principle of equality to parental responsibility. In 1896, the London Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends gave full support to the child rearing efforts of purity reformers and issued A Letter to Fathers,


calling the attention of the father to the need for sex education within the family.\textsuperscript{34} Ten thousand of the pamphlets were circulated among Friends in America.\textsuperscript{35}

In the same year, the Social Purity Department of the WCTU initiated the Mother's Crusade. Under the leadership of Mary Wood-Allen, the \textit{Mother's Friend} was published to promote and coordinate Mother's Meetings and attempt to develop the concept of family unity. Attention was also focussed upon the family by the League for the Protection of the Family, which pressed for the inclusion of the study of the family in colleges and universities.\textsuperscript{36} The Reverend Mary T. Whitney issued, from her Institute of Family Culture in Massachusetts, the journal \textit{Family Culture}. All joined to press for parental responsibility in educating the young at the Mother's Congress, convened by Mrs. Theodore Weld Birney in 1897.\textsuperscript{37} Educators, philanthropists and purity workers resolved to purify the press, pioneer in sex education, advocate laws for the welfare of children and strive for a single standard of morality. The Congress also promoted

\textsuperscript{34} "A Letter to Fathers," \textit{Philanthropist}, XII (January, 1897), 4.


\textsuperscript{37} Mrs. T.W. Birney, "The Work of the Mother's Congress and Clubs," \textit{The Coming Age} (September, 1899), p. 253.
the further development of Mother's Meetings, and local Mother's Unions gained rapid popularity throughout the country. By 1899, over 50,000 women had joined the Mother's Crusade and the WCTU had established a special department for Mother's Meetings. The popularity of the Crusade was further enhanced by the endorsement of Theodore Roosevelt, who, speaking at the New York Mother's Convention in 1899, stressed the desirability of parents sharing the responsibilities of child rearing in the interests of purity and patriotism. The Mother's Crusade, in fact, became the forerunner of the National Parent-Teacher Association.

Purity reformers, however, also saw the need to give immediate and practical assistance to parents who must sexually educate their children, and in order to help them best inform their child, a large number of sex education books began to be distributed in the 1890's. Manuals were prepared for boys, girls, men and women, under the assumption that sexual

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38 *Woman's Journal* (July 3, 1897), p. 216.


knowledge presented delicately and purely would afford the necessary information without pandering to unholy and sensual passion. Mary Wood-Allen, the WCTU Purity Superintendent and a physician, took upon herself the task of explaining the facts of reproduction to girls and women. Her books were used extensively from their time of publication in 1893 throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, going into many editions and revisions. With delicate and religious rhetoric she described the physiological facts of the reproduction of plants, animals, bees, fishes and birds and emphasized the beauty of God's creation before touching upon the facts of human sexuality. Young girls were instructed upon the necessity of maintaining a chaste body - it was a temple to be kept holy; a garment worn by the soul. Information was provided for maintaining good health through proper food and rest, good breathing, correct clothes, exercise and cleanliness, as well as through good companions and good books. Overall she emphasized the vague dreadfulness and guilt of uncleanness of mind and weakness of will. Since bad thoughts were supposed to lead to bad deeds, the effect of good thoughts upon life and character was emphasized above all.43

43 John C. Burnham, op. cit., p. 899.
The books of Mary Wood-Allen (A Gateway and a Gift, Teaching Truth, Almost a Man, Child Confidence Rewarded, Marriage, Its Duties and Privileges, Almost a Woman, What a Young Girl Ought to Know, What a Young Woman Ought to Know) met with the fullest approval of purity reformers. "I know of no one," said Mrs. Grace H. Dodge (herself the author of Girlhood and Purity: A Confidential Letter and A Bundle of Letters to Busy Girls on Practical Matters), "who writes or speaks on these great subjects with more womanly touch than Mrs. Wood-Allen, nor with deeper reverence. When I listen to her I feel that she has been inspired by a Higher Power." Commenting on the works of another physician, Mrs. Emma F.A. Drake (What a Young Wife Ought to Know, What a Woman of Ought to Know), Mrs. Joseph Cook lavished praise upon the author's work; "it illuminates the Holy of Holies in the most sacred of early relationships with the white light of truth and purity." Dr. Drake gave particular help to mothers in child rearing matters. Teach them the right attitudes at the earliest possible age, she stated; be "argus-eyed" in watching your children and keep them from sleeping in the same bed or playing together without the presence of an adult.

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44 Grace H. Dodge, quoted in Sylvanus Stall, op. cit., Appendix.

45 Mrs. Joseph Cook quoted in Ibid., Appendix.
While yet very young, they can be taught that the organs are to be used by them only for throwing off the waste water of the system, but that they are so closely related to other parts of the body that handling them at all will hurt them and make them sick. Tell them that little children, when sometimes they do not know this, form the habit of handling themselves and as a result they become listless and sick, and many times idiotic and insane, or develop epileptic fits. This will so impress them that they will not fall easily into the bad habit.46

The mother's duty toward young children was to answer questions, give simple general information and lay the foundations of wholesome ideals and habits. The communication of knowledge was to satisfy the child's curiosity rather than stimulating it, thus postponing any interest in sexual matters. It was also aimed at preventing such discussions among the child's peers.

This is such a beautiful story, lets make it a secret between just you and mother . . . When you started life, Mary or Joseph, it was a little egg . . . this was such a precious egg that it had to have a perfectly safe, quiet nest, soft and warm. And where do you suppose that nest was? It was in mother's body right under mother's heart.47


The whole effort was to call the child's attention away from the generative organs, postpone the development of desires, and emphasize the sentiments of motherhood. No reference was expected to be volunteered as to actual sexual intercourse. Emma Drake counselled the mother to tell the child, if he should be bold enough to inquire about the father's relation to the child, first that she must think about the question for a few days, and then tell him the bare facts. "Then away to your room," she continued, "and down on your knees before God, until the subject is divested of every shadow of sin and darkness, and then, in this pure light, pray for your life." 48

For the girl approaching adolescence, the mother had a particular duty to impart the facts of menstruation lest the girl be frightened by its appearance. Menstruation was to be stressed as a rehearsal for motherhood. Menstrual days were days "consecrated to your womanhood . . . the very symbol of the central purpose of life . . . . It is even possible to hold out such high, pure, sweet hopes of eventual motherhood as shall make this season sacramental in one's personal experience." 49 Menstruation would commemorate the monthly Sabbath. There was also a need to build up the bulwarks of maidenliness and provide a code for protection - "Don't talk

too much about yourself and don't let anybody touch you" was considered to be a useful maxim. After the age of fourteen, the code was to be amplified by principles containing three weapons - the word, which was maidenly reserve; a chart of the road, which was information; and another weapon, suggested in Pilgrim's Progress, called 'All Prayer', which was moral and religious idealism. Sex information was to be presented by focusing upon parenthood, and by emphasizing the need for the girl to save herself for her future husband. Most important, fear and knowledge of the physical consequences of intimacy would provide the daughter with her greatest safeguard against intrusion upon the bodily temple, and for her future as a mother.

For boys and men, the Reverend Sylvanus Stall, a Lutheran minister, provided What a Young Boy Ought to Know, What a Young Man Ought to Know and What a Man of 45 Ought to Know. Heralded by Anthony Comstock as lifting "the mind and thoughts upon a high and lofty plane upon delicate subjects," the manuals presented information similar to those for girls and women, though much more stress was laid upon the dangers of masturbation and the grim consequences of the act, or thoughts about it. Emphasis was also laid upon the dangers

50 Ibid., p. 179.

51 Sylvanus Stall, op. cit., Appendix.
resulting from sexual misbehavior, most particularly venereal diseases. It was claimed that more than twenty-five per cent of the population was infected with this 'leprosy of lust', a sad comment on a society which inoculated its cattle against contagious diseases, but left its own young men and women in total ignorance "to be crushed beneath the Juggernaut of lust, disease, and death as its gory wheels roll from ocean to ocean."52 Boys and young men were instructed to stave off sexual urges by taking cold showers and rubbing down with a coarse towel; by participating in physical exercises, maintaining a frugal diet, evacuating the bowels regularly and avoiding sleeping in feather beds. A knotted towel was recommended for those troubled by nocturnal emissions since the knot would prevent sleeping on the back.53 The absolute remedy, of course, was to school the mind to banish all impure thoughts and, by the aid of will, maintain high moral standards and safety.

Father were called upon to participate more in matters relating to child-rearing as a supportive measure to the teachings of the mother. For young children, replications of the mother's explanations were desirable. To his adolescent daughter, his relationship should always be one of absolute and irreproachable chivalry and honor, never forgetting for

52 Ibid., p. 98.
53 Ibid., p. 89.
a moment the fact that she was a woman whose purity of mind and chastity of person were pearls of great price. His greatest responsibility, however, lay toward his adolescent son to whom he was obliged to relate the 'secret of manhood'. He must "explain to his boy how the . . . magical stimulant absorbed from the testicles is carried to the brain by the blood, and the young man begins to see visions, visions of great things out in the world to be done." In the communication of facts, he was to avoid inciting interest in details which were apt to lead to curiosity and experiment. Most of all he was to instill into his son the need for self-control against the difficulties of sexuality. "I tell you this, Frank, because I know all about it. The manly fight is a big fight, but like all other big victories it wouldn't be worth much if it didn't take a fight to get and hold on to it." The fight needed the weapons of information and goodness, self-respect and dependable virtue, and parents were to provide every possible motive to help the youth upstay his will and keep his life stainless. "Don't fail to value and use every aid that is calculated to help you onward in

54 Winfield Scott Hall, Sexual Knowledge; Knowledge Concerning Self and Sex (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1921), p. 155.

55 Ibid., p. 161.

56 W.B. Forbush, op. cit., p. 82.
the right direction . . . for the young man who fails to bring lust and passion into subjection and control . . . has a dark future before him."57

The possibility that parents might not undertake the positive sex education of their children was recognized reluctantly by purity reformers, and, in addition to mother's meetings and sex literature for parents, they stimulated the development of other social institutions which could serve as agencies of sex education. The White Cross Society developed through the need, perceived by some Anglican clergy, to educate young men to a single standard of morality and to provide them with the support of a society in their efforts to resist temptations. The idea was enthusiastically adopted by Episcopalians in America, and in 1883, Benjamin De Costa established the first branch at the Parish of St. John the Evangelist in New York City.58 The movement gained popularity partly through the propaganda of Frances Willard, and Elizabeth Powell Bond estimated that membership extended to the tens of thousands by the second year of its existence.59 The society became an important agency for spreading the world that chastity and health were compatible and it stressed


that its most important task was to persuade parents to fulfill their obligations by properly instructing their children in sexual matters. If they failed, then the society urged that there be "set in motion such general machinery as in one way or the other may reach and educate the rising generation, preparing them to meet evils and temptations which they are sure to encounter." The medical and clerical professions were called upon to supplement the sex education given by the family.

The needs of young women for the same type of society were recognized as even more acute, but the White Shield branch for women of the White Cross Society never gained the popularity of the latter. More durable was the Working Girl's Society which offered protection to young women away from home both from temptations and external danger. Grace H. Dodge helped in the formation of these societies, inspired by the need for collective moral action among the working girls of New York. Her first society was founded


in 1884 and within five years it had expanded to include eleven clubs and three thousand members. By 1897, the societies had consolidated with other similar organizations to form the National League of Working Women's Clubs. To help the girls, Grace Dodge published her *Bundle of Letters to Busy Girls on Practical Matters*, a compendium of her talks to Working Girls' Societies, in an effort to supplement the function of the family in sex education. Purity reformers did not object to the publication. They were beginning to recognize, albeit reluctantly, the need for more overt sex education beyond the confines of the family.

Purity reformers, as social educationalists, recognized the utility of the classroom as a means of moral education, yet until the end of the century they had been reluctant to press for sexual instruction in the schools. Group instruction, they felt, could incite undue discussion and curiosity, and might lead to stimulation rather than repression of sexual activity and thoughts. Thus, the home had been advocated as the most favorable arena for sex instruction. However, despite the activities of purity reformers in promoting this home instruction through the

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distribution of numerous manuals and pamphlets, and the work of such societies as the White Cross, vice in society showed no signs of diminution. On the contrary, municipal investigations of vice were showing that brothels were becoming more numerous, and venereal disease and delinquency more rampant. 66 Thus the realization was gradually forced upon purity workers that parents either would not or could not adequately perform their duty of providing sex education in the home, and that they should, perhaps, look to the school as a second line of defence.

Compulsory instruction in sex began to be advocated, "for the real crime was to leave children in ignorance or under the exclusive control of parents, incapable, because of vice or other causes of performing their duties." 67 They were reluctant, however, to relinquish the idea that the school should be only a supplement to parental guidance, and some suggested that school instruction could be a stop-gap measure, to take over sex instruction until there was a generation of

66 "Municipalities and Vice," Municipal Affairs, IV (December, 1900), 698-707.
Committee of Fifteen, The Social Evil; with Reference to Conditions Existing in the City of New York (New York: C.P. Putnam's Sons, 1902).

adequately prepared mothers and fathers who could resume
the task. They advocated a transitional period during which
all the constructive forces of society could work together
to produce a generation of parents possessing both sexual
information and the inclination to disseminate it to their
children.\textsuperscript{68} "This means that we must go into the schools and
teach the great truths of life to these children and youths."\textsuperscript{69}
Such an attitude emphasized that though the mother was still
thought of as the "workman approved of God," she was no
longer considered to know, by instinct, what was right for
her child.\textsuperscript{70} One had to be educated for motherhood, as in
any other profession, and perhaps the easiest way to accomplish
this was to educate the present generation of children at
school. "When the right kind of children are created,"
said Mrs. Gilman, "then we shall have some reason to honor
motherhood and it will be brainwork and soul work we honor —
not the uncertain rudiments of a brute instinct."\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{68} In a similar manner, Josiah Strong and Washington
Gladden saw public education as a holding operation until
other great forces could transform society. See: Robert H.
Wiebe, \textit{The Search for Order, 1877-1920} (New York: Hill and

\textsuperscript{69} Winfield Scott Hall, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{70} "Moral and Religious Training," \textit{Church Union
(September 21, 1878), p. 2."

\textsuperscript{71} C.P.S. Gilman, \textit{The Home, Its Work and Influence
(New York: McLure Phillips, 1903), pp. 55-61."}
Others sought to include permanently in the school curriculum such sexual knowledge as was adequate to safeguard against ignorance and misinformation. The kindergarten was viewed as an excellent agency for both supplementing a mother's work at this important stage of early childhood and of educating the mother. Local and State Mother's Unions strongly recommended Froebel's *Education of Man* to their members and regarded as one of their most important roles the need to educate the public to the importance of the kindergarten. At a Philadelphia meeting free kindergartens were recommended to be attached to each of the six hundred churches of the city. The Home Influence Association recommended that every girl complete her education with one year of special training in the theory and practice of kindergarten and Domestic Science. The *Child Study Monthly* advocated kindergarten as the "one thing needful" for the child. It promised, said Mrs. Mann, the regeneration of society.

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74 Minutes of the Home Influence Association (Swarthmore College: February 21, 1899), p. 54.

75 Justice Sterns, "Froebel," *Child Study Monthly* III (April, 1898), 14.

76 Mary Mann, "The Kindergarten or the New Education," *Journal of Education*, XV (April 20, 1887), 249-251.
On a more practical level, the kindergarten teacher, who was to be a surrogate parent in every respect, was to train the children into "responsible, self-directing agents" of righteousness and self-sacrifice.77

Thus by the end of the nineteenth century, purity reformers were reluctantly conceding that the narrow emphasis they had laid upon the parent and home as the vehicle of character development might have been misplaced. They had developed numerous techniques to sexually educate the child through the parents. The importance of the conditioning of habits had been carefully considered and explained in much detail. The types of sexual information necessary for the child from his earliest stages had been drawn up and disseminated through numerous organizations and publications. Books had been expurgated and immoral entertainments banned. Indeed the whole environment had been searched and studied in an attempt to discover, and remove where possible those influences which did not conduce to the perpetuation of a child's innocence. Yet, at the end of the century, vice, prostitution and delinquency showed no rebate, which suggested to purity reformers that parents were improperly performing their duties. They hoped that this was due to inability rather than lack of desire, and having been unable to educate

present parents saw new hope in reaching future ones. Sex
instruction would therefore have to move into the school
for a while, or permanently, so that society could be sure
that children were not left in ignorance about the dangers
of their sexuality.

In addition to the gradual recognition among purity
workers of the values to be gained from some type of sexual
instruction within the school, momentum for sex education
was supplied by interested groups of physicians and educators.
Members of the developing Social Hygiene Movement and
advocates of a 'new' and 'progressive' types of education
increasingly influenced purity reformers to enlist the schools
as potentially powerful agencies of moral reform. The com-
bination of these forces led, in the first decades of the
twentieth century, to the emergence of specific sex education
programs in the schools.
Chapter 9

SEX INSTRUCTION IN THE SCHOOLS

As Lawrence A. Cremin points out, if anything had been established in the public mind by the 1890's, it was an overriding faith in the binding relationship of education and national progress.¹ When Pennsylvania enacted a compulsory education law in 1895, the drive for national compulsory education was almost complete (Mississippi was last in 1918), but at the same time enormous pressures were being put upon the school to relate its curriculum more directly to the child and his increasingly complex world. The introduction of industrial and vocational education were two successful illustrations of these pressures.² More pervasive was the increasing emphasis upon social progress through Americanization and the need to use the school as a crucial part of the melting and molding process. Succinctly stated by the


²For a discussion of these topics, see Marvin Lazerson, Origins of the Urban School: Public Education in Massachusetts, 1870-1915 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).
Reverend William S. Rainsford, popular New York spokesman for reform Protestantism, education was "the one way to bring better times, better civilization, better men, better women." 3

Liberal Social Darwinism provided an intellectual rationale for these ideas. In 1883, Lester Frank Ward had challenged the theory that education could not significantly alter evolutionary patterns by suggesting that the power of the mind could consciously direct evolutionary development. Following Auguste Comte, he argued that social salvation lay in a vast diffusion of information, especially scientific information among the population. 4 Popularized by his disciples, among them Albion Small and John Dewey, the importance of school education to social progress and reform was being increasingly accepted by educators in the 1890's. 5 Moreover, advances in psychology, especially child psychology, were demonstrating that the dissemination of scientific knowledge must be accompanied by an understanding of the mind of the child and his abilities to digest and utilize it. G. Stanley Hall pioneered in the development in America


5 A general discussion of the development of pedagogical theories of Progressive Education can be found in Cremin, op. cit., Chapters 3 and 4.
of the concept of the child-centered curriculum whereby an understanding of the nature, needs and development of the child would lead to a curriculum more relevant to the future needs of the child than had previously been the case.

The new studies in psychology also served to emphasize the benefits which could be accrued from new teaching strategies. William James pointed out that the knowledge of the difficulty of reversing established habits suggested the very real need to instruct the child in the importance of pure habits before it was too late. "Could the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in a plastic state." However, he also conceded that the mind, properly trained, could overcome bad habits and suggested that education could indeed serve as a change agent by providing the child with the instruments of effective self-direction. Moral idealism could then stem, not from docility, but from the consciousness of freedom to voluntarily submit to obedience to moral laws. Choice could thus be perceived as an important factor in character formation.

The gradual acceptance of these ideas operated to open the doors of the school to all manner of activities which could be shown to be pertinent to the needs of the child.

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"After the 1880's public enthusiasm for this 'new education' represented a common determination to use any workable theory to enlist the child as painlessly as possible into the service of the 'right'." The dramatic developments in scientific research on the child, and new designs to expand the scope and power of the schools, propelled the hope among many that the school could become the center of an educational effort to save the traditional American ideals of character and faith. In the light of such a belief, instruction in sexual behavior, a model for behavior in other spheres of life, seemed to be a pertinent area to include in the school curriculum. Purity reformers were persuaded that in intelligence lay the key for man to conquer the brute within him, and that through conditioning, habits could be developed that would lead to social salvation. They believed that man could, if necessary, change his nature and saw increasingly that school education could be an infallible means of accomplishing the task. By 1905, Dr. O. Edward Janney, who headed the American Purity Alliance was stressing education to be "the one method of relief, at once correct in theory and prompt in bringing about an improvement in Social Purity." Education,  


8 Ibid., p. 143; For the same viewpoint, see Jonah Goldstein, "John Dewey's City on a Hill," The Journal of Educational Thought, VII (August, 1973), 73.  

he continued later, would create a "serviceable character," the expression of which could be found in good citizenship.¹⁰

Purity reformers were not alone, of course, in their interest to make the school an arena of moral instruction. The theme was hardly novel. Decades earlier, Horace Mann had envisioned universal schooling as the prime agent of moral elevation. Following the Civil War, William Torrey Harris confirmed Mann's ideals, though in a more conservative manner, by looking to the school to preserve the social order through emphasis on morality, citizenship and self-discipline. During the 1890's there were several large scale discussions about the role of moral instruction in the school. In 1892, the National Education Association passed a resolution recognizing the importance of moral training in schools as a means of preventing vice and developing the character.

This Association heartily recognizes the importance of moral training in the public schools. In all efforts to quicken the intellectual life of pupils, we should not lose sight of the fact that the ultimate aim is to elevate and invigorate character. Vice and pauperism are a greater menace to free institutions than even illiteracy. . . . We urge that adequate efforts be made to teach the great lessons of obedience, industry, justice and integrity.¹¹


Three years later, at the Columbian Exposition, the Congress of Elementary Education recommended including the teaching of morals in the elementary curriculum. Other divisions of the National Education Association discussed the various modes of educating for morals with increasing frequency.

However, the most powerful thrust to purity reformers to develop practical measures for sex education in the schools was given by the medical profession. The trend to combine medicine with moral reform which was so apparent during and after the 1830's, was again emphasized in the early twentieth century. One aspect of this phenomenon was the propulsion of physicians to positions of leadership in moral reform associations. O. Edward Janney, a young Quaker physician, became the leader of the American Purity Alliance, and Dr. Mary Wood-Allen undertook the Woman's Christian Temperance Union's Purity leadership.

This transformation in leadership, quite consistent with the growing dependence of purity reformers upon professional workers and administrators, illustrated the changing nature of purity reform. Prior to the establishment of

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the American Purity Alliance in 1895, purity leaders had been mainly concerned with coordinating the many purity reform organizations and providing what Pivar calls "symbolic integration for many reforms undertaken by the women's movement." Once purity reform had been institutionalized in the form of a Purity Alliance, many diverse elements of the movement began to gain independent existence as separate reform movements administered by professional experts. Grace Dodge's Working Girls' Societies, for example, were absorbed into the Women's Trade Union League. Losing many of its former functions, purity reform was able to concentrate more directly upon sex education and the campaign to eradicate prostitution and venereal disease. Physician leaders, it was hoped, would be effective in marshalling the forces of medicine and morality for social purity.

Support from the medical profession came unexpectedly from Dr. Prince A. Morrow, an eminent New York physician, who was largely responsible for revitalizing the union of morality and science in his prolonged campaign against the ravages of venereal disease. Mention has already been made of attempts by purity reformers to abolish prostitution and their influence in persuading many physicians to abandon attempts at regulation. Despite abolition measures, however,

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venereal diseases had continued to increase and physicians were faced with an inability or reluctance to broadcast and treat the widespread ravages of the disease. Furthermore, advances in medical knowledge were revealing other unpleasant facts about disorders directly associated with syphilis and gonorrhea, and showing both to be very much more dangerous than had previously been assumed. The complications of syphilis were shown to result in major diseases of every organ of the body, as well as arthritis, nervous disorders and paresis—a mental illness that caused "mortal terror" among physicians. Gonorrhea was shown to be a deadly infection causing numerous female complaints that had hitherto been undiagnosed. Many doctors were particularly outraged when they realized that the disease could spread to innocent people, people who had not sinned sexually, but who had contracted the disease from the husband, the mother, the wet nurse or the drinking cup. Innocent children inherited syphilis because the father had sinned threefold; by contracting it, by not treating it properly and by infecting his unsuspecting wife who passed it on to her unborn child.


16 William A. Gorton, reported in *American Journal of Insanity*, XLVIII (July, 1891), 86.

17 L. Duncan Bulkley, *Syphilis in the Innocent (Syphilis Insortium)*, Clinically and Historically Considered, with a Plan for the Legal Control of the Disease (New York: Rebman Company, 1894).
At the forefront of the outrage was Dr. Morrow who made the study and eradication of venereal disease his life's work. In 1880 he translated Jean-Alfred Fournier's book, *Syphilis and Marriage*, commenting upon the importance of this information for American society. Five years later he published a manual on venereal disease, *Venereal Memoranda: A Manual for the Student and Practitioner*, followed by the editing of a number of reports concerning syphilis from specialists in the field. His investigations noted the lack of effectiveness of sanitary regulations for prostitutes, a point which purity workers had emphasized repeatedly in their fight for the abolition of prostitution. Morrow had maintained, however, that the total eradication of prostitution was utopian, and it was not until after his attendance at the International Conference of the Prophylaxis of Syphilis and Venereal Disease at Brussels in 1899 that concern over the prevalence of innocent victims propelled him to initiate a campaign to expose and publicize the dangers of venereal disease and to eradicate prostitution.

The Brussels meeting marked an important step in the fight to eradicate venereal disease, being one of the first


international gatherings to suggest that education, rather than law might be beneficial in the solution of the problem.\textsuperscript{20} It was an effort, said Lavinia Dock in her study of the Social Hygiene Movement, "to reconcile justice and morals with science."\textsuperscript{21} On his return from the conference, Morrow presented an address to the New York County Medical Society stressing education and treatment as the best methods of protecting innocent victims from venereal disease. The Committee appointed by the society to further investigate the matter declared that gonorrhea, the most serious and widespread of infectious diseases had "risen to the dignity of a public peril."\textsuperscript{22}

As a result of his findings, Morrow was urged, at the Second International Conference at Brussels in 1902, to found an American Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis along the lines of a similar society founded by Fournier in France. Before he embarked upon this venture, however, he completed the documentation of his book, *Social Diseases and Marriage*, in which he described the dangers of syphilis and gonorrhea; how these diseases were transmitted during marriage

\textsuperscript{20}Conférence Internationale pour la Prophylaxie de la Syphilis et des Maladies Veneriennes (Brussels, 1899-1900).


\textsuperscript{22}Prince A. Morrow, "Report of the Committee of Seven on the Prophylaxis of Venereal Disease in New York City" (New York, 1901), p. 967.
to an innocent spouse; the danger to the child born to an infected mother; and the importance of education in the solution of sex problems. He felt that "the general diffusion of knowledge among the public constitute[d] the most effective prophylaxis," and advocated the dissemination of pertinent medical knowledge among lay personnel. Furthermore, he insisted that moral and hygienic education should reinforce one another for "it is distinctly within the province of hygiene to teach control of the sexual function and warn against its exercise under conditions which cause disease. It is no less the province of the moralist to condemn a vice which has a demoralising effect upon the individual and upon society." The year his book was published, Morrow began to organize the American Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis, a proposed coalition of medical and laymen whose principal duty would be to educate the public to the dangers of venereal disease. Many physicians took up the issue, and, between 1903 and 1910, over twenty local societies for Sanitary and


24 Ibid., pp. 345, 352, 363.

Moral Prophylaxis were established, all advocating the need for sex education. In 1907, for example, the Chicago Society of Social Hygiene issued a pamphlet entitled *The General Need for Education in Matters of Sex*. So successful were these societies in promoting the panacea of education as a preventative to sexual vice, that other groups of moral reformers increasingly stressed education. In 1906 the American Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis formally combined with Janney's American Purity Alliance to provide advice on moral questions to influential people, among them Theodore Roosevelt. By 1908, the official Purity Alliance Journal, *Philanthropist*, was announcing approval of the educational aims of the Hygiene Societies. Vigilance and Light, the other leading Purity journals, were soon concurring that their primary work should be educational. A coalition between social purists and social hygenists was thus


initiated, acknowledging the need for sex education in the schools on the assumption that "the majority of parents were not qualified to give it, and that the duty therefore devolved upon teachers, and should be an integral part of the course of study in all normal schools."\textsuperscript{31}

Though agreement was reached between the two groups that the school must assume the major responsibilities for sex instruction, a divergence of opinions was evident when it came to discussing the practical applications of this idea. The complexity of developing a generally acceptable mode of sex instruction was great. What to teach, how to teach and whom to teach were still unanswered questions that preoccupied advocates of sex education. Purity reformers and social hygienists held different views on the type of information to be imparted, its mode of presentation and the vehicle of instruction.

Purity workers hoped that some kind of sex instruction could be devised which would eliminate the sexual curiosity of the child and put it into the background of his consciousness. By seeking to curb the imagination, sex education would lead in the "struggle against lust" and the creation of a super morality.\textsuperscript{32} Yet they were also concerned


that "enlightenment, improperly imparted, could effect a premature awakening of passion," and that an improper vocabulary, for example, could convey wrong attitudes.\(^{33}\) Cold, scientific language, it was suggested, was the only terminology free from stealthy suggestiveness and indelicate associations.\(^{34}\) Textbooks presented similar problems, for any lengthy attention to such a topic invited the play of the imagination. Furthermore, sex books might fall into the wrong hands and allow the information to be abused. Maurice Bigelow suggested a number of short pamphlets instead, to be read at wide intervals and only in the presence of a vigilant adult.\(^{35}\)

To further confound the child, purity forces hoped that sex instruction might actually be performed without the child realizing it. G. Stanley Hall indicated that the essential problem of sex education was to safeguard the rising generation against sex dangers without any allusion to sex.\(^{36}\) (He did, however, warn that some kind of sex instruction should be given in the later years of secondary boy's schools.)\(^{37}\)


\(^{34}\) Maurice Bigelow, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

\(^{35}\) *Ibid.*, pp. 121-123.


Others advocated touching lightly upon the reproductive processes in biology and physiology classes and then complementing the information in literature and history classes where the teacher had "merely to draw a moral from the story in keeping with the current sexual morality." Should a child be bold enough to inquire about sexual intercourse, biology teacher James Peabody recommended telling him "that these were topics that did not in any way concern him at his time of life." Social Hygienists, on the other hand, were generally concerned with advocating the inclusion of the dangers of venereal disease and the subject of eugenics in the sex hygiene school program. Despite the discovery of Salvarsan in 1907 as an effective treatment for syphilis, physicians continued to stress fear of infection as a mode of regulating sexual behavior and condemned the behavior leading to the infection rather than advise upon its treatment. Morrow wished to utilize bold propaganda and 'graphic' exhibits to frighten youth into refraining from sexual activity and imprint upon their minds the horrors of venereal infection. He and his associates wanted to emphasize the hazard of action as opposed to the hazard of thoughts, contrary to some purity reformers,


like Bigelow, who feared the sexual imagination and went so far as to emphasize that day dreaming was more harmful than actual masturbation since it was capable of being practiced without limit.\textsuperscript{40} The desired concentration upon the horrors of venereal disease by social hygienists, however, led some more conservative physicians to worry that excessive sex hygiene propaganda was causing cases of venerophobia - people afflicted with an obsession that they and those around them were contaminated by the disease and who could not be persuaded of the fallacy of their belief.\textsuperscript{41} Such phobias could certainly have been induced by the graphic exhibit put out by the American Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis on the effects of venereal disease. This "hall of horrors" included wax models, drawings, charts, photographs, and lantern slides demonstrating the baneful results of the awful curse.\textsuperscript{42} Educators had mixed feelings about methods suggested for disseminating knowledge of the dangers of venereal disease. Many attacked undue emphasis upon venereal disease, especially graphic exhibits such as the one described above. Though Fletcher Dresslar had described the exhibit as one which

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\textsuperscript{40}Maurice Bigelow, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 144.
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would have a definite and far reaching educational effect, the *Journal of Education* reported that Dr. Ira Wile had denounced such exhibits in "scathing terms," finding them more harmful than beneficial. An editorial of the *Journal* tended to agree that such shock tactics had no place in the school room.

Both social hygienists and purity workers were interested in promoting the principles of eugenics through sex instruction. The study of eugenics had originated with Francis Galton in England in the 1880's and the books of some of his disciples, C.W. Saleeby, Havelock Ellis and C.B. Davenport became widely circulated in America in the first decades of the twentieth century. Essentially, eugenicists stated that a product of the best 'nature' and the best 'nurture' would give the best race. They thus encouraged "parenthood on the part of the worthy," and discouraged it among the mentally defective and diseased. Such people, Saleeby insisted, contributed largely to the ranks of prostitution, were mainly responsible for propagating venereal disease, were usually delinquents or alcoholics, and generally

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produced feeble-minded children with similar habits. Havelock Ellis produced statistics blaming the problems of the race upon the reproduction of unfit persons. The studies of Davenport in New York on the hereditary relationships of feeble-mindedness agreed with the conclusions of Ellis.

Those concerned with race regeneration, consequently, wished to stress the need to educate for parenthood and instill "an understanding of the moral obligation inherent in the proper use and direction of the sexual powers and instinct." This meant that children should not only be taught that sexual promiscuity could lead to the birth of feeble-minded children, but also that they should be instructed in how to evaluate and choose a healthy mate. To take the case of the girl, said Saleeby, "parental education, instead of merely concerning itself with the care of her baby, will be at work when she is choosing the baby's father. In all times and all places, woman's primal and supreme function is, or should be, that of choosing the fathers of the future."

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46 Ibid., p. 48.
49 C.W. Saleeby, op. cit., p. 23.
50 Havelock Ellis, op. cit., p. 54.
51 C.W. Saleeby, op. cit., p. 36.
excellent possibilities in incorporating eugenics into sex education. He felt that a knowledge of eugenics might, in the long run, be the most effective method for the elimination of sexual immorality, for "the central point of eugenics is the responsibility of the individual, whose uncontrolled sexual actions may transmit undesirable and heritable qualities and bring a train of disaster to generations of descendants." On a more practical level, the investigations of heredity and feeble-mindedness undertaken by Dr. H.H. Goddard for the American Breeder's Association resulted in the histories of two feeble-minded families, the Jukes and the Kallikaks. These histories came to form the basis for instruction in eugenics in the public schools for many years.

52 Maurice Bigelow, op. cit., p. 86.

53 The Kallikak Family.
The founder had an illegitimate son by a feeble-minded woman. From this son, in 5 generations, were traced 480 children, only 46 of whom were normal. The same father married a normal woman, had 496 offspring in 6 generations and only 1 was not normal. In the first family were all kinds of feeble-mindedness, degeneracy and crime. In the second were tradesmen, teachers, preachers, lawyers, judges and a generally high quality of citizenship.

The Jukes Family
In 6 generations, there were 1200 defectives, cared for by the state at a cost of millions of dollars.

On the part of educators, official bodies were reluctant to participate in developing formal programs of sex education during the first decade of the twentieth century. Some schools, however, did make an attempt to formulate their own programs. One of these was conducted at DeWitt Clinton High School in New York in 1904, and consisted of a lecture series given by physicians. In 1909, some Cincinnati schools organized a series of sex talks by physicians on "cleanliness, character, heredity, anatomy, the menses, infections, womanhood, and motherhood." These programs, however, were the exceptions rather than the rule. In 1910, John Heffron wrote that the subject of physiology and sex hygiene "was touched upon in but a very few schools."

During the next few years, discussion over the content and nature of sex education increased in volume among both advocates and critics. In 1911, Charles W. Eliot, President of the American Federation for Sex Hygiene, attempted to draw up "the general lines" of sex education that he considered desirable for the schools. His suggestion, submitted


to the Fifteenth International Congress of Hygiene and Demography was to teach the elementary facts of sex hygiene, frankly and concisely, through natural history.\textsuperscript{57} Taking his idea into account, the Congress drew up guidelines for a definite program of sex hygiene for schools, de-emphasizing the role of physicians and advocating that teachers of biology and nature study should be responsible for the subject.\textsuperscript{58} The use of biological sciences as a vehicle for sex instruction was increasingly discussed, some teachers advocating the use of pregnant animals, babies and nude statues in the classrooms.\textsuperscript{59} A papier mache statue of the female body was used, for example, in a Technical High School in Cleveland for discussions of female reproduction.\textsuperscript{60} The American Society for Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis, however, while accepting the utility of discussing animal reproduction, opposed the direct observation

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  \item \textsuperscript{57}Charles W. Eliot, "School Instruction and Sex Hygiene," \textit{Journal of Education}, LXXV (May, 1912), 595-597.
  \item \textsuperscript{58}G.W. Hunter and H.H. Tracy, op. cit., p. 50.
  \item Harold Molter, "Practical Suggestions for the Teaching of Sex Hygiene," \textit{Education}, XXXIV (October, 1913), 96.
  \item \textsuperscript{60}Anna C. Arbuthnot, "Physiology and Sex Hygiene for Girls in the Technical High School, Cleveland, Ohio," \textit{School Science and Mathematics}, XI (February, 1911), 103.
\end{itemize}
of animals in the classrooms, for "animal morality is not human morality" and such observations "sets the children to talking." 61

The use of biology as a tool for sex instruction was further acknowledged as useful by the Commissioner of Education of the United States in 1912 when he discussed sex education for the first time. Yet, far from bringing consensus to the debate on how sex hygiene might best be taught in the schools, the discussion of methods continued to be a highly controversial subject among educators, purity workers and social hygienists, as well as among the general public. 62 When Ella Flagg Young introduced a program of "personal purity talks" to the Chicago High Schools in 1913, national criticism forced their rapid termination. 63 The Journal of Education reported some of this criticism and the Educational Review gave extensive coverage to an editorial of a San Francisco newspaper which stated:


Every now and then comes a gratifying and unexpected flash of intelligence from the educational authorities of the country. Among the latest expressions of conservative common sense is the veto placed by the Chicago Board of Education on the course in sex hygiene outlined by Mrs. Ella Flagg Young. The Board will have nothing to do with it. It refuses to sanction, or to touch such an explosive as this. It says in effect that while there are certain things that children ought to learn it is far better that they should go wholly untaught than that the instruction should be given to them outside the family circle. There are some kinds of knowledge that become poisonous when administered by the wrong hands, and sex hygiene is one of them.64

In the light of the failure of the Chicago experiment, the Board of Education of New York City dropped the idea of a similar program.65 Though there were examples of individual schools carrying out sex hygiene programs, school boards remained reluctant to act upon the controversial subject of sex instruction, despite a resolution of the National Education Association that "the time has arrived when normal schools and teachers colleges should give adequate courses of instruction in sex hygiene with a view of the introduction of similar instruction into the courses of study in public schools", the reluctance was understandable.


In a survey carried out by the *Journal of Education* in the same year as the NEA resolution, to discover how people felt the schools should handle sex education, the results indicated that though more was expected from the schools in this area, very few could agree on precisely what this entailed.  

It is impossible to estimate to what extent sexual instruction had been made available in the schools by 1914. The literature suggests that, even though there was much discussion, actual courses were the exception rather than the rule. Michael Bliss, in discussing the pre-Freudian view of sexuality and its hazards, has pointed out that despite the widespread dissemination of attitudes and measures concerning the belief in the need for creative sexual repression, many were never exposed to the message. After all, he states, brothels vied with churches as the most popular social institutions during the first decades of the twentieth century. Exposure to the message, of course, does not necessarily mean acceptance or retention of its content. The perceived benefits of an action are essentially concerned with what the individual considers significant from his point of view. The inclusion of some sex hygiene courses in the public school curriculum doubtless enlarged the audience of—


the purity-social hygiene forces but it would seem likely that the various frames of reference of the audience operated to cause a selective perception and retention of the information. Middle-class Protestant children of educated parents probably accepted the message as a reinforcement of their early childhood training; others may have ignored or molded the information to accord with their experience and background. Thus the net result of the inclusion of sex hygiene courses in the schools was probably no more than a reinforcement of traditional and already learned attitudes among certain sections of the population.
Chapter 10

SUMMARY

Education, Michael Katz has remarked in his revisionist interpretation of nineteenth century educational history, was something the better part of the community did to others to make them orderly, moral and tractable.¹ So, one might add, was castration, though the measure was hardly advocated as the key to social salvation. However spurious the comparison, the relationship of sexual morality to moral reform and the development of new educational techniques to control behavior during the nineteenth century cannot be ignored. The urge to create, or rather re-create social control and higher standards of public order among Americans was a primary feature of educational organization by the turn of the twentieth century. It was stimulated by successive waves of concern over the spread of sexual immorality which was felt to be a symptom of social disorder. During the nineteenth century, sexual behavior was generally considered

to be an indicator of behavior in other spheres of life. If man were continent, it was likely that he would also be thrifty, hard-working and temperate. Those who were deviant represented clear-cut symptoms of a disordered society, and a number of reform groups, generally emanating from the middle-class, better educated sections of the community, sought the preservation of traditional values through the removal of these deviancies.

Scientific, or pseudo-scientific arguments rationalized and legitimized this line of reasoning, enlarging the bases along which sexual deviancy could be defined, and laying the groundwork for moralist-medical cooperation. Through cycles of mutual reinforcement, moralists and certain groups of physicians facilitated a diffusion of information concerning sexual deviancy and the results of sexual abuse. Science gave impetus to moral reform by emphasizing that sexual behavior was not only sinful, but was a disease capable of contaminating society and overthrowing the norms of law and order.

Nineteenth century efforts to regulate sexual behavior and re-establish social order have generally been considered in terms of the Social Purity Movement and the ferment of social reform activity which took place in the last decades of the nineteenth century. A close look at the impulses which triggered such activity, however, is useful
in understanding the intense pre-occupation with sexual matters of purity and other moral reformers.

This study has suggested that events of the ante-bellum years, especially after the 1830's, generated triggering cues in terms of changing perceptions of sexual deviancy, and stimulated a cooperation between medical or pseudo-medical personnel and moral reform forces. The physiological justifications of sexual repression emanating from the diffusion of the theory of moral physiology were rationalized and reinforced by those concerned with defending the family and restoring traditional morality and social order. The reported prevalence of masturbating individuals in the insane asylums lent credence to the theory that a lack of sexual conservation contributed to psychological disorder on the individual level and general disorder on the social level. As masturbation phobia was projected onto women as well, the base concerning the perceived seriousness and extent of the consequences of sexual abuse was broadened, thus increasing sexual pre-occupation among both women and men. Exposés of the widespread extent of commercial prostitution and its related health hazards enhanced this pre-occupation, for many believed that prostitution undermined the very foundations of social order and public health. This distrust, or fear of sexuality, was as apparent in the communitarian free love experiments as among moral reform groups. The Free Love Movement emphasized
that the consequences of sexual over-indulgence were heightened by a marriage in which sexual abuse could take place legally. It was, in many ways, a campaign to grant people the choice of freedom from sex.

This was an issue dear to the heart of the Women's Rights Movement, for many women keenly felt that they had been victims of the animalistic impulses of men in the marriage bed and the brothel long enough. The theory of moral physiology provided an excellent argument for women to improve both their status and the health of the nation by promoting sexual continence within marriage (except, of course, for procreation), and by attempting to eliminate the growing curse of commercial prostitution. Since the all-embracing nature of the physiology theory advocated the cultivation of ascetic habits in daily life, and many women's rights supporters wished to change the image of the fashionable and helpless female, the promotion of simple dress, spare diet and increased opportunities for physical exercise was appealing. As they saw it, not only should sexual repression be advocated equally for both sexes, it could be invoked through a total life scheme involving the minutest habits of daily living. This necessitated a well-ordered plan of child rearing, and even the most liberal women's rights worker agreed that this was generally a female task.
The recognition that correct child rearing could result in an individual competent to repress his sexual feelings was an exceedingly important triggering cue to reform action. Such action could not take place unless reformers believed in their ability to control behavior. If sin was fatalistically believed to be inevitable, people would be unlikely to undertake the impossible. If the traditional doctrine of infant depravity was accepted, then what was the point of attempting to mold the child into an individual capable of self-control? The popularization of the concept of the feasibility of human perfection, and declining enthusiasm for the notion of infant depravity during the ante-bellum years removed obstacles to possible reform action. Action, not only to modify, but to mold behavior from the very beginning was perceived as possible, essential and urgent well before moral reformers organized their movement to purify and reorder society. Purity reform was in many ways the second act on a stage already set for the performance.

Assumptions concerning the pervasive nature of sexuality operated to diffuse the strategies deemed necessary for creating and maintaining physical and therefore moral health. Two types of strategies were perceived as essential to the molding of a well-repressed individual. Silence regarding sexual matters was condemned from the 1830's onward as stimulating, rather than discouraging sexual abuse. Sexual
abuse must be discussed, said Sylvester Graham, and people must be warned of the dangers of such abuse. Instruction therefore was deemed necessary so that people could know both the dangers to avoid and how best to avoid them. Conditioning strategies, however, were extremely important for laying the foundations of a healthy body and mind. Habitual asceticism was an excellent basis for a well ordered life and could be instilled by correct conditioning from birth. Consequently, diet and dress reform and endeavors to promote exercise and healthy recreation became strands of a continuing endeavor to purify the body as house to the soul. Food, clothing and bodily functions were essential elements of daily living and represented habits, according to moral physiology, which could lead to habitual over-indulgence or to habitual self-control. Sylvester Graham particularly emphasized that sexual control could be achieved by the careful regulation of dietary habits. Women reformers advocated simplicity of dress as both a material sign of equality with men and a means of removing disease-inducing strictures and sensual, frivolous clothes. Exercise was viewed as a means of refrigerating the passions and creating spartan habits of endurance and self-control. As industrialization operated to increase leisure time and purchasing power, moral reformers sought ways of purifying corrupt recreation practices and establishing facilities for healthy exercise
and recreational pursuits. By supporting such agencies as the Young Men's Christian Association they assisted in the development of the Playground, Recreation and City Parks Movements in the last decades of the century, on the assumption that directed play, youth societies and rural spaces in the city would operate to inhibit delinquent behavior.

As the century progressed, increasing indices of sexual misbehavior, especially reports of rampant prostitution, prompted further alarm among moralists over social disorder. The strategies in operation to instruct and condition the individual in self-control and sexual repression were clearly inadequate. Despite the diffusion of Darwinian theories which might have dispelled some of the earlier enthusiasm of moralists in their hope for a perfect world, optimism continued to persist that if the right educational strategy could be developed, then sexual sin and its effects could be eliminated. Stimulated by female physicians, women began to organize Moral Education Societies as a specific device to assist mothers in the moral education of their young. Moral education, they stated, would engender the development of a social character through right generation and Christian nurture so that the child might consequently be able to provide social orientation to the nation. The child, as Bernard Wishy has pointed out, was to be the redeemer of the people. In matters sexual he was to be
conditioned in ascetic daily living habits and adequately instructed in measures for diverting sexual energies into socially acceptable channels as well as in the wonders of 'pure' sexuality (sex for the purpose of procreation). A greater understanding of child nature and developments in psychology and pedagogy operated to promote an enthusiasm for more positive teaching strategies in the area of sex, though the persistence of the vitalist concepts of physiology, and new medical discoveries concerning the contagious and extended nature of venereal disease worked to maintain fear as a major educational deterrent. Physicians such as Dr. Morrow, while advocating progressive educational measures for the prevention of sexual abuse, did not yet perceive that the utilization of intense fear arousal would tend to block, rather than open receptivity to their message. They did, however, stress that the rewards for sexual repression were immediate and practical, rather than an abstract salvation more distant in time. Moralists tended to use less brutal, though emotional themes which may have increased the salience of their message and certainly contributed to the popularity and durability of the numerous purity-related publications. "Pure Books on Avoided Subjects" became the most prominent series of sex manuals to appear at the turn of the century and their popularity lasted for well over thirty years.
Both moralists and medical personnel had generally maintained that the most effective arena for sex instruction was the home, and that the best time for such instruction was early childhood. Child nurture theories and steadily increasing knowledge in the physical and psychological workings of the child operated to confirm this belief. Sex manuals and popular magazine articles were designed to aid the parent effect this task. Only when moral and medical reformers agreed upon the failure of their measures did they attempt to cooperate in extending their arena of operations to the school. Though often in disagreement as to the form and method of sex instruction, both agreed that sexual information must be further diffused and taught through the schools in order to sustain a traditional morality and the public health, which demanded the repression of all sexual activities except for procreational purposes.

Initial efforts were disappointing. Though some schools did develop various types of sex hygiene programs, school boards were reluctant to act upon a subject which was proving to be so controversial. If purity reformers and social hygienists could not agree upon a suitable course outline for sex hygiene, how much more difficult was it for agreement to be reached among large numbers of educators and the American public in general? Indeed the difficulties of formulating acceptable strategies of educating for sex
were vividly brought to light some years later by the prosecution of Mary Ware Dennett in 1919 for distributing a sex education pamphlet which the court considered obscene; this despite the fact that the Union Theological Seminary, the Young Women's Christian Association, State Health Departments and the public schools of Bronxville, New York all used and recommended the pamphlet for its tasteful presentation of sexual matters for boys and girls. At her trial, Mrs. Dennett discussed the misleading nature of the sex literature available for children and the limitations of the type of sex hygiene instruction given to school children, if indeed it was given at all.

I found that from the physiological point of view the question was handled with limitations and reservations. From the point of view of natural science, it was often handled with sentimentality, the child being led from a semi-esthetic study of the reproduction of flowers and animals to the acceptance of a similar idea for human beings. From the moral point of view it was handled least satisfactorily of all, the child being given a jumble of conflicting ideas, with no means of correlating them - fear of venereal disease, one's duty to suppress 'animal passions', the sacredness of marriage and so forth. And from the emotional point of view, the subject was not handled at all. 2

An appeal eventually overturned the ruling of the court but the obscenity case was an ironic comment upon the continuance of the nineteenth century's distrust of sexuality and fear of its consequences. Though, for almost a century, moral reformers had repeatedly warned that ignorance and silence would not facilitate sexual purity, they had succeeded in developing measures for the dissemination of sexual knowledge which were in many cases as stringently circumscribed in content as had been the policy of silence. Scientific developments, which could have generated practical measures for the removal of the effects of sexual abuse, were molded, time and again, by moral reformers to add potency to their efforts at regulating sexual behavior. The formal merger of medical and purity people to become the American Social Hygiene Association in 1913 was a national illustration of the ongoing relationship of moral and sanitary reformers in the area of sexual hygiene and morality.³ It represented further acquiescence to the 1830 view of Sylvester Graham that sexual hygiene was sexual morality and that education for one would result in the achievement of the other. How far this union was perpetuated in the field of home and school instruction in matters of sex during the following decades is a subject demanding further study.

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