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**The Ecstasy of Sarah Prentice:  
Death, Re-Birth, and the Great Awakening  
in Grafton, Massachusetts  
By  
Ross W. Beales, Jr.**

On October 11, 1782, Ebenezer Parkman, minister of Westborough, Massachusetts, noted in his diary that Dr. John Gott of Marlborough had stopped by the parsonage on his way back from Connecticut and that Gott related "the Strange Conduct of the *Shakers* at *Windham*." On the same day, Parkman also noted that "Madam Prentice of Grafton has been with the *Shakers*."<sup>1</sup> This all-too-brief allusion to the Shakers is the last evidence we have concerning the spiritual journey of Sarah (Sartell) Prentice (c. 1716-1792). Although Prentice was born to parents of substantial means, was literate, and married a Harvard graduate and minister, some of her experiences have a remarkable parallel to those of Mother Ann Lee, the founder of the Shakers. Like Mother Ann, Prentice lost several children, experienced a dramatic conversion, was brought to court for her religious activities, and chose to become celibate. Her interest in the Shakers was a natural outgrowth of her experiences and the evolution of her beliefs over a period of forty years.

While Sarah Prentice's life is worthy of note in the early history of Shakerism, her experiences are also important to an understanding of the Great Awakening, both at its height in the early 1740s and in its long-term consequences for individuals, churches, and communities in eighteenth-century New England. While a number of case studies of the Great Awakening in New England have focused on the ages, and particularly the youthful character of converts and separatists,<sup>2</sup> in the

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<sup>1</sup>Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, Oct. 11, 1782 (Massachusetts Historical Society). Extant portions of Parkman's diary through 1755 (except 1736 and 1742, which were recently acquired by the American Antiquarian Society) are in *The Dairy of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782: First Part, Three Volumes in One, 1719-1755*, ed. Francis G. Walett (Worcester, Massachusetts: American Antiquarian Society, 1974). Other parts of the diary appear in *The Diary of Rev. Ebenezer Parkman, of Westborough, Mass., for the Months of February, March, April, October and November, 1737, November and December of 1778, and the Years of 1779 and 1780*, ed. Harriette M. Forbes ([Westborough:] Westborough Historical Society, 1899). Unpublished portions of the diary are held by the American Antiquarian Society (1736; 1742; 1756 - May 1761; June 1764 - June 1769; Nov. 10-21, 1772; June 1773 - Oct. 1778) and by the Massachusetts Historical Society (Aug. 1771 - June 1773; 1781-82).

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, J. M. Bumsted, "Religion, Finance, and Democracy in Massachusetts: The Town of Norton as a Case Study," *Journal of American History*, LVII (1971): 817-31; James Walsh, "The Great Awakening in the First Congregational Church of Woodbury, Connecticut," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser. XXVIII (1971): 543-62; Gerald F. Moran, "Conditions of Religious Conversion in the First Society of Norwich, Connecticut, 1718-1744," *Journal of Social History*, V (1972): 331-43; William F. Willingham, "Religious Conversion in the Second Society of Windham, Connecticut, 1723-43: A Case Study," *Societas*, VI (1976): 109-19; idem, "The Conversion Experience During the Great Awakening in Windham, Connecticut," *Connecticut History*, No. 21 (1980): 34-61; Peter Onuf, "New Lights in New London: A Group Portrait of the Separatists," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., XXXVII (1980): 627-43.

case of Grafton the circumstances of conversion and the status of revival participants suggest that other dynamics were at work. In several cases, the deaths of family members or neighbors provided the context in which individuals re-examined their lives and made new religious commitments. In addition, while many studies of the Great Awakening necessarily focus on records of admissions to churches, in Grafton the impact of the Great Awakening on persons who were already church members was at least as important as its impact on new converts. Sarah Prentice, for example, had been a church member for eight years before the Great Awakening and could not re-join the church, but she could, and did, begin to seek new ways to express her religious commitment, including separation from the church of which her husband was the pastor.

Sarah Prentice's husband, Solomon (1705-1773), was by any measure a radical New Light -- that is, he espoused or evidenced those "errors in doctrine" and "disorders in practice" which Old Lights denounced<sup>3</sup> and which moderate New Lights sought to discount or disown. But Solomon Prentice's zeal and talents were no match for those of his wife, and her separation from his church, along with a group of disaffected New Lights, and the scandal of her behavior with Shadrack Ireland<sup>4</sup> left Solomon Prentice with no secure support. Attacked by Old Light conservatives within his church, and abandoned by New Lights even more radical than he, Solomon Prentice was dismissed from his pastorate. He was so discredited that the ecclesiastical council which oversaw his dismissal declined to recommend him for another pastorate.

Solomon Prentice did secure another position, but it was as insecure as his first; and he and his wife eventually returned to Grafton. Their domestic life, at least after the turmoils of the mid-1740s, was outwardly unexceptionable, but Sarah Prentice addressed her husband as "brother" and proudly told Ebenezer Parkman that she knew no man "after the Flesh." Her personal life, religious experience, and commitment to celibacy had prepared her for her visit to the Shakers long before she had ever heard of them.

Sarah Prentice was born about 1716, the daughter of Nathaniel and Sarah Sartell, Huguenot immigrants who settled in Groton, Massachusetts. Her father was a prosperous merchant who, according to one family tradition,<sup>5</sup> opposed his daughter's marriage to Solomon

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<sup>3</sup>*The Testimony of the Pastors of the Churches in the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England, at their Annual Convention in Boston, May 25, 1743, Against Several Errors in Doctrine, and Disorders in Practice, Which Have of Late Obtained in Various Parts of the Land; As Drawn Up by a Committee Chosen by the Said Pastors, Read and Accepted Paragraph by Paragraph, and Voted to Be Sign'd by the Moderator in their Name, and Printed* (Boston, 1743). Nathanael Eells was the moderator.

<sup>4</sup>Francis G. Walett, "Shadrack Ireland and The 'Immortals' of Colonial New England," in *Sibley's Heir: A Volume in Memory of Clifford Kenyon Shipton* (Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, LIX; Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1982), pp. 541-50.

<sup>5</sup>William Kelly Prentice, *Eight Generations: The Ancestry, Education and Life of William Packer Prentice* (Princeton, 1947), pp. 32-37.

## The Ecstasy of Sara Prentice

Prentice; indeed, his opposition may have included disinheritance. His daughter's age -- about sixteen at the time of her marriage -- and Prentice's modest talents and the obscurity of the town which he served,<sup>6</sup> suggest that there may have been some substance to the family tradition. On the other hand, following Sartell's death in 1742, Prentice described him as "a Most tender, indulgent, and provident Father."<sup>7</sup> That he indulged his daughter is indicated by the fact that she married so young when her parents could have prohibited the marriage. And his providence is suggested by the presence of slaves in the Prentice household, a luxury beyond the reach of a country parson's salary.<sup>8</sup> As her subsequent life reveals, Sarah Prentice clearly had a mind and will of her own. Clifford K. Shipton summarizes writes that "she was a genius who knew most of the Bible by heart and could, it was said, preach as good a sermon as any man."<sup>9</sup> Sarah Sartell and Solomon Prentice were married on October 26, 1732, and Sarah Prentice joined the Grafton church on January 28 of the following year.<sup>10</sup> The Prentices' first child, a son, was born nine months later.<sup>11</sup> In traditional New England fashion, this son was named

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<sup>6</sup>Prentice came from a modest background -- his father owned a farm in Cambridge -- and the pastorate to which he was called in 1731 after graduating from Harvard in 1727 was in the newly founded town at Hassanamisco in central Massachusetts. Hassanamisco had been the site of a village of "praying Indians," whose numbers had so declined by the 1720s that the General Court had authorized a group of petitioners to purchase the land from the Indians and form a new town. A church was gathered in 1731, and the town was incorporated as Grafton in 1735. On the early history of Grafton, see Frederick Clifton Pierce, *History of Grafton, Worcester County, Massachusetts...* (Worcester: Chas. Hamilton, 1879), chs. 3, 5.

<sup>7</sup>"Solomon Prentice's Narrative of the Great Awakening," ed. Ross W. Beales, Jr., *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, LXXXIII (1971), p. 134.

<sup>8</sup>The slaves included Pompy, a "negro servant" who was baptized on Dec. 9, 1742); Luce, a "negro child," who was baptized on Jan. 19, 1745, and who died on Jan. 19 or 20; and Zipporah, a "negro child," who was baptized on Dec. 7, 1746; *Vital Records of Grafton, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1849* (Worcester, Mass.: Franklin P. Rice, 1906), pp. 104-5, 357.

<sup>9</sup>Clifford K. Shipton, *Biographical Sketches of Those Who Attended Harvard College...* ("Sibley's Harvard Graduates"; Boston, 1951), VIII:249 (hereafter cited as *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*).

<sup>10</sup>Grafton Church Records (ms. in Evangelical Congregational Church, Grafton, Massachusetts), p. 30 (Jan. 28, 1733).

<sup>11</sup>Solomon Prentice, who was born on May 11, 1705, in Cambridge, married Sarah Sartell, Oct. 26, 1732; he died on May 22, 1773. Sarah Sartell was born about 1716 and died on Aug. 28, 1792, aged 76. Their children were (1) Solomon, born at Groton, Oct. 29, 1733; died Oct. 25, 1747; (2) Nathaniel Sartell, born Dec. 8, 1735; (3) Sarah, born Feb. 14, 1737; died Mar. 2, 1737; (4) John, born Feb. 24, 1739; (5) Sarah, born Nov. 29, 1740; died at Groton, Aug. 22, 1742; (6) Henry, born Nov. 17, 1742; (7) Sarah, born July 1, 1744; (8) Lydia, baptized May 25, 1746; died Nov. 16, 1747; (9) Solomon, born at Easton, Aug. 13, 1748; and (10) Mary, born Aug. 12, 1751. These data are based on the *Vital Records of Grafton. The Vital Records of Groton, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1849* (2 vols.; Salem: Essex Institute, 1927), contain the marriage of Solomon Prentice and Sarah Sartele [sic] II:148), as well as the birth of their first son Solomon (I:88), but not the deaths noted above.

Solomon. Other children followed at the relentlessly regular intervals that characterized the female reproductive cycle in colonial New England. The second child, also a son, was named Nathaniel Sartell Prentice in honor of his maternal grandfather.<sup>12</sup> The Prentices' third child, a daughter named after her mother, died sixteen days after birth. A fourth child, John, was followed by a fifth, another daughter, who also received the name Sarah at her baptism in late 1740.

The year of birth of the Prentices' second Sarah, 1740, was also the year when the English evangelist George Whitefield made his whirlwind tour of New England. His itinerations in the fall of that year took him through central Massachusetts, where he preached at Sudbury, Marlborough, and Worcester. While there is no record that the Prentices or residents of Grafton attended his preaching, they may have been among the "great Assembly" which Ebenezer Parkman and members of his family reported at Marlborough.<sup>13</sup>

As Solomon Prentice looked back upon the events of the late 1730s and early 1740s, he recalled that the people of Grafton "were Generally a Sober, and to appearance Religious People: Who in the general lived in Love and Peace among our Selves, and have been Noted by Strangers, to be very kind, obliging, and helpful to One Another, in Sickness and all Times of Need and Difficulty." The harmony of the community was disrupted when residents and absentee proprietors became embroiled in a dispute over the ownership and right to pews in the meeting house. The "throat distemper," or diphtheria, which struck the town in the late 1730s, "Marred Much of our Beauty," noted Prentice, for twenty to thirty of the town's children died in the epidemic.<sup>14</sup>

The people kept up an outward appearance of piety, as most families, Prentice recalled, practiced family prayer, few persons had not been baptized, and church membership was growing. There was "as Much of the form of Godliness among us, as in any Neighbouring Town...: but to our Shame, be it ever Spoken as Little of the Life and Power of it." Prentice noted that most of the town's young people were "Very Much adicted [*sic*] to Frolicking and Mirth," and although he warned them against it and "pressed upon them the Expediency and Necessity of Remembring [*sic*] their Creator in the Days of thier [*sic*] Youth," his efforts were "very InEffectual" until March, 1741.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>One might also note that the use of a middle name, even a family name, was uncommon at this time; the Prentices' decision to use a middle name may have reflected their ties with a cultural world in which middle names were becoming fashionable. On the relatively sudden appearance of middle names, see David Hackett Fischer's study of Concord, Massachusetts, "Forenames and the Family in New England: An Exercise in Historical Onomastics," in *Generations and Change: Genealogical Perspectives in Social History*, ed. Robert M. Taylor, Jr., and Ralph J. Crandall (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986), pp. 229-30.

<sup>13</sup>*Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, ed. Walett, p. 85 (Oct. 14, 1740).

<sup>14</sup>"Prentice's Narrative," 133.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

As in many other New England towns, the late winter and early spring of 1741 marked the beginning of the Great Awakening in Grafton. In March two young men arrived from Cambridge, where they had been inspired by the preaching of George Whitefield and Gilbert Tennent, and met with Grafton's young people. During the summer, the behavior of Grafton's youth seemed altered for the better, and several appeared to be converted. That winter, two heads of families were converted, and two elderly people, who had a reputation for notable piety, were likewise awakened.<sup>16</sup> During the later winter and spring of 1742, "a very general Concern" appeared "in all Ranks and Ages," and the town was visited by several itinerant revivalists.<sup>17</sup> It was against this background of widespread religious concern that Sarah Prentice's dramatic conversion took place.<sup>18</sup> The death of her father on January 16, 1742 appears to have been the crucial turning point.<sup>19</sup> At the news of his death, she cried out, "Have I dead Father Who has been dear to me! Ah! but I have a dead *Soul* which is off an Eternal Duration, which is infinitely [*sic*] worse than to have a dead Father! ...Can I Mourn for a dead Father, when I have a dead *Soul*!" Starting on January 19, her spiritual distress increased until the end of February, when, as Prentice recalled, "her Soul began to be in an Agony; which Much Effected her Body to the Degree that She was Scarce able to Stirr [*sic*] hand or foot for Some few Minuits [*sic*]...." The night before receiving divine consolation, she was "exceedingly humbled and bowed to the will of God," proclaiming, in typically Puritan fashion, "Let Him do what He will with me, I am Now willing to be what, and where, and to do and Suffer, whatever He Shall please to lay on me, or call me unto!" The physical manifestations of her agony intensified: "her Nerves and Sinews are contracted, and her Tongue Stiff in her head: her Own Phrase was, it felt like an Iron bar in her Mouth...." She begged God to give her the power of her tongue, and she finally cried out "full of Astonishment '*at the wondrousfull [*sic*] Power of God! Come See the Power of God on Me!*'" After this she slept, but the next day she was again "enabled too wrestel [*sic*] with God till her Strength failed, and Breath too, for a Little Space." Finally, "her Stomack [*sic*] heaved, and, She broke forth -- *its Lovely! its Lovely!*" When asked how lovely, she replied, "Think of Every thing on Earth,

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<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 133-34.

<sup>17</sup>These included Samuel Buell (Yale 1741); Daniel Bliss (Yale 1732), minister of the First Parish in Concord; and Philemon Robbins (Harvard 1729), minister of Branford, Connecticut; *ibid.*, pp. 136-37.

<sup>18</sup>The quotations in this and the next paragraph are from Solomon Prentice's narrative. He did not identify his wife by name, but among the women for whom data are provided in the *Vital Records of Grafton*, only Sarah Prentice fits the description which the minister provides: a married woman, about twenty-six years of age, whose father died in the winter of 1741-42 and whose only daughter died shortly thereafter.

<sup>19</sup>According to a gravestone inscription, Nathaniel Sartell died Jan. 16, 1741; *Vital Records of Groton, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1849* (2 vols.; Salem: Essex Institute, 1927), II:263. His death was not recorded by the town clerk. I have assumed that the cemetery inscription was intended to represent 1741/42.

that is lovely, and pleasant: and put them altogether; and this is ten thousand times more So [*sic*]" Her joy and raptures continued for several months, but, "bodyly [*sic*] Indispositions prevailing upon her" during the summer months, "these pleasing Prelibations [*sic*] of heavenly Joy and Delight were much abated." (The "bodyly [*sic*] Indispositions" may have been the result of her sixth pregnancy; another son, Henry, was born on November 27, 1742.)

Sarah Prentice's religious experience prepared her for the death of her only daughter and namesake on August 22, 1742, in Groton.<sup>20</sup> According to her husband, "her Submission and Resignation there in was Wonderfull [*sic*] to Such as were about Her," and she often said that "She Could bless God with her whole Soul for taking away her Child from her; for She had a Full and Satisfactory Discovery that her Heart and Affections were Shamfully [*sic*] taken off the Creator and placed upon the Creature; therefore God Justly Corrected her."

As news of the revival spread, people from other towns began to attend services in Grafton, and Prentice invited New Light itinerants such as Samuel Buell, Philemon Robbins, and Daniel Bliss to preach in Grafton. The preaching of zealous New Light ministers, Prentice's forays into other towns, the appearance of an Indian, Ezekiel Cole, in the Grafton pulpit, and Prentice's increasingly censorious behavior toward Old Light ministers and parishioners caused widespread concern. In the face of criticism from more moderate ministers, Prentice withdrew from the Marlborough Association,<sup>21</sup> and a group of conservatives separated from his church and called for an ecclesiastical council.

The council, composed of moderate New Lights, was sharply critical of Prentice. They variously described his doctrines and conduct as "unsound, and of dangerous Tendency," "unchristian and inhuman," "hard and uncharitable," "unjustifiable and offensive," and containing "too much Confusion of Thought, and Want of necessary Distinctions." Nonetheless, in light of what they thought was Prentice's acknowledgment of his errors, they urged a reconciliation.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>The vital records note that the child died in Groton, but it is not certain whether Sarah Prentice was there or in Grafton.

<sup>21</sup>At the quarterly meeting of the Marlborough Association on Apr. 13, 1742, Prentice delivered a concio on Luk. 14:22, and Ebenezer Parkman, the scribe, noted: "Conference after turned upon some passages of the Sermon against Such Ministers as oppose the present work of God." At the association's meeting on Apr. 13, 1743, there was a debate between Prentice and Samuel Barrett, minister of Hopkinton, relating to "Exceptions" which Prentice made against a sermon which Barrett had preached at a fast in Westborough on Feb. 2, 1743. Barrett was asked to repeat the sermon and Prentice "was requested to make his Exceptions anew and distinctly but answered that the sermon did not appear to him as it did at first hearing - yet a reconcilment between these Gentlemen was not accomplished." This was apparently the last time Prentice attended the association's meetings, for on Aug. 15, 1744, Nathan Stone observed that Prentice "had been absent for Some Considerable Time from these Meetings," and on Jan. 22, 1745, it was noted that Prentice "desired to be dismissed from the Association and have his name raised [*sic*] out of the Associations Books which was consented to." Records of the Marlborough Association (ms., Marlborough First Church; microfilm, American Antiquarian Society), pp. 43, 46, 49, 50.

<sup>22</sup>*A Result of a Council of Churches at Grafton, October 2d. 1744* (Boston, 1744).

## The Ecstasy of Sara Prentice

In the turmoil of 1743 and 1744, there is no record of Sarah Prentice's activities. A seventh child -- a daughter, the third to be named Sarah -- was born on July 1, 1744, but this is the only reference to Sarah Prentice from those two years. Other women in Grafton did, however, leave a record. Thus, Hannah Stevens, who had "experienc'd wonderful awakenings," visited Ebenezer Parkman on August 6 and assured him that she was "not able to admitt [*sic*] many things which she finds among her Neighbours [*sic*] -- regard to Dreams, and holding most sensible Communion with God in sleep, etc."<sup>23</sup> Parkman's diary contains several references to Sarah Prentice in 1745, most notably on May 6, when he dined at the Prentice home. Mrs. Prentice, he noted, "was very much in Raptures last Night, and was Somewhat full, at times, to Day."<sup>24</sup>

George Whitefield returned to New England in early 1745, and his presence, against the background of the turmoil that had followed upon his visit in 1740, prompted New England ministers to choose sides, with most either vocally critical of him or at least keeping a safe distance. Not so Solomon Prentice, who invited Whitefield to preach in Grafton in late June.<sup>25</sup> When Whitefield and his wife continued their journey to Northampton, the Prentices accompanied them.<sup>26</sup> Later that year, so-called "Canterbury men" -- that is, members of the separatist church in Canterbury, Connecticut<sup>27</sup> -- visited Grafton and caused dissensions among those who had supported Prentice.<sup>28</sup> Most notable among these outsiders was Elisha Paine,<sup>29</sup> whose brother Solomon would visit Grafton in 1747 and prompt Sarah Prentice to separate from her husband's church.

Exactly what was happening in Grafton remains elusive, although Ebenezer Parkman did record some of the allegations. Parkman participated in an ecclesiastical council which sought to bring peace to Grafton in February of 1747. The New Light separatists insisted that "the very Ground work and gathering of the Church in Grafton was not according to the Gospel." Furthermore, according to Parkman, "they Vindicated the Doctrine of Knowledge of one another by the union of

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<sup>23</sup>*Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, ed. Walett, p. 101 (Aug. 6, 1744).

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 117 (May 6, 1745).

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 120 (June 24, 28, 30; July 1, 1745).

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 121 (July 18, 1745).

<sup>27</sup>On the separation at Canterbury, see John W. Jeffries, "The Separation in the Canterbury Congregational Church," *New England Quarterly*, LII (1979): 522-49.

<sup>28</sup>*Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, ed. by Walett, p. 127 (Nov. 14, 1745).

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 123-24 (Sept. 4, 25, 1745). On Feb. 22, 1743, Elisha Paine had been jailed in Worcester for "Publishing or Uttering Mock Sermons in Imitation or in Mimicking preaching and other parts of Divine Worship." The Grand Jury judged him "Ignoramus," and, no objections being made, the court discharged him, May 10, 1743. Records of the Court of General Sessions of the Peace, Worcester, II:120 (ms., Worcester County Court House, Worcester).

Love etc. etc."<sup>30</sup> Two days later Solomon Paine arrived in Grafton,<sup>31</sup> and within eight days Sarah Prentice separated from her husband's church. According to Parkman, on March 9, 1747, "Mr. Prentice of Grafton...came down to see me under his heavy Burdens. He freely tells me that now he can have no Thoughts of tarrying in Grafton. Their Church is to meet tomorrow and he thinks he must ask a Dismission: his wife having been to hear Mr. Solomon Paine; and last Saturday Morning declar'd [*sic*] for the Separation."<sup>32</sup>

Although neighboring ministers advised Prentice to seek a dismissal from Grafton,<sup>33</sup> he was slow to act. Parkman visited the Prentices in mid-May, and Sarah Prentice "declar'd [*sic*] herself a Separate." Parkman took the opportunity to "convince her of her Error," especially her claim to be able to judge the spiritual state of other persons, her judgment that the church in Grafton was no real church, and her irregular separation. He also warned her, as he phrased the matter, "against Defect in Relative Dutys [*sic*] in the House; and giving occasion to others to suspect criminal Freedoms with the other sex, under the splendid Guise of Spiritual Love and Friendship. I bore my Testimony against Visions and Revelations...."<sup>34</sup> Nearly fifty years later, Ezra Stiles recorded what his informants told him about Shadrack Ireland, the self-anointed leader of a group of immortals or perfectionists who would settle in Harvard, Massachusetts: "Old Nat Smith died 2 or 3 y. ago, Aet. 80 & supra. He lived an old Bach. in Hopkinton near Edge Medfield. He was one of Old Ireland's Men & of the Compa. of a doz. or 15 wild Enthusiasts who about 50 y. ago lived in & about Medfd., Sutton, Uxbridge & declared themselves IMMORTALS: of wc. Rev. Mr. Prentice's Wife of Grafton was one. She used to lie with Ireland as her spiritual Husbd [*sic*]."<sup>35</sup>

Whether Sarah Prentice knew Shadrack Ireland in any sense is not corroborated by other evidence, but her behavior clearly angered her husband. A month after Parkman warned her against "giving occasion to others to suspect criminal Freedoms with the other sex," he "heard the Storys [*sic*] confirm'd [*sic*] of Mr. Prentice beating his Wife again,"<sup>36</sup> and, still later, he heard "very terrible storys [*sic*] concerning Mr.

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<sup>30</sup>*Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, ed. Walett, p. 150 (Feb. 25, 1747). The doctrines and practices of these radical New Lights were not unique; see William G. McLoughlin, "Free Love, Immortalism, and Perfectionism in Cumberland, Rhode Island, 1748-1768," *Rhode Island History*, XXXIII (1974): 67-85.

<sup>31</sup>*Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, ed. Walett, pp. 150-51 (Feb. 27, 1747)

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 151 (Mar. 9, 1747).

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.* (Mar. 12, 1747).

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 154 (May 18, 1747).

<sup>35</sup>Ezra Stiles, *Extracts from the Itineraries*, ed. Franklin Bowditch Dexter (New Haven: Yale, 1916), p. 418 (Sept. 18, 1793).

<sup>36</sup>*Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, ed. Walett, p. 156 (June 18, 1747).

## The Ecstasy of Sara Prentice

Prentice of Grafton and his beating his wife."<sup>37</sup> An ecclesiastical council composed of delegates from three neighboring churches heard "Grim and formidable Evils related concerning the Reverend Mr. Prentice's Conduct towards his Wife and the rest of the Separatists, so lately as last Lords Day Eve -- Tore her Gown, Struck them that resisted him etc."<sup>38</sup> With Solomon Prentice's treatment of his wife a public and repeated scandal, and with the church voting "Man by Man their Desire that Mr. Prentice would ask a Dismission," the ecclesiastical council severed the tie between Prentice and his church and declined to recommend him to another ministry.<sup>39</sup>

Upon the public reading of the council's result, Sarah Prentice's "Voice was Suddenly lifted up and she scream'd [*sic*] in the assembly -- the Chief was in defence [*sic*] of their (the Separatists) Covenanting together and to exhort and pay [pray?] the Members of the Council not to fight against God."<sup>40</sup> By this time, Sarah Prentice and the other Grafton separatists had already been presented by the county grand jury to the Worcester County Court of General Sessions of the Peace for their separation. On November 3, 1747, the court heard the case of separatist Joseph Whipple, who "pleaded Guilty of not attending the publick [*sic*] Worship of God in the Ussuall [*sic*] place and put Himself on the favour [*sic*] of the Court." Whipple stated that he "Could not Attend on the ministry of the Reverend Mr. Solomon Prentice in Grafton with a Clear Conscience And that the Defendants with others constantly attended on Lords and carryed [*sic*] on Worship amongst themselves." The court concluded that "they were Actuated by an overheated and blind Zeal" and ordered that Whipple "be Dismissed paying Cost." The presentments against all but two of the defendant separatists were similarly dismissed that day; those against Sarah Prentice and another defendant were dismissed early the next year.<sup>41</sup>

After his dismissal, Solomon Prentice did find other ministries -- first in Easton, Massachusetts, from 1747 to 1752, then in Hull,<sup>42</sup> from 1768 to 1772 -- but these were terminated amid acrimony and confusion

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<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 157 (June 29, 1747).

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.* (July 7, 1747).

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.* (July 10, 1747).

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup>The grand jury made its presentments against the separatists in May, 1747. The court held its first hearing on the matter on Aug. 18, when the defendants pleaded not guilty, "put them Selves on Tryall by the Court," and were ordered to appear in November. Sarah Prentice may have moved with her husband to Easton before most of the cases were heard in November. Records of the Worcester County Court of General Sessions of the Peace (ms., Worcester County Court House), II:188-89 (Aug. 18, 1747), 192-93 (Nov. 3, 1747), 198 (Feb. 2, 1748).

<sup>42</sup>With respect to Prentice's ministry at Hull, Ezra Stiles reported that "Rev. & crazy Solo. Prentice & one Jones are there & as Exhorters now officiate." See Stiles, *Extracts from the Itineraries*, pp. 249-50.

which were compounded by Sarah Prentice's doctrines. In early 1748, Prentice wrote to a correspondent:

My Wife is So Strong a Seperate [*sic*] She has not heard me Preach but a few times for 2 years past. Neither Can She, or any of the Stanch Separatists hear any of the Standing Ministers, if they Say any thing against the work of God, (i.e.) the Seperation [*sic*]. Which Mrs. Prentice Says is the Lords work and it will prosper And prevail, wherever there are Christians, in Spite of all Opposition [*sic*] from Earth and Hell: She Says None Can or Ever did or will pray with the Spirit of God against itt [*sic*]; because the N. English Churches are degenerated and gone away from the Rules of Gospel Dissapline [*sic*] and this is the way god [*sic*] is taking to reduce them but I See not So, nor does any Minister in the Land or world, that I know of.<sup>43</sup>

On December 5, 1750, according to Prentice's notation in the Easton church records, Sarah Prentice had become an Anabaptist: "She was immersed by a most despicable layman..., her husband being absent."<sup>44</sup>

Sarah Prentice's religious ideas continued to evolve to the point that she believed herself immortal and free from sin. The nature of these doctrines is suggested by a "discourse" which Isaac Backus had with her on June 27, 1753: "she declared that this night 2 months ago She passed thro' [*sic*] a change in her Body equalent [*sic*] to Death, so that She had ben [*sic*] intirely [*sic*] free from any disorder in her Body or Corruption in her Soul ever Since; and expected she ever should be So: and that her Body would never see Corruption, but would Live here 'till Christs [*sic*] personal coming. And tho' She held these Strange things, yet the Temper she Shewed [*sic*] and his discourse on other things Seemed very agreeable."<sup>45</sup>

Her beliefs remained persuasive to her husband. In 1754, after his church faction at Easton had joined the so-called Irish Presbytery in Londonderry, New Hampshire, Prentice is said to have been "Silenced pro Tempore by the Irish Presbytery...for adhering too much to his Wifes [*sic*] notions of Immortality etc."<sup>46</sup>

She continued to espouse her radical doctrines, returning to Grafton in 1754, where, according to what Parkman heard, "her

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<sup>43</sup>Solomon Prentice to Jacob Green, Easton, Feb. 6, 1748 (ms., Gratz Collection, Alpha Series, Historical Society of Pennsylvania).

<sup>44</sup>*Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, VIII:252, citing William L. Chaffin, *History of the Town of Easton* (Cambridge, Mass., 1886), p. 136.

<sup>45</sup>*The Diary of Isaac Backus*, ed. William G. McLoughlin (3 vols.; Providence: Brown University Press, 1979), I:294.

<sup>46</sup>Josiah Cotton, *Memoirs* (ms., Harvard College Library), p. 431, as quoted in *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, VIII:256.

Exhortings [*sic*] have Success."<sup>47</sup> She and one Mrs. Logan visited Westborough in June of 1755. "I perceive," wrote Parkman, "they are plung'd [*sic*] very deep into Errors; and Yet Seem exceeding Spiritual, heavenly and Purify'd [*sic*] -- at least Mrs. Prentice. 'Tis Said they are Nicolaitans, and yet Perfectionists." Parkman lamented the "infinite Mischief" which he thought they had done to the church, and he hoped that he and all others would "be preserv'd [*sic*] from their Mischievous Reveries!"<sup>48</sup>

For his part, Solomon Prentice seemed reconciled to his wife's behavior, indeed, convinced of its authenticity. When Prentice visited the Westborough parsonage, Parkman "talk'd [*sic*] closely with him of his Wife's pretence [*sic*] to Immortality: he gives in to it, and thinks She is, as She declares, in the Millennium State." Parkman "also enquir'd [*sic*] strictly into their Sentiments and Practices respecting their Conjugal Covenant," and Prentice "utterly" denied "Every Thing of uncleanness, Fornication or Adultery among them."<sup>49</sup>

Despite the disruptions in their lives and in Prentice's ministry, the Prentices remained husband and wife. Their eighth child, a son, was born in Easton in 1748 and was named Solomon, the first son by that name having been killed in 1747 by blasting powder while digging a well in Grafton.<sup>50</sup> Their ninth and last child was born in 1751. The birth interval (thirty-six months) between her second-to-last child and her last child suggests that she might have been approaching menopause (she was about thirty-five). At the same time, according to her own testimony, she had become celibate. When Ebenezer Parkman visited the Prentices in early 1773, Sarah Prentice spoke of her husband "under the name of Brother *Solomon*," and she gave Parkman "Some Account of the wonderful Change in her Body -- her Sanctification -- that God had shewn [*sic*] to her His mind and Will -- She was taught henceforth to know no man after the Flesh -- that She had not for above 20 Years -- not so much as Shook hands with any Man etc."<sup>51</sup> Thus, by her own account, Sarah Prentice had had no sexual relations for more than twenty years, that is, since sometime in the early 1750s. Her recollection of the chronology fits with her statement to Isaac Backus in 1753 that she had "passed thro' [*sic*] a change in her Body equalent [*sic*] to Death, so that She had ben [*sic*] intirely [*sic*] free from any disorder in her Body or Corruption in her Soul ever Since; and expected she ever should be So: and that her Body would never see Corruption, but would Live here 'till Christs [*sic*] personal coming."

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<sup>47</sup>*Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, ed. Walett, p. 279 (Aug. 6, 1754).

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.* p. 290 (June 10, 1755).

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 292 (July 26, 1755).

<sup>50</sup>*Vital Records of Grafton*, p. 358; *Diary of Ebenezer Parkman*, ed. Walett, p. 163 (Oct. 24-25, 1747).

<sup>51</sup>Parkman Diary (ms.), Feb. 23, 1773.

The Prentices appear to have worked out a mutually satisfactory relationship, for no breath of scandal worth recording reached Westborough. When Parkman visited them in 1773, the year of Solomon Prentice's death, "old Mr. Prentice" (he was then sixty-seven years old) was "far gone in a Dropsy." Parkman "found him pleasant; and his wife also Sociable."

Sarah Prentice's visit to the Shakers nine years later resulted from the convergence of her religious experience and the arrival of Mother Ann Lee and her followers at Harvard, Massachusetts, in the late spring of 1781. After leaving Niskeyuna (to the northwest of Albany, New York) in late May, 1781, Mother Ann and five followers stopped at several towns in Massachusetts, including Grafton, where they spent several days at the home of John Maynor before continuing on to Upton, Stillwater, and Harvard.<sup>52</sup> Given Sarah Prentice's beliefs and conduct, as recorded by Ebenezer Parkman, we may assume that she most certainly would have met Mother Ann at this time. There are few contemporary accounts of Mother Ann's arrival at Harvard, but at their meeting on August 21, 1781, the Marlborough Association of ministers, for which Parkman served as scribe, heard "an Account of the Strange Conduct and Temper of a Number of People who were come to Harvard, who are called *Shakers*, and under the Guidance of an *Elect-Lady*."<sup>53</sup> At the Association's next meeting, on October 23, Parkman recorded that "though we hear a great deal concerning the Enthusiasts at Harvard, We have no such distinct Accounts as to enable us to take any Notice of them."<sup>54</sup> Neither the Marlborough Association nor Ebenezer Parkman took further notice of the Shakers, or their "*Elect-Lady*." The last significant record we have of Sarah Prentice is the tantalizing entry in Parkman's diary for October 11, 1782, concerning Sarah Prentice's visit to the Shakers.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to sort out the tangled elements of the relationship between Solomon and Sarah Prentice. Yet it is possible to place that relationship into a larger context -- namely, the ways in which at least some individuals in Grafton confronted problems of guilt and death in the context of the religious revival. In the case of Solomon and Sarah Prentice, the family tradition that her parents opposed her marriage suggests that there were grounds for guilt. Whether there was a real or lasting estrangement between parents and daughter is impossible to say, but clearly her father's death had a significant impact on Sarah Prentice. In addition, the death of her second daughter named Sarah was made bearable by her religious experience.

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<sup>52</sup>Edward Deming Andrews, *The People Called Shakers: A Search for the Perfect Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 35-36. Isaac Backus noted that the Shakers had been at Enfield and Grafton before going to Harvard; see *The Diary of Isaac Backus*, ed. William G. McLoughlin (3 vols.; Providence: Brown University Press, 1979), II:1097.

<sup>53</sup>Records of the Marlborough Association, p. 147.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*

Other deaths in Grafton appear to have had an effect on the revival, serving as both a warning and a stimulus. In late July, 1743, occurred the "Suddain [*sic*] And awfull [*sic*] death" of an old man who was "Shifted out of time into Eternity in One Moment" when he fell off a cart and broke his neck. Prentice chose to preach on Ecclesiastes 12:7, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." The result "Seemed to be Much of the goings of Our God And King in His Sanctuary and among His people, in Conviction and Consolation."<sup>55</sup>

Even more dramatic was the death-bed conversion of thirty-year-old Samuel Harrington, who had been, in Prentice's words, "*a Violent Oposer [*sic*] of the work of God.*" On one occasion, Harrington left one of Prentice's service and asked a neighbor, "*why do you go to Meeting[:] the Divil [*sic*] is there.*" He also frequently spoke "*not only lightly but reproachfully of the work of God And the promoters of it.*"<sup>56</sup>

Harrington was stricken with the throat distemper in early August, 1743, experienced a death-bed conversion, and died within a week. After his conversion, Harrington welcomed the prospect of death, admonished his brother "to be Sure to git [*sic*] an Intrest [*sic*] in Christ quickly," and acknowledged his ignorance in having opposed the revival. His opposition to Prentice's ministry weighed particularly on his mind, for he repeated to Prentice a "Considerable part" of the minister's ordination charge. He likewise entreated Prentice "to be Instant in Season and out of Season in preaching the word of God, And not to fear the faces of Men." He added that if Prentice were "faithfull [*sic*] to the death," God would give him "a Crown of Life."<sup>57</sup>

About half an hour before Harrington's death, his wife Mary was "under punjent [*sic*] And deep Convictions," and Prentice prayed that "Now the Lord was taking away her Husband from her, She Might be Espoused, Unto the Lord Jesus Christ by faith." Prentice's prayers, in the context of this crisis, had the desired effect, for she was "Enabled to [put?] faith in the Lord Jesus And received Him for her Husband And head."<sup>58</sup> Mary Harrington had, in effect, experienced a second conversion, for she had joined the church on May 2, 1742.<sup>59</sup>

The final example of the relationship between guilt, death, and revivalism took place after Prentice's dismissal. In 1754, Hannah Wadsworth, one of the New Light separatists, asked the church to forgive her and to allow her to return to communion. Her separation, she said, had been "Partly Influenced By others and partly By a misinformed Judgment and a misguided Zeal." As early as 1751, she had had doubts

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<sup>55</sup>"Prentice's Narrative," p. 144. The old man was probably John Perham, who died on July 29, 1743, aged 76; *Grafton Vital Records*, p. 355.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 143-44.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>59</sup>Grafton Church Records, p. 36.

about her conduct but found herself "averse to...making a retraction." She became convinced of her errors, however, by the death of a neighbor. Hannah was asked to "cast the winding Sheet Round" -- that is, to wrap the body of burial. This caused her to examine her conduct, and she could "Scarce Rest Easey [*sic*]" until she had made peace with the church and had returned to her duty.<sup>60</sup>

How can the religious experience of people like Sarah Prentice, Samuel Harrington, and Hannah Wadsworth be placed in the larger context of the Awakening? Richard L. Bushman has suggested that the revival experience allowed Connecticut Puritans to resolve the guilt that arose from their resistance to clerical authority and their material strivings in the world. Connecticut Puritans thus emerged as Connecticut Yankees.<sup>61</sup> It would be difficult, however, to suggest that Sarah Prentice or Hannah Wadsworth were becoming Yankees, or that even the dying Samuel Harrington met his Maker as a Yankee. Their feelings of guilt, their confrontation with death and dying, and their religious experiences had little to do with material strivings.

Bushman may be quite correct, however, in his suggestion that guilt, arising from resistance to authority, played a role in the conversions of the Great Awakening. Sarah Prentice had resisted parental authority; Samuel Harrington had resented and defamed his minister; and Hannah Wadsworth had rejected the church's authority over her. In each case, a confrontation with death, in the context of the religious revival, made it possible for the guilty individual to repent and reform.

How far can one carry this kind of analysis? In the 1930s, Ernest Caulfield was struck by the fact that the Great Awakening seemed to follow immediately upon the spread of the throat distemper throughout New England.<sup>62</sup> His suggestion that there was a link between the diphtheria epidemic and the revivals, however, has been generally rejected. Edwin Scott Gaustad, for example, notes that the revivals in New Jersey began long before the epidemic; that in Massachusetts and Connecticut there was no correlation between the severity of the epidemic and the intensity of the revival; that in New Hampshire there was a five-year lapse between the end of the epidemic in 1736 and the start of the Awakening; and that the Awakening was most pervasive in

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<sup>60</sup>"Hannah Wadsworth's Confession," Nov. 1754 (ms., American Antiquarian Society). I am indebted to Nancy H. Burkett for bringing this document to my attention. Hannah Wadsworth's husband David had died on Dec. 5, 1749; *Vital Records of Grafton*, p. 368. She married widower Deacon Joseph Merriam, Dec. 26, 1754; *ibid.*, p. 251. Her desire to "Rest Easey" may have been enhanced by her impending marriage to the deacon.

<sup>61</sup>Bushman suggests that "two conditions prepared men for conversion: an increased desire for material wealth that ministers called worldly pride or covetousness, and the growing frequency of clashes with authority entailed in the pursuit of wealth." Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 191.

<sup>62</sup>Ernest Caulfield, *A True History of the Terrible Epidemic Vulgarly Called the Throat Distemper: Which Occurred in His Majesty's New England Colonies Between the Years 1735 and 1740* (New Haven: Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine for the Beaumont Medical Club, 1939), p. 2.

Massachusetts and Connecticut, while the epidemic was more severe in New Hampshire and Maine.<sup>63</sup>

Charles E. Clark takes a somewhat different perspective. "On the statistical level, and with regard to direct causation," he concedes, "Gaustad's reasoning is impeccable." Clark suggests, however, that statistics "fall short of telling the whole story." He cites the case of Nicholas Gilman, the New Light minister of Durham, New Hampshire, whose journal indicates "a relationship between the loss of two of his children in the epidemic and the development of his spiritual life. The quality and intensity of that development, in turn, profoundly influenced the rise of fanatical revivalism in his community of Durham." On a more general level, Clark argues, "conditions of life in northern New England over the course of several decades made the people psychologically receptive to the revivals when they came. For these reasons," he concludes, "the diphtheria epidemic, at least beyond the Merrimack, is of great importance."<sup>64</sup>

The possible connection between the "throat distemper" and the Awakening takes on new significance in light of the impact of the revivals on young people. The young, who were most vulnerable to the "throat distemper," were prominent among the new converts in older communities like Norton, Massachusetts, and Norwich, Windham, and Woodbury, Connecticut.<sup>65</sup> As the epidemic raged across New England, ministers warned the young to turn from the world toward Christ, and thus not to be found wanting at death.

To the people of New England, the meaning of epidemics, earthquakes, and fires was clear: they demonstrated God's displeasure with a sinful people. New Englanders traditionally responded in communal form to natural disasters, for such calamities as earthquakes, floods, and droughts affected the entire population.<sup>66</sup> The earthquake of 1727, for example, had shaken hundreds of people from their sloth and had driven them into the churches.<sup>67</sup>

In contrast to the earthquake, the "throat distemper" was a selective manifestation of God's displeasure, for the young were most vulnerable. As an anonymous poet wrote,

The Bow of God, is bent abroad,  
his Arrows swiftly fly,  
Young Men and maids, and sucking Babes,

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<sup>63</sup>Edwin Scott Gaustad, *The Great Awakening in New England* (New York, 1957), pp. 20-21.

<sup>64</sup>Charles E. Clark, *The Eastern Frontier: The Settlement of Northern New England, 1610-1763* (New York, 1970), p. 274 n.

<sup>65</sup>See the articles cited in note 2, above.

<sup>66</sup>Perry Miller, "Declension in a Bible Commonwealth," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* n.s., LI (1941): 37-94.

<sup>67</sup>For data on the 1727 earthquake, see Cedric B. Cowing, "Sex and Preaching in the Great Awakening," *American Quarterly*, XX (1968): 624-44.

are smitten down thereby.<sup>68</sup>

Given the high mortality among young people during the diphtheria epidemic, the young may have felt that God's wrath was especially directed at them. Parents, too, would have been aware of God's wrath, for a child's death could be seen as a warning to those who were spared. Thus, illness and death, however they might directly affect individuals, carried a stern warning to all persons.

The crisis of mortality may have been linked, at least in the minds and consciences of the young, to an eighteenth-century crisis of morality. When ministers complained of night-walking, frolicking, and company-keeping among the rising generation, they were aware of very real problems, as studies of vital records clearly show that the rate of prenuptial pregnancies increased dramatically in the eighteenth century.<sup>69</sup>

In light of such data on prenuptial conceptions, James A. Henretta has suggested that attitudes toward courtship, love, and marriage were changing. The "concept of marriage as primarily a property settlement intimately connected with the landed wealth of the entire family was now breaking down in the face of new social conditions.... Economic conditions were such that the traditional arranged marriages could readily be replaced by sexual relationships based largely on the free choice of those involved; and it was this type of more personal and more romantic union which was steadily becoming more important." Such changes could not take place, Henretta concludes, without "feelings of tension and guilt," which the Great Awakening finally assuaged through a "total psychological submission."<sup>70</sup>

Henretta's hypothesis is helpful in understanding Sarah Prentice's conversion, but what about her radical behavior after her conversion -- the assertion of immortality and perfection, the scandal which her expressions of love caused, and her ultimate renunciation of sexual relationships? Here we can turn to the parallels with Mother Ann Lee -- an early marriage, a rapid succession of children, the death of two daughters, both namesakes, a trial (or at least arraignment) for her separation from her husband's church, and the beatings which she endured. All of this took place in a highly volatile situation in which at least some radical New Lights -- those even more radical than her husband -- sought new answers to questions concerning purity and love.

Finally, one should note that questions of sexual abstinence, if not celibacy, were of increasing concern to New Englanders in the second half of the eighteenth century. As studies of Deerfield, Sturbridge, and Nantucket, Massachusetts, and Hampton, New

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<sup>68</sup>N.N., *Awakening Calls to Early Piety* (Boston, 1738), p. 3.

<sup>69</sup>Daniel Scott Smith and Michael S. Hindus, "Premarital Pregnancy in America 1640-1971: An Overview and Interpretation," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, V (1975): 537-70.

<sup>70</sup>James A. Henretta, *The Evolution of American Society, 1700-1815: An Interdisciplinary Analysis* (Lexington, Mass., 1973), p. 133.

## The Ecstasy of Sara Prentice

Hampshire, indicate, married couples appear to have been consciously limiting the number of children women would bear within the bounds of marriage. The decreasing numbers of children were one way in which women -- and men -- took control of their sexual lives.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, in a small way Sarah Prentice's life presages some dimensions of the great debates and tensions over sexuality which would figure so prominently in the cultural history of nineteenth-century America, to some elements of which the Shakers would provide one answer.

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<sup>71</sup>See H. Temkin-Greener and A. C. Swedlund, "Fertility Transition in the Connecticut Valley: 1740-1850," *Population Studies*, XXXII (1978): 27-41; Lawrence J. Kilbourne, "The Fertility Transition in New England: The Case of Hampton, New Hampshire, 1655-1840," in *Generations and Change*, ed. Taylor and Crandall, pp. 203-14; Nancy Osterud and John Fulton, "Family Limitation and Age at Marriage: Fertility Decline in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, 1730-1850," *Population Studies*, XXX (1976): 481-94; Edward Byers, "Fertility Transition in a New England Commercial Center: Nantucket, Massachusetts, 1680-1840," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XIII (1982): 17-40; Barbara J. Logue, "The Whaling Industry and Fertility Decline: Nantucket, Massachusetts, 1660-1850," *Social Science History*, VII (1983): 427-56. The path-breaking work which inspired these studies is Robert V. Wells, "Family Size and Fertility Control in Eighteenth-Century America: A Study of Quaker Families," *Population Studies*, XXV (1971): 73-82.