ABSTRACT

Motherhood and Power in New England, from the Puritans to the Revolution

Angelique Little, M.A.

Mentor: Thomas S. Kidd, Ph.D.

Women in Colonial New England were empowered by a female community operating under masculine authority but also outside it. Although women seem to have first been politicized by the American Revolution, the power inherent in colonial motherhood suggests that New England women were both powerful and empowered, that they were prominent in the community, and that they were already responsible for producing productive citizens. Republican motherhood, which has been described as an important new way for women to engage in politics, can also be explained as a feminine reinterpretation of the maternal identity that, no longer defined solely by spirituality, transformed to encompass individuality, humanism, and democratic politics.

Motherhood and Power in New England, from the Puritans to the Revolution

by

Angelique Little, B.A.

A Thesis

Approved by the Department of History

_____

Jeffrey S. Hamilton, Ph.D., Chairperson

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts

Approved by the Thesis Committee

_____

Thomas S. Kidd, Ph.D. Chairperson

_____

Kimberly R. Kellison, Ph.D.

_____

Sarah K. Ford, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School
May 2011

_____

J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

Page bearing signatures is kept on file in the Graduate School.

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank, first and foremost, Dr. Thomas S. Kidd for his unwavering professionalism and patience during this process, which has taken much longer than anticipated. Additionally, I am appreciative of the help extended to me by the history department, especially Dr. Barry Hankins. Dr. Kimberly Kellison and Dr. Sarah Ford have been kind enough to serve on my thesis committee, and for that I am grateful. Finally, I am thankful to my family for encouragement and support.

For Ishmael, who told me I could accomplish anything;

for Reginald, who helped me believe it was true;

and most of all, for sweet Cynthia, who makes all my accomplishments worthwhile

CHAPTER ONE

Puritan Motherhood and the Community of Women

New England Puritan women are sometimes viewed by historians, philosophers, and feminists as powerless, subservient, and marginalized; but this perspective tends to devalue traditionally feminine roles and to cast masculine, public power as the standard against which all power is measured. When power is considered primarily in terms of political participation and legal efficacy, it is easy to support the claim that women were historically less powerful than men. Writings of some Revolutionary-era women suggest both recognition and rejection of gender inequality, but these women did not represent the average New England wife or mother. Moreover, comments about feminine empowerment are best evaluated by considering the generations of women who lived between Puritan colonization and the conclusion of the Revolutionary war. Seventeenth and eighteenth century women did not always perceive themselves as powerless, and there is evidence to suggest that colonial women felt empowered and enjoyed a degree of authority, power, and autonomy that was centered in their role as mothers. By the Revolutionary period, ideas about what it meant to be a citizen changed; as a result some women articulated a desire for political participation—a sentiment captured in Abigail Adams's request to her husband John, who had been chosen to serve on the all-male committee which would eventually draft the Declaration of Independence. "Remember the Ladies," she intoned, because "all men would be tyrants if they could."[1]

[1] Edith B. Gelles, *First Thoughts: Life and Letters of Abigail Adams* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998), 14-15.

Abigail's statement is sometimes cited as an articulation for women's rights, or as a manifestation of a long overdue female demand for power. However, well before that famous admonition, New England women drew power and authority from a female community centered in motherhood and supported by Puritan ideology. By the Revolutionary period, when overt statements arguing for gender equality entered public discourse, the American sense of self was changing to incorporate a secular citizenship aligned with the notion of a democratic government. For New England women, this emerging identity prompted a change in traditional mothering, which had always included the nurturing of pious, godly offspring. Now, mothering also included the rearing of productive secular citizens who could function in a democratic society. When Revolutionary-era women resolved to influence the public sphere by raising productive sons, they were not arguing for entrance into that sphere for the first time. Rather, they were rearranging their mothering to produce children who were able to perform successfully as saints and as increasingly secularized citizens.

Linda K. Kerber has argued that women emerged from the Revolution ready to enter the public domain through a feminized version of political participation she has termed "republican motherhood." In this model, mothers fulfilled a civic duty and acted politically by raising children to become good citizens, all the while remaining within the confines of traditional domesticity. These women, Kerber states, "devised their own interpretation of what the Revolution had meant to them as women, and they began to invent an ideology of citizenship that merged the domestic domain of the pre-industrial woman with the new public ideology of individual responsibility and virtue." Kerber presents republican motherhood as a feminine political expression boldly articulated

despite the "severe ridicule" inherent in a culture that was hostile to female equality. Women in the early Republic, therefore, could only gain access to the political sphere through the purifying filter of familial service and domesticity and through the actions of their husbands and male children. Women best served their country by producing male citizens, not through direct political participation—an idea that appeared unappealing or even offensive to scholars writing during the period of bombastic and unapologetic feminism that emerged during the 1960s and still persists to a degree in 2011. Kerber supports her argument through a study of law, philosophy, and literature; however, she does not account for the influences of religion or emerging developments in medicine that altered the daily lives of women. Moreover, her argument confines power to visible, public expressions which are implicitly masculine: legal proceedings, philosophical discourse, and direct political participation. Finally, Kerber isolates the events of the American Revolution and implies that the drama of the war resulted in dramatic changes for women in the postwar period. This approach leaves little room for considerations of power and empowerment aside from the definitions accepted today, and it does not consider examples of female power and empowerment that are evidenced in the actions of women from the colonial period through 1800.

Although the notion of republican motherhood did represent an integration of female activities and interests into the American political experience, it was not a sudden feminine grasp for power or equality. It was not a "very important, even revolutionary, invention" aside from its significant contribution to women's historiography.[1] Moreover, the ideas were not articulated in an environment that was directly hostile to women, but

[1] Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 11, 269, 283-84.

rather within a culture better described as unwelcoming to an overt reversal of divinely prescribed gender roles. Even if New Englanders could concede the establishment of Protestant religious pluralism and engage in a democratic government, and despite discussions about gender equality, neither men nor women were ready to discard traditional God-given models of family and gender. In Calvinist New England, cultural and religious order demanded male authority, but there was also a clear endorsement of maternal empowerment and of feminine power. Women and men coexisted in New England, and so did gendered versions of power and authority.

Republican motherhood was coined by Linda Kerber as a valid and useful means for modern historians to understand feminine politicization as it related to democracy and a secular government. For women of the period, however, the ideas associated with Kerber's term were probably not perceived as new. And while republican motherhood did bind women to traditional domesticity, it was not restrictive in that sense, because motherhood and traditional domesticity did not historically restrict women or render them powerless. Motherhood had for some time given New England women access to power, and maternity and childrearing created an insular, nurturing female community wherein women operated independently, without direct masculine oversight and authority. Mothers were responsible for raising children into productive adulthood, and failure to comply meant problems for individual mothers and the community as a whole. In colonial New England, mothering was both powerful and empowering. The notion of republican motherhood, therefore, seems a logical progression of traditional New England maternity rather than a sudden, novel burst of feminist rhetoric intended to propel women into the realm of politics.

The activities of women in New England have been well established by historians. Women performed domestic duties and they were legally dependent on men, but they were not "servile or helpless."[2] In fact, in certain circumstances New England women could—and were even expected to—perform most of the duties normally performed by men. Likewise, women enjoyed some equality in the courts, being legally accountable for their transgressions and also able to bear witness and petition the court regarding a number of matters.[3] Women provided medical care to the community, acting as healers and midwives; they sometimes allegedly turned their powers to evil ends, using witchcraft to harass their neighbors. A disproportionate female church attendance has been acknowledged by contemporary ministers and modern historians alike, and even without direct power in the church, women did shape New England's religious scene.[4]

Women may not have been able to initiate change in the direct and visible ways that men did, but they did hold a good deal of power that was vested in the female community, wherein women gave birth, breastfed infants, and nurtured each other, their families, and the community at large. Moreover, women had a special relationship with God, in part due to their roles as mothers and submissive wives. While men could intervene in the female community, they did so episodically to inquire into anomalies like monster births or to conduct criminal investigations. The average male probably did not regularly enter or exert control in the female domain occupied by wives and children, and

---

[2] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Images and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 37.

[3] For a thorough discussion of women's experiences with the legal system, see Cornelia Hughes Dayton, *Women before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

[4] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 215-35.

men were excluded from the female experiences of childbirth, infant care, and breastfeeding. New England women regularly entered the male world, but men were routinely absent from the feminine circle.

From 1650 through 1800 there were a number of changes which impacted New England culture, and specifically women. Changes in medicine influenced midwifery practices and altered the ways that women tended to the sick. Understanding of the human body changed, and gender became fixed rather than mutable. At the same time, obstetrics emerged as a field of study. As a result, women began to have a degree of responsibility for their bodies, including reproduction. Armed with forceps and formal education, physicians displaced New England midwives and established lucrative obstetrics practices that took an increasingly proactive approach to childbirth. The possibility of controlled reproduction brought with it a focus on quality of offspring rather than quantity: women were expected to bring forth fewer children, to educate them properly, and to prepare them for a productive adulthood in a new cultural and political climate. Cultural values changed, and though religion and godliness remained synonymous with goodness, an increasingly secular sensibility emerged as well. Philosophical discourse associated with the Age of the Enlightenment questioned existing ideas about religion and social structure. The Revolutionary War and formation of the new nation meant that Americans had a responsibility to foster a state founded on equality and a sense of individualism. Society was no longer structured on a divinely ordained hierarchy that placed men above women; rather, a democratic government implied equality, liberty, and political efficacy previously unavailable. A newly emerging sense of self called for alignment with a secular, democratic goodness in addition to a

religious one. The feminine identity was slowly transformed by incorporating democratic, secular values into traditional motherhood. Producing godly children was no longer sufficient; children must be good citizens in the secular republic as well.

Beginning in the mid seventeenth century, ideological changes began to create an environment conducive to the birth of democracy. The Age of the Enlightenment, which is simply defined as a period during which old values and beliefs were challenged, produced a number of new ideas, many of which were acknowledged in America as well as England and France. Over more than a century, notions about gender hierarchy were questioned through an examination of the state of nature and mankind's role therein. The idea that the family and society followed the example of God as father slowly evaporated in favor of a secularized worldview that incorporated an emerging epistemology about the physical body, science, and religious beliefs. By the Revolutionary period, a philosophical and spiritual discourse regarding the role of women in the new political and cultural milieu was well established, but that discourse had not yet produced gender equality.

Writing early in the Enlightenment, Thomas Hobbes addressed the role of women in the state of nature, and concluded that women—specifically, mothers—had at least as much power as men by virtue of a mother's domination of her children. However, for Hobbes this power became degraded under the artificial construct of a male-dominated society, which had prevailed for centuries. Ultimately, however, women had control over their offspring because only the mother could reveal paternity, and only the mother could decide whether or not to nurture the child or leave it to die.[5] But even Hobbes did not

[5] Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 16.

endorse gender equality; he accepted male domination, at least in part, "because men are naturally fitter than women, for actions of labour and danger."[6] It is important to note that although this statement might give pause to the modern reader, in an era where women bore many children, nursed infants, knew little about nutrition, and routinely treated illness with the weakening remedies of purgation and bloodletting, it was reasonable to conclude that women appeared physically weaker than their male counterparts, aside from normal physiological differences. Hobbes's characterization of the female as weaker and less suited to physical labor and danger was widely accepted, and the notion was probably supported by practical experience.

John Locke also addressed the male-female relationship, casting it as the fundamental basis for all other associations. Interaction between man and woman was, in Locke's version of things, voluntary. Moreover, women had the right to "a filial respect that is not dependent on the husband's will; mothers have their own responsibilities to their children; women ought to control their own property." Locke teetered on the edge of affording women a public and political role, but he did not directly state a mechanism whereby women could attain direct political participation. [7] He did, however, note the inconsistency of the prevailing notion that Eve's sin was justification both for female suffering and subjection and for male dominance and superiority. Locke ridiculed the belief that man was cast out of Eden to toil in sweat and dust while being simultaneously elevated to a position of supreme authority over all creation, including women. In Locke's hands, original sin did not translate to male dominance because Adam and Eve

[6] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, Or, the Matter, Form, and Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiastical and Civil* (London: Andrew Crook, 1651), 128-131.

[7] Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 18-19.

were both punished equally, and the sexes should therefore maintain some modicum of equality. Taken literally, this idea suggests that since ideological and practical changes allowed some men to forego a life of physical toil, the universal suffering felt by women during childbirth might likewise be discarded in favor of medical advancements including pain management and intervention by physicians. Childbirth need not be a divine punishment. Locke's ideas suggested that women could—and perhaps should—be equal to men in many ways. For both genders, many things were changing during the eighteenth century.

Mary Wollstonecraft began her widely read *Vindication of the Rights of Women* by stating that "in the present state of society it appears necessary to go back to first principles in search of the most simple truths, and to dispute with some prevailing prejudice every inch of ground." Like her male contemporaries, Wollstonecraft believed that beliefs needed challenging, but from her perspective, such a challenge would lead rational people to conclude that women were on equal footing with men. Writing late in the eighteenth century, and well after the American Revolution, Wollstonecraft entered an already flourishing intellectual discourse about civil authority, and she directly and assertively addressed her male contemporaries and their theories. According to Wollstonecraft, "Rousseau exerts himself to prove that all *was* right originally: a crowd of authors that all *is* now right: and I, that all will *be* right."[8] Thus, although the present state of gender affairs bore scrutiny, the conclusions drawn by male writers were, according to Wollstonecraft, prejudiced by a masculine worldview; this error might be rectified if society managed to rid itself of the androcentric hierarchy that placed men

[8] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (Boston: Peter Edes, 1792), 1.

above women. Wollstonecraft advocated for women's rights by incorporating into existing theory the possibility of a progressive social arch—people would eventually realize that gender equality was optimal. Moreover, Wollstonecraft's arguments underscored the dissatisfaction surrounding the role of women on both sides of the ocean. Like Abigail Adams, Mary Wollstonecraft recognized and directly attacked gender inequality as an outdated practice that should be discarded.

Seventeenth and eighteenth century intellectuals were undoubtedly aware of the philosophical discourse engaged in by Locke, Rousseau, Wollstonecraft and others. However, the average New England woman probably did not regularly read and discuss new ideas about social theory. Rather, New Englanders of both genders turned to authority figures within the community, including ministers and their wives, for the direct guidance of sermons and the indirect guidance of exemplary behavior. The religious climate underwent a number of changes from a singularly Puritan New England through a period of greater religious toleration associated with the Great Awakening. Throughout the seventeenth century, Calvinist doctrine ensured that women and men occupied specific spaces and that both genders adhered to a prescribed relationship with God. The revivals of the Great Awakening included a rhetorical attack on a perceived decline in the morality of both children and their parents, and the messages dispensed in sermons before and during the period of the Great Awakening advocated a renewed focus on traditional worship and behavior.

Paradoxically, the Great Awakening also permitted women to behave in radically different ways during worship, despite a focus on traditional morality. Discussion of the misbehavior of children as both a signal and a symptom of declining morality appeared in

sermons, and rhetoric cited maternal failure as the primary cause. At the same time, so-called religious excesses such as exhorting by women and an increasingly emotional element in worship were also viewed as problematic. Emotional expression, which supporters attributed to the movement of the Holy Spirit, was sometimes viewed as dangerous due to its inherently feminine nature and a possible association with Satanic influence. The revivals of the Great Awakening indicate a disparity between ideology and practice, with a return to traditional worship advocated alongside a direct questioning of ministerial authority, nontraditional outdoor worship services, and exhortations by women. Godless children, misbehaving women, and the perception of familial decline combined with new forms of religious expression and were expressed in changing ideas about maternal power.

The role of motherhood, for better or worse, was a source both of power and of empowerment. To view New England women as marginalized is not entirely accurate; women felt a degree of empowerment as long as traditional motherhood was valued. Mothering also had a strong association with community success or failure, well before republican motherhood appeared on the scene. Conversely, women living in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were definitely not afforded the same rights as their male counterparts. These women asked for—and later, demanded—legal and social equality. Once allegiance to a secular state became a concern, New Englanders began to redefine themselves in terms not entirely based on divine hierarchy.

Likewise, new knowledge about medicine and human biology meant that the notion of an abstract, mutable gender was discarded in favor of concrete biological sources of masculinity and femininity. Gender inequity became unavoidably apparent,

resulting in rhetoric that addressed itself to where exactly women belonged, and the notion of a strictly domestic sphere emerged as the proper feminine space. Although women were already operating primarily within the domestic sphere, they were also somewhat free to coexist in the masculine, public world as well. By the nineteenth century, however, gender roles were more strictly defined, and women lost access to an autonomous female community. The lengthy process by which New England women lost their spiritually charged power and authority to a secularized and misogynistic inequality is best understood when considered comprehensively, beginning with Puritan mothers and concluding with Republican motherhood.

When John Winthrop boarded the *Arabella* in 1630, he sailed to America armed with Puritan ideology, piety, and a diary. On June 1, 1630, Massachusetts's first governor recounted how the *Arabella* fired her gun and raised her topsail to signal the nearby ship the *Jewel* to turn back: a woman was in travail, and a midwife was needed. On June 7, Winthrop reported that the infant was stillborn, commenting that the mother "did very well" despite the loss, which was not her first.[9] Winthrop's remarks remind us that early New England settlers typically came as families. Moreover, he reminds us that childbirth was an everyday but exciting event that sometimes ended in loss of life. While Winthrop's notation of the hailing of the *Jewel* is easily attributed to a welcome break from the boredom of a long voyage, the second entry commenting on the outcome of the delivery and the mother's postpartum condition suggests that although men may not have directly participated in childbirth, they were interested in a female community which centered on bearing and rearing children. Early American women were quite visible and

[9] Richard S. Dunn, James Savage, and Laetitia Yeandle, eds., *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630-1649* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1996), 4, 16-17.

sometimes assertive members of society; as Laurel Thatcher Ulrich observes, John Winthrop's "city on a hill" was, at least partly, a city of women.[10] A culture that was oppressive and openly hostile toward women, in which women had little direct power in the church, and in which pregnancy, childbirth, and childrearing practices fell under the auspices of male authority may have been the norm in America by the nineteenth century, but early New England's female community created an environment which afforded women a certain kind of autonomy and authority within society and the church.

Although New England's colonists included a variety of people, the Puritan ethos set the tone for the region's seventeenth century ideology. By the time John Winthrop arrived in New England in 1630, nearly a century had passed since Anglican reformers began splitting from the Church of England. In 1554, a group of English exiles arrived in Frankfurt, where they continued to debate the state of the reformed church, namely whether worship should contain elements of "national church tradition" or a return to "first-century practices."[11] The crux of Puritan dissent was the desire for further reform and a move toward an austere worship with no resemblance to Catholicism. By 1630, Puritans began migrating to the Massachusetts area, settling in Salem, Boston, and elsewhere.[12] Puritan theology did include a consuming relationship with an unflinching, patriarchal God whose will was carried out in the earthly realm by a harsh legal system based on swift, painful, and humiliating punishment. However, there was a softer side as well. Puritan culture was not a wholly stern one, and theology and law, while based on a

[10] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "John Winthrop's City of Women," Massachusetts Historical Review 3 (2001): passim.

[11] Ronald J. Vander Molen, "Anglican Against Puritan: Ideological Origins During the Marian Exile," *Church History* 42, no. 1 (March, 1973): 3-4.

[12] John Butler, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short* History (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 51-75.

masculine God, also acknowledged and embraced a feminized and nurturing deity who nursed believers at his bosom and encouraged moral and upright behavior for the good of the community.

Gender hierarchy was an important part of Puritan society, and women were subordinate to men; however, oversimplification of New England culture and religious belief does not acknowledge the complexity of Calvinism or address how the culture changed between colonization and the American Revolution. From 1630 through 1800, New England culture underwent a number of changes, including the movement toward religious pluralism. As the seventeenth century drew to a close, the Puritans and other New Englanders faced a number of challenges, including King Philip's War, the threat of witchcraft, and changes in English colonial governance. After 1660, the Puritan movement in England "disintegrated," leaving New England Puritans to reconsider the colonies' "moral standing in the spiritual wilderness." As a result, "second generation Puritans acquired more of an *American* collective consciousness."[13] Calvinism persisted throughout the eighteenth century, but Puritanism eventually gave way to evangelicalism and religious pluralism as New England moved toward revolution and democracy. Meanwhile, the lives of New England women were governed by maternity, childrearing, and domestic productivity. For early New Englanders, childbirth and pregnancy were incorporated into religious beliefs, and women enjoyed a female community wherein childbirth and other maternal affairs were attended by a community of women and presided over by midwives. A strong female community reflected and defined the New

[13] Joseph A. Conforti, *Saints and Strangers: New England in British North America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 99.

England feminine identity—ideal Puritan women were mothers, and therein lay their authority.

At the core of Puritan identity was the Calvinist notion that salvation was predestined by an omnipotent God who frequently punished and, perhaps more infrequently, rewarded his saints. The cornerstone of existential yearning is a desire to perceive oneself in relation to that which is good.[14] For Puritans, goodness was inextricable from godliness, and therefore the Puritan sense of self was almost exclusively conceived in relation to God and within the strong framework of the Puritan community. The Calvinist self-conception correlated to a complex system of self examination, communal identity, and discrete gender traits. Puritan identity was centered in divine hierarchy and marked by internal castigation and self doubt: Calvinism did not allow for certainty when it came to salvation. The fundamental truth at the center of Calvinist doctrine was that mankind was depraved and incapable of redemption, resulting in a disconnection from the divine that was only remedied by the extension of God's grace. For the Puritans, mankind's relationship to God was conceived as extraordinarily complex and gendered. While God was unfathomable, humans were fashioned in his image, and though most Puritans undoubtedly imagined a masculine God most of the time, they also acknowledged and embraced a divine femininity. Ministers encouraged men to embrace a female piety that enabled masculine reception of God's grace in a holy marriage complete with sensual and maternal imagery. Puritan men shared God's masculinity, but they ultimately received grace by invoking womanly piety and

[14] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 44.

submission. The Puritan male's sense of self included a feminine element that expanded his relationship to God.

New England women, conversely, drew their identity and power not only from their relationship with God but also from a robust and nurturing community of women which existed outside of male domination in ways that historians have not fully considered. For New England women, cultural identity and sense of self was derived largely from the feminine relation to that which was considered good; this relationship was primarily expressed in the broad and important duties of wife and mother. A New England woman may have performed masculine duties by acting as a "deputy husband,"[15] but her sense of self and relationship to God was not dependent upon a display of masculine behavior. In other words, Puritan men needed both masculine and feminine elements for a full relationship with God, whereas Puritan women required a singularly female expression. To view this as limiting for New England women is inaccurate. The female community and the importance of feminine submission strengthened the cultural value of femininity, increasing women's power and authority. Perhaps seventeenth century colonial women did not articulate a desire for gender equality because there was an element of equality present, even if gender parity was based upon a highly structured ideological and physical space wherein women were permitted to operate.

The practices associated with childbirth and mothering remained somewhat static from John Winthrop's seventeenth century remarks during his voyage to America all the way through midwife Martha Ballard's late eighteenth century account of childbirth

[15] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Images and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 35-50.

practices in Maine. Women gave birth in the company of women, they breastfed their own infants, and they learned practical childrearing from other women. Martha Ballard's diary suggests low mortality rates for mothers and infants, but the frequency of childbirth and the rudimentary nature of medicine meant at the very least that women had frequent opportunity for meeting death in childbirth, or of losing a child or infant. For New England Calvinists, physical motherhood—most notably childbirth—contained a spiritual component due to its close relation with death.

Motherhood was a perilous undertaking. Labor and delivery were subject to complications including injury and death, and children were frequently lost in the first years of life. For example, prominent New England judge Samuel Sewell and his wife Hannah lost seven of their fourteen children, some in infancy and others in early childhood.[16] Likewise, maternal death during childbirth was a very real possibility, and "expectant women confronted directly their own mortality." Historians speculate that "as many as 20 percent of New England woman died in childbirth," and although it is difficult to quantify, women probably knew "more than one woman who had died giving birth."[17] The childbed could easily transform into a deathbed, for both mother and baby. As a result, ministers like Cotton Mather saw travail as an opportunity for women to prepare their souls for death. In his well-known tract *Elizabeth in her Holy Retirement*, Mather warns expectant mothers that "death has entered into you," and reminds women that they might not survive their nine month gestation.[18] As Laurel Thatcher Ulrich points

[16] Judith S. Graham, *Puritan Family Life: The Diary of Samuel Sewell* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000), 34-51.

[17] Marilyn J. Westerkamp, *Women and Religion in Early America, 1600-1850: The Puritan and Evangelical Traditions* (London: Routledge, 1999), 29.

out, an expectant mother arranged for a midwife, but her "primary duty" was "preparing to die."[19] Although the acts of bearing, delivering, and nurturing children were physical, they also bore spiritual implications.

Pregnancy and childbirth were prominent elements of New England community and culture. Women conducted business as usual during pregnancy, normally retreating to the home only during the postpartum lying-in period. The average New England woman could reasonably expect six to eight pregnancies over a lifetime.[20] Attending the deliveries of other women was a community event that excluded men. Female family members and other women of the community attended births along with the midwife, and the atmosphere of early labor resembled a party, where women snacked on groaning cakes and beer provided by the expectant mother.[21] The party-like atmosphere, however, was overshadowed by the specter of death, who could claim mother, infant, or both. Medical options in failed deliveries were limited, and when labor was no longer viable, the infant was dismembered and removed.[22] Although the potential horrors of childbirth were somewhat routine, fear and pain are human reactions that no amount of socialization can resolve entirely. The possibility of a prolonged, non-productive delivery was certainly excruciating for any woman to contemplate; such an event was also disturbing for her female attendants to witness. Women readily comprehended the danger, which

---

[18] Cotton Mather, *Elizabeth in Her Holy Retirement: An Essay to Prepare a Pious Woman for Her Lying-in* (Boston: Nicholas Boon, 1717), 6.

[19] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Vertuous Women found: New England Ministerial Literature, 1668-1735," *American Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (Spring, 1976): 31.

[20] Catherine M. Scholten, "'on the Importance of the Obstetrick Art': Changing Customs of Childbirth in America, 1760 to 1825," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (July 1977): 427.

[21] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 127, 131.

[22] Scholten, "Changing Customs of Childbirth in America, 1760 to 1825," 433, 437.

was compounded by the realization that they likely faced the possibility of death from childbirth a number of times during their lives.

New Englanders, particularly Puritans, were well known for a preoccupation with death and dying, and beliefs about death influenced beliefs about childbirth. Ideas about death arose from folkways and religious ideology and rhetoric.[23] Death was a punishment but also a reward, a duality that ministers frequently recognized.[24] Of course, there was probably some disparity between the idealized sermons of ministers and folk practices, but at the very least New Englanders expected religion to make sense of the brevity and fragility of life. The deathbed, particularly for women, shifted the power paradigm, giving women an opportunity to "speak their minds in opposition to traditional notions of decorum."[25] The minister, who was normally found at deathbeds, was not routinely called to the childbed. Instead, midwives ministered to the laboring women and attendants. The exclusion of men from childbed placed women in positions of power with men on the periphery. At childbed, unsupervised women were responsible for discerning the state of the laboring mother's soul. Childbirth was a common occurrence, so it is reasonable to conclude that childbirth represented not a shift in power but rather a normalized state of affairs. Childbirth was a distinct and frequent ritual, situated within the female community, with parallels to the deathbed ritual—and the childbed ritual was overseen

[23] David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Beliefs in Early New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 205.

[24] David E. Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 77-79.

[25] Erik R. Seeman, "She Died Like Good Old Jacob': Deathbed Scenes and Inversions of Power in New England, 1675-1775," 104, (1994): 288.

by women. Female control of ritualized childbirth was therefore a source of feminine power and authority with distinctly religious overtones.

The deathbed and the childbed were both marked by physical agony, and women were expected to bear this suffering properly. Like women in childbirth, the dying or gravely ill were surrounded by friends and family, who sought to determine whether the "sufferer viewed his illness appropriately." Proper behavior in the face of death or illness, including childbirth, indicated whether the subject would dwell for eternity with Christ or Satan.[26] The New England childbed maintained a religious tone, wherein women ministered to each other and sought redemption.

New Englanders continually prepared for death, which could come at any time and signified an opportunity to determine conversion. Cotton Mather encouraged believers to reflect constantly on death, and to "live daily under the power of such impressions."[27] Part of this preoccupation was brought on by Calvinist ideas of conversion mingled with the frequency of death. For Puritans, signs of conversion appeared within a specifically ordered sequence that ended with "spiritual 'assurance.'"[28] Although converts could not control God's grace, they could at least prepare to receive it through humiliation and submitting to God through proper actions—namely moral behavior. Calvinism demanded faith but also a constant questioning; confidence that one was among the elect "presume[d] a godlike omniscience." Compelled by conscience and a deep fear of eternal damnation, Calvinists struggled to discern signs of conversion in

[26] Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment*, 197.

[27] Cotton Mather, *The Thoughts of a Dying Man* (Boston: Bartholomew Green, 1697), 38.

[28] Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death*, 73.

themselves and members of the community.[29] The moment before death was the last and definitive opportunity to determine conversion. The dying utterances of a saint, according to Cotton Mather, had "as deep a savour of heaven as the breath of a dying man has of earth."[30] Death and deathbed behavior, as opportunities to affirm conversion, were a central part of the Calvinist religious experience.

Death was one occasion where conversion became visible; childbed was another. Childbirth, a common, redemptive, and exclusively feminine event gave women the opportunity to determine conversion without the presence or authority of men. Likewise, childbirth afforded women frequent and predictable opportunities to face death, something that ministers and other writers acknowledged and cited when they exhorted women to behave properly. A tract published in 1694 advised women that even the best material preparations were rendered useless in the face of death, and suggested that spiritual preparation was more important.[31] Likewise, Cotton Mather, recognizing travail as an opportunity to hear God's voice, addressed the hazards of childbirth, outlined proper childbed behavior, and asserted that women were more pious than men due to the frequent contemplation of death in childbirth.[32] Congregationalist minister Benjamin Colman, writing in 1711, echoed Mather when he remarked that "more of the life and power of religion" was with women, something he attributed to the prolonged nature and

---

[29] George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards, A Life* (New York: Yale University Press, 2003), 28-29, 41.

[30] Cotton Mather, *Small Offers Towards the Service of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness* (Boston: Richard Pierce, 1689), 2.

[31] John Oliver, *A Present to be Given to Teeming Women, by their Husbands, Or Friends. Containing Directions for Women with Child.* (Boston: Benjamin Harris, 1694), passim.

[32] Cotton Mather, *Elizabeth*, passim.

repeated cycle of pregnancy and childbirth. For Colman, Eve's curse to bear children in pain was transformed into a blessing, giving women extra opportunity to reflect on the state of their souls.[33] Through its close association with death, childbirth provided women additional and gender-exclusive opportunities to prepare for God's grace and to face death with appropriate, ritualistic behavior.

According to Cotton Mather, women should accept the inconveniences and pains of childbirth, since doing so indicated appropriate submission to God's will. He felt that childbirth was a blessed duty that brought women closer to God, giving them access to divine grace. When he wrote *Elizabeth in her Holy Retirement*, Mather had 1 Timothy 2:13-15 in mind, which relieves women of some of the burden of original sin through childbearing. Mather believed that through childbirth, women secured and were prepared for eternal blessings, and he sought to comfort women with the news that travail, despite its "pains" and "pangs," was surely "the time wherein the methods and motions of divine grace will find" the laboring mother, who would hopefully "be made wife unto salvation." Like the deathbed, childbed was an opportunity to discern the state of a woman's soul, and Mather encouraged women behave appropriately. Women should submit with cheerfulness and avoid "indecent impatience" or "dissatisfaction;" to do so would be to reject God's will and to invite "sorrow."[34] Cheerful submission to God's will was for Calvinists a sign of conversion, so behavior during suffering indicated whether a woman was one of the elect. Mather situated childbirth within both the spiritual and physical realms, with the result being not only the delivery of an infant but also possible

[33] Benjamin Colman, *The Duty and Honour of Aged Women* (Boston: Bartholomew Green, 1711), ii-iii.

[34] Cotton Mather, *Elizabeth*, 1-4.

affirmation of salvation. Even if the physical birth went horribly wrong, spiritual success was a positive outcome. Childbirth, like death, created an opportunity for expectant mothers to observe appropriate religious behavior and, in turn, to be observed by the female community for signs of conversion.

Determining how much women internalized rhetoric like Mather's, or how they actually behaved during labor is difficult, since women seldom recounted these experiences in detail and men, the most prolific diarists of the period, were generally excluded from the childbed scene.[35] However, in preparation for a possibly terminal labor and delivery, women often left letters to their husbands, and Anne Bradstreet left poetry.[36] In her poem *Before the Birth of one of her Children*, Bradstreet confronts the possibility of death inherent in her approaching delivery: "All things within this fading world hath end, Adversity doth still our joys attend." Throughout the poem, Bradstreet focuses on both the inexorable nature of death but also encourages her husband, in the event of her death, to assuage his grief by remembering her virtues and looking "to my little babes my dear remains" for comfort. [37] Bradstreet's poem evokes the tenuous nature of life, but also the redemptive quality of childbirth, and echoes Mather's characterization of childbirth as redemptive and full of grace. The death of a mother in childbirth was particularly bittersweet since birth was also a joyous occasion. Bradstreet comprehends her physical vulnerability and the harsh dichotomy of childbirth, wherein joy is tempered

[35] For a published work that provides a female perspective of motherhood and dying, se Grace Smith, *The Dying Mothers Legacy* (Boston: Timothy Green, 1712). Smith encourages her children to submit to the will of God and to live godly lives.

[36] Ulrich, *Good Wives*, 129.

[37] Anne Bradstreet, "Before the Birth of one of her Children," in *The Complete Works of Anne Bradstreet*, ed. Joseph R. McElrath, Jr. and Allan P. Robb (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), 179-80.

by the possibility of death. Likewise, death is tempered by the possibility of regeneration and renewal. Childbirth was the only confrontation of death where physical renewal, through the birth of an infant, was possible. Thus, childbirth became an opportunity for spiritual and physical redemption, even in the event of the mother's death. Like death, childbirth was both a curse and a reward.

The physical and spiritual components of New England motherhood became intertwined with Calvinist notions of conversion, which was bestowed by God upon a passive saint. Whereas women submitted to God's will by fulfilling their duties as physical mothers within the home and the community, one way that men submitted to God was through spiritual feminization, and the motifs of nursing fathers and mystical marriage appeared throughout ministerial literature. The male body became metaphorically feminized in order to receive a full measure of God's grace, and ministers nourished the community with spiritual milk. Women, conversely, did not participate in spiritual mothering, instead receiving grace and affirming conversion through physical mothering, particularly childbirth. Behavior during childbirth was ritualized by women and idealized by ministers, who capitalized on the experience to dictate proper behavior. Through their roles as physical mothers, women set an example of feminine virtue that men emulated when they submitted to God as spiritual mothers and brides of Christ. New England motherhood existed in the temporal world where physical mothering occurred, and also in the spiritual realm where God and men performed and received spiritual nurturing. Both realms provided communicants gendered opportunities to affirm conversion and receive God's grace.

Maternal motifs wherein men assumed a feminized or maternal spirituality appeared in New England ministerial literature throughout the seventeenth and well into the eighteenth centuries. The use of maternal and feminine metaphors served to broaden mothering by elevating it from the mundane to the sublime. Calvinism required submission to God's will, and because gender was not fixed in biological bodies, men were able to accept feminine roles and behaviors, provided they did so within a spiritual framework. Submission to God's will was inherent to conversion, and since submission was feminine, men turned to feminine behavior for guidance. Spiritual nursing was perhaps the most common overtly maternal motif in New England clerical writings, but there were also other feminine themes that implied spiritual mothering, including fertility metaphors and betrothal to Christ. Seventeenth century feminized spirituality took on an erotic tone, but by the mid eighteenth century, rhetoric had shifted, likely due, at least in part, to the political climate wherein feminine submission was less attractive. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the nursing father trope assumed a more literal scriptural interpretation and also shifted toward a political context; spiritual nursing was no longer the duty of all men, but rather that of kings and rulers.[38]

While the gender fluidity inherent to masculine assumption of femininity during worship seem strange to modern sensibilities, it carried no inappropriate or homoerotic connotation for its practitioners, partially due to ideas about gender and the human body. Similar ideas about the body and the soul allowed men to achieve mystical marriage. Prior to 1800, Westerners held markedly pre-modern ideas about human physiology, and

[38] Edward Dorr, *The duty of civil rulers, to be nursing fathers to the church of Christ* (Hartford: Thomas Green, 1765). See also John M. Mason, *The voice of warning, to Christians, on the ensuing election of a president of the United States* (New York: George Hopkins, 1800). In the latter, the role of nursing fathers is briefly mentioned, and is used to argue against selecting a godless president.

notions about gender and social roles were situated within cultural ideas about the body. Seventeenth and eighteenth century ideas about motherhood and gender functioned within a "one-sex model" of the human body that had been the norm for centuries. According to Thomas Laqueur, it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the one-sex model was transformed into a biology-based version of gender. Prior to that, asserts Laqueur, "to be a man or a woman was to hold a social rank, a place in society, to assume a cultural role, not to be one or the other of two incommensurable sexes."[39] The male body was the standard by which the sexes were judged, and was considered superior to the female body. According to the one-sex model, women were inferior because they were "inverted, and hence less perfect, men" who possessed male organs located "exactly in the wrong places." The vagina was frequently depicted in medical diagrams as an inverted penis, and the ovaries were labeled "female testicles."[40] Men and women were perceived as different, but ideas about the body meant that gender was defined theologically and ideologically rather than biologically. For early New Englanders, gender roles were somewhat fluid, which made for some interesting ideas, particularly about motherhood.

Focusing on American Puritans, Elizabeth Maddock Dillon discusses the relationship between gender roles, theology, and pre-modern ideology.[41] For Puritans, Dillon argues, gender was "grounded in the divine hierarchy of God rather than in the bodies of men and women." Under the one-sex model, gender was not fixed; rather, one

[39] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 8.

[40] Ibid., 26, 154-59.

[41] Laqueur's study, which Dillon relies upon heavily, posits that the one-sex model was prevalent throughout Western society, and not confined to American Puritans.

sex "assume[d] a variety of forms."[42] Under this model, women's roles were more static than men's. Women were strongly discouraged from taking on the masculine form in any sense, and such transgressions were often severely punished.[43] New England women were excluded from spiritually leading men or the community and were subject to masculine authority. Men, conversely, held authority in the family, the community, and the church, but they were also expected to submit to God's will by becoming brides of Christ. In order to join Christ in mystical marriage, men accepted a feminine position which did not "induce anxiety or homosexual panic" in New England culture. Puritan sermons described ministers as nursing fathers who suckled others at their breasts, and male converts were inseminated by the seed of Christ and suckled at the breast of God. Submission to Christ involved the male convert assuming the role of spiritual wife and mother through impregnation with Christ's seed. Ministers performed spiritual nurturing with metaphorical milk.[44] In performing these duties, men followed the example provided by their own wives and mothers.

In addition to pre-modern ideas about the body, ministers frequently referred to the soul as feminine, allowing for spiritual intimacy in which men and women coupled with a masculine Christ. Moreover, the feminized soul was frequently "characterized as

[42] Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, "Nursing Fathers and Brides of Christ," in *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America*, ed. Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 129, 131.

[43] Historians, including Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, have argued that women did perform some masculine duties, but women did not take on leadership roles in the community or church. See Ulrich, *Good Wives*.

[44] Dillon, "Nursing Fathers and Brides of Christ," 129-134.

insatiable,"[45] which was aligned with popular thinking about women, but also congruent with a believer's desire for Christ. Espousal to Christ occurred in the soul, and the feminine motifs appearing in the sermons of ministers mirrored the Puritan conception of sexuality, fertility, and maternity. The union of the believer's soul with Christ prefigured the final heavenly union, but the courtship of the believer with Christ had distinctly earthly properties. Ministers performed double duty when it came to uniting believers with Christ, since ministers were potential brides as well; thus, they served as "interpreters, advocates, and potential recipients of the redeemer's advances."[46] Ministers had a vested interest in playing divine matchmaker, because souls of saints were both individual and part of a community that would eventually reunite with Christ in the firmament. The use of maternal motifs underscores a joyful love of Christ, a sense of community, and an appreciation of feminine sensuality and maternity. The feminized souls of saints allowed men to participate in spiritual mothering.

The physical acts of pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding, while spiritually possible for men, are physically confined to the female body. Motherhood's physical components, in some ways, mirrored Christ's redemption of the church and the signs of his return, deepening the relationship of women with Christ in ways that were physically inaccessible to men. Women, by subjecting their bodies to the agonies of childbirth in favor of bringing forth new life, resembled Christ's death; the reclusive period of lying-in

[45] Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 93, 212.

[46] Richard Godbeer, "'Love Raptures': Marital, Romantic, and Erotic Images of Jesus Christ in Puritan New England, 1670-1730," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 3, (September 1995): 361.

that followed childbirth[47] recalls Christ's time in the tomb and his resurrection, wherein he offered his body and blood as a means of spiritual rebirth. Christ compared himself to a laboring mother, stating in John 16:21-22 that his death was like the pain of a woman in travail—but just as redemptive. Moreover, the description of the piercing of Christ's side in Matthew 19:34 recalls the beginning of labor, which is heralded by the flowing of water and blood as the mother's water breaks.[48] In Matthew 24:4-8, Jesus describes the events heralding the end times as birth pains, again with a redemptive conclusion. For Puritans, who had an affinity for millennialism, biblical allusions to the end times as labor pains gave motherhood an added dimension.

While it is unclear whether ministers or congregants recognized the parallels between childbirth and Christ's physical sacrifice, they did recognize childbirth's redemptive elements. Cotton Mather discussed this theme at length in *Elizabeth in her Holy Retirement*, in which he asserted that proper submission to suffering in childbirth offered women redemption, and again in *Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion*, when he reiterated the redemptive nature of childbearing.[49] Likewise, breastfeeding, whereby women's bodies nurtured both infants and the community, resembled the Lord's Supper. Minister Samuel Moody connected the Lord's Supper to nursing when he noted Christ's willingness to feed saints "with his Flesh and Blood; as ever Tender Mother was to draw

---

[47] Laural Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 189. According to Ulrich, the lying-in period of postpartum recuperation lasted about a week, or as long as it took a woman to care for herself, her infant, and her home, at which time she reemerged from her bedchamber and resumed normal activity.

[48] *Aristotle's master-piece completed: in two parts* (New York: Printed for the company of flying stationers, 1798), 63-65.

[49] Cotton Mather, *Ornaments for the daughters of Zion* (Cambridge: Samuel and Bartholomew Green, 1691), passim.

out her full and aking Breast to her hungry, crying child."[50] Feminized spirituality was perhaps influenced on some level by parallels of feminine suffering to Christ's suffering, and certainly by Calvinist doctrine operating in a culture where maternity was common and welcomed. While the full meaning of feminized spirituality may be unclear, evidence affirms that the maternal motifs whereby men partook in mystical marriage allowed them to be included in a distinctly feminine relationship with Christ. In very small and subtle ways, men were spiritually marginalized, and the inclusion of feminine metaphors and spiritual mothering suggest that on some level, men comprehended that marginalization and sought to expand their relationship with Christ.

The implicit and inherently feminine parallel between motherhood and Christ's sacrifice for the church resulted in a gendered Christian relationship exclusive to women. Amanda Porterfield asserts that "a woman's own suffering could be identified with the suffering of Christ and experienced emotionally as a sacrifice that carried redemptive power" for the female sufferer.[51] Men could not access feminine sacrificial suffering and its redemption on the physical plane. Thus, ministers sought to include men in mothering and the feminine relationship with Christ, and while men could not commune with Christ the way women did, the feminine nature of the soul, as espoused by Puritans, allowed male saints to enter into a fruitful and oftentimes erotically charged marital relationship with Christ. Marriage and the sexual relationship it encompassed was not, for the Puritans, a necessary evil; rather, it was something that consummated love and created a

[50] Samuel Moody, *The Children of the Covenant Under the Promise of Divine Teachings* (Boston: John Allen, 1716), 34.

[51] Amanda Porterfield, *Female Piety in Puritan New England: The Emergence of Religious Humanism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 129.

fruitful union.[52] While the feminine soul became fertile ground for believers of either gender to receive Christ and bear his fruit, the laboring mother's body during childbirth and lying-in recalled Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Men may not have directly articulated the loss or alienation they might have felt when excluded from the feminine relationship with Christ, but they did seek to spiritually emulate the role of women. Widespread use of the marital metaphor, while usually read by historians as an affirmation of marriage, was likewise a celebration of maternity and the nurturing, submissive, and redemptive roles of women in theology and the New England community.

At the core of Puritan Calvinism, of course, was the notion that salvation was predestined by an omnipotent God. Perry Miller remarked that the "Puritan God is entirely incomprehensible to man;" nevertheless, Miller felt that the prolific minister Cotton Mather "in his heart of hearts never doubted that the divinity was a being remarkably like Cotton Mather."[53] While Mather very likely imagined a masculine God most of the time, he also embraced a divine femininity, and he and other ministers advocated a female piety. Cotton Mather was fond of the mystical marriage metaphor, and he described espousal to Christ in detail in a number of sermons. In *A Glorious Espousal*, Mather presented a courtship between Christ and the convert's feminine soul, wherein Christ selects, woos, and "quickens" the believer, invoking a loving relationship whose outcome is espousal to and rebirth in Christ.[54] Likewise, Edward Taylor described

---

[52] Godbeer, "'Love Raptures,'" 358.

[53] Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), 10.

[54] Cotton Mather, *A Glorious Espousal* (Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1719), 2-28.

his relationship with Christ in erotic terms, often using feminine metaphor. In 1719, Taylor wrote in his diary: "Lord put these nibbles then my mouth into, and suckle me therewith I humbly pray,/then with this milk thy Spirituall Babe I'st grow," suggesting an acceptance of godly femininity.[55] He continued, asking God to cleanse his own breasts so that others might suckle there. Increase Mather reminded his audience of Christ's entry into the world via a human mother, and presented Christ's corporeal suffering as a vehicle for salvation, stating that Christ was born of and nourished by a woman's body, and suffered and died in that flesh to redeem men.[56] Christ's earthly mother, while not afforded the reverence of the Catholic Madonna, was nevertheless important in presenting God incarnate to the human race. Thus, men resembled God and Christ physically, but they received his grace by embracing womanly piety and submission and acknowledging the importance of motherhood and femininity.

Marriage, for New Englanders, meant the production of children,[57] so when men were instructed on the personal level to enter a mystical marriage with Christ, the feminine element inherent to that metaphor also encompassed motherhood. John Cotton, writing around 1651, encouraged men to consider marital affection, and to base their submissive, wifely relationship with Christ on a feminine model that included meeting Christ "in the bed of loves" and accepting "the seeds of his grace shed abroad in your

[55] Edward Taylor, *The Poems of Edward Taylor* ed. Donald E. Stanford (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 354.

[56] Increase Mather, *The Mystery of Christ Opened and Applyed. in several Sermons, Concerning the Person, Office, and Glory of Jesus Christ* (Boston: Richard Pierce, 1686), 7, 9, 85

[57] Margaret Marsh and Wanda Ronner, *The Empty Cradle: Infertility in Early America from Colonial Times to the Present* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). See the first chapter for an overview on infertility, which was considered the will of God rather than a medical condition.

hearts."[58] The imagery of impregnation with grace and an overtly sexual intimacy with Christ was acceptable in a society where men, functioning under a one-sex model of the body, looked to women for an example of properly submissive feminine behavior. Elizabeth Maddock Dillon asserts that identity was "dislodged" from "biological bodies," and as a result, the body was viewed metaphorically. In this model, the body represented power relations instead of "physically grounded identities."[59] Wives physically bore children, but husbands bore the seeds and fruit of Christ and submitted to wifely duties as Christ's bride while also functioning as physical head of household. The fluidity with which men passed between metaphorical femininity and masculinity makes sense in light of the one-sex model of the body wherein men and women followed a divine hierarchy rather than a physical one. The focus on accepting a submissive feminine role was important because in Puritan marriages, proper behavior by the subordinate female initiated a response from the superior male, not the obverse. Although Calvinism rejected the notion that converts initiated conversion, proper adherence to commonly held marital roles gave individuals and the community a means of spotting conversion in themselves and others.

For early New Englanders, motherhood and its connection to nurturing and the creation of life was important and revered, as was the submissive nature of femininity. The frequency of childbirth meant that women were engaged in childbearing and rearing during a large portion of their lifetimes, but also, and perhaps more importantly, women's daily activities revolved around child care and maternity. The constant presence of

[58] John Cotton, *Christ the fountaine of life* (London: Robert Ibbitson, 1651), 36-37.

[59] Dillon, "Nursing Fathers and Brides of Christ,"131-32.

children and childbirth made motherhood a commonplace but profound part of New England culture that influenced society at large. While men and women could not relate to each other on every level, motherhood and feminized religious metaphors created an emotionally charged and seductive religious dialogue that both genders seemed to internalize. When women adhered to an idealized version of motherhood, they gained status in the community and enjoyed a special relationship with Christ that men sought to emulate. While fatherhood had its own set of symbols, women could not relate to these, as they were excluded from paternal duties and the relationship between father and son, which also encompassed legal matters.[60]

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, ordinary women do not seem to have actively sought direct access to power in the masculine world, as they later did through feminist activism. Men, conversely, did seek access to the world of women, wherein their wives and young children resided. The New England family, while headed by men, was quickened by women, physically and metaphorically. While it is true that women were marginalized in the church and subject to masculine authority, they were not physically bound to domesticity. Women did perform masculine duties and as historians have noted, they moved about rather freely within New England society. Men, conversely, could not physically access the redemption inherent in childbirth as women did, nor did they participate in the ritualized female community that existed in the day to day lives of New Englanders. Thus, it was men rather than women who were motivated to seek a mode of communicating with women and accessing a feminized relationship with God.

[60] For a more thorough discussion of New England fatherhood, see Anne S. Lombard, *Making Manhood: Growing up Male in Colonial New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

The study of New England women and their roles as wives has served to broaden the historiography—to answer some questions and to raise others. Women played an important role in New England culture and within the church. Moreover, while it is true that women were in many ways excluded from the masculine public domain, it is worth reiterating that men were excluded from the daily and intimate domestic realm of childbirth, lying-in, and the nurturing of infants and young children. Reflecting on her life during the 1740s, Catherine Smith quipped that although her husband Ben walked to church with her, their ten month old baby Robert, and friend Annie Orr, "he did us little good, for he was not worth a fig to carry a bairn."[61] Smith referred not only to "us"—the female community that encompassed women and children—but also hinted at male marginalization within that community. Studies of women's history have often viewed women and the female community as operating within a masculine world, responding to that world, and later, pressing against it. But the extensive nature of mothering and women's activities meant that men also operated in a female and feminized world, and were sometimes alienated from it just as women were excluded from masculine public life.

Colonial women undertook the physical acts of nurturing the community through bearing and rearing children, nursing the ill and dying, and setting an example of godly behavior, but by 1750 there were new opportunities for feminine piety and religious participation. The Great Awakening of the mid-eighteenth century involved women and broadened female religious participation while casting aside social and gender hierarchy,

[61] *History of Bedford, New Hampshire, Being Statistics Compiled on the Occasion of the One Hundredth Anniversary*, Quoted in Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Images and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 218.

at least within the context of worship. Itinerant preachers with radically different ideas created a divisive element in New England culture as ministerial authority and religious and social mores were challenged in various ways. The result of these revivalist notions, according to critic Timothy Cutler, could be seen in New England women who were "teeming with bastards" as a result of decaying morals.[62] Evangelist George Whitefield was accused of creating an atmosphere of sexual licentiousness through his outdoor revivals that commingled men and women of various races and social classes in ways that scandalized some of his contemporaries.[63]

The Great Awakening was a clear challenge to orthodoxy—women and slaves exhorted in public, and the mechanics of conversion were reconsidered with a new emphasis on personal revelation. The Holy Spirit, according to some, was afoot in New England, and this activity resulted in changes in the female community. The Great Awakening may or may not have been connected to a decline in morals; what it did initiate was a shift toward a personalized relationship with God and a belief in individual responsibility and movement away from the communal spirituality wherein conversion was most visible in the behavior of saints.[64] For women, this allowed change in matters both ideological and practical; however, a freer religious expression did not equate to an increase in feminine power. Rather, communal power diminished as women were no longer responsible for perceiving signs of conversion at childbed or within the community of women.

---

[62] Cedric B. Cowing, "Sex and Preaching in the Great Awakening," *American Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 1968):624.

[63] H. B. Parkes, "Sexual Morals and the Great Awakening," *The New England Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (January 1930): passim.

[64] Susan E. Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, & Family Limitation in America, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 79.

At the same time, women were considered responsible for declining morality. Declining morals was, of course, a common complaint found in sermons preceding the Great Awakening, and mothers were considered indirectly responsible for the decline. Ungodly children, maternal shame, and paternal failure were all problematic elements of the New England community. But because proper mothering was so integral to womanly success, women were more culpable for the failings of their children.

Well before the revivals, Cotton Mather addressed parents of godless offspring in *Counsels and Comforts for Godly Parents Afflicted with Ungodly Children*. Foolish children of godly parents, lamented Mather, were quite commonplace in New England. Citing David and Solomon as biblical examples, Mather reported that the unfortunate production of ungodly children by godly parents was not a new phenomenon. Furthermore, wise children brought pride to their fathers, while foolish offspring brought shame to mothers. Mather explained that mothers were particularly afflicted by wayward children because mothers, often rightly so, were blamed for their children's wickedness. Women felt more slighted by their offspring than men, and they also were more likely to hear reports of bad behavior. Fathers, conversely, were able to bask in the warmth of wise, godly children in ways that mothers did not. Mather felt that these reactions came about because men were more likely to deal with mature, better behaved children, while women were associated with the younger developmental phase of childhood. Thus, it appeared to Mather that it was the mother's duty to raise godly children for the pleasure of the father; failure to do so would result in her own unhappiness. For New Englanders on the eve of the Great Awakening, godless offspring were a common problem supposedly caused by mothering and felt most keenly by mothers. One message of

Mather's *Counsels* was that women had a very important role in mothering, and if they failed, declining morals translated into shame for parents and the community as well.[65]

Writing in 1700, Samuel Willard also noted a decline which worsened with each generation. He lamented the general decline in religious practice and in the quality of parenting, but his focus was on the failure of fathers. Family worship, prayer, and scripture reading were neglected; this was a failure on the part of fathers. Men, who were trusted with "the care and charge of families," had not upheld their covenant. Infrequent prayer or worse, no prayer at all, marked households whose fathers were noncompliant with family worship standards. Willard feared that as families drifted from worshipping together in the home, God would surely drift away from the community. The symptoms of decline were visible in the "rising generation," who experienced a worsening of symptoms, including a descent into the old "things which their Progenitors forsook" when they migrated to New England. Youth of the day engaged in various misdeeds—"night revels" and "meetings in bad houses" were filled with drinking and games as young people flouted the authority of their "superiors." Willard seemed astonished that these were the children of good Christian families, children who had been "carefully and religiously educated," and who realized the outcome of their licentiousness.[66] He described the children as a product of poor parenting, and also as a catalyst for further decline.

Jonathan Edwards also remarked on the failure of family religious values and practices, and he acknowledged wayward youth as central to religious revival. For

---

[65]See Cotton Mather, *Help for Distressed Parents. Or, Counsels & Comforts for Godly Parents Afflicted with Ungodly Children* (Boston: John Allen, 1695), passim.

[66] Samuel Willard, *The Peril of the Times Displayed* (Boston: B. Green, 1700)8-10.

Edwards, the death of his grandfather Solomon Stoddard marked the beginning of a "dullness of religion" which was notable for "licentiousness…among the youth of the town," who visited taverns and engaged in "night-walking." Edwards noted that the carousing youth had little regard for their families, suggesting parental action as a cause but not a solution: sermons and a series of deaths of several young people ultimately brought other youth in the community to their senses. The first death cited by Edwards was that of a young man who died from sudden illness. Edwards does not mention the state of the decedent's soul, reporting only that his sudden death made a great impression on his peers. However, the second to die was a young married woman who had been in a state of distress regarding her salvation. Edwards characterized her death as a "satisfying evidences of God's saving mercy to her, before her death; so that she died very full of comfort, in a most earnest and moving manner, warning and counseling others."[67] By contrasting the two deaths, Edwards shows two possible outcomes: a positive one for the woman, and an unclear one for the young man. In this case, the woman had time to properly submit to death and to die appropriately, which gave assurance of her salvation to herself and to the community. The man, who did not have time to get his spiritual affairs in order, illustrated a situation which was to be avoided by youthful revelers. Both cases, according to Edwards, were examples to be avoided through religious piety.

Although ministers may not have directly addressed female power in ways that suggest female empowerment, they did talk about what happened when women (and sometimes men) neglected parental duty. There is evidence that women did feel empowered, and there is also evidence that they were viewed as powerful, even if within

[67] Jonathan Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1738), 7-18.

a negative context. The actions of women, for better or worse, impacted community morals, beginning with children. Perceived by some ministers as existing in a state of moral decline, New England was ripe for revival, and since women shouldered much of the responsibility for moral decay which manifested in godless children, they also shared responsibility in returning to community godliness through proper mothering. Women engaged in the revivals of the Great Awakening, and emerged into a more visible, public role that was accepted by fellow revivalists and derided by critics. Women may have had a specific place in New England culture, but in practical and religious terms, women were not necessarily less influential than men, since women were able to impact the community through what was considered proper or improper mothering.

CHAPTER TWO

Motherhood and Medicine: the Rise of Man-midwifery

While the mechanics of childbirth remained largely consistent throughout the colonial period, by 1750 the development of obstetrics as a medical specialty was well underway in England, and beginning to emerge in America as well. Initially called "man-midwives," male doctors began attending normal childbirths, and some medical students directed their interests toward obstetrics. Traditionally, the appearance of a doctor at childbed signaled a failed delivery, as midwives did not possess or use the hooks and crochets needed to extract an infant. Women feared both the physician and his tools, and that fear, coupled with modesty and a sense of propriety held by both genders, might have made it difficult for men to advance onto the childbirth scene. Midwives were well respected members of the community, and therefore male doctors set about discrediting them, excluding them from formal education, and ultimately removing them from competition. This was quite a long term process, and midwifery persisted well into the nineteenth century in many parts of the country, especially rural areas. However, in New England, male doctors made relatively rapid headway, encroaching into the feminine realm and displacing midwives. Likewise, male doctors displaced women from their traditional role of domestic doctoring, signifying a subtle reorganization of gender roles. This shift, accompanied by other changes in science, medicine, and religion ushered in a new ideology that left women under the care and authority of men in new and more expansive ways. By the Revolutionary period, women began articulating an acknowledgement of their changing roles as mothers and citizens. For New Englanders,

changes in healthcare helped redefine how men and women interacted and behaved, ultimately placing male physicians in a position of authority during childbirth and relegating midwives to a subordinate position. In order to take advantage of medical advances like forceps and opium, women relinquished the authority that the traditional female community enjoyed during the childbed ritual. As medicine became more formalized, childbirth became less ritualized, and soon the events of labor, delivery, and lying-in were removed altogether from the female community's control.

In seventeenth century New England, knowledge of disease and its treatment was limited. Medicine centered on herbal remedies, and the Galenic method of humoral balancing was only beginning to be challenged. In Puritan New England, Paracelsian theory was accepted by ministers and by physicians like John Winthrop Jr., who embraced the notion that the body was regulated by a "partly physical, partly spiritual soul" that controlled "movement, sense, and thought. While Galenic medicine taught that disease originated within the body and could metamorphose according to changes in humoral balance, Paracelsus advanced the idea that diseases were discrete and external in origin. Professional physicians of the period were generally no better equipped to deal with common illness than ordinary housewives, and in fact, it was ordinary housewives who provided the bulk of healthcare. Women administered purgatives, blisterings, and emetics along with herbal remedies, calling the doctor only when bleeding or surgical treatment was required. Despite intervention by women doctresses or male physicians, patients often died; this was considered God's will and was to be borne with stoicism and faith. Seventeenth century medicine, like its female practitioners, was passive at best. At its worst medicine's heroic bleeding and noxious treatments, including those containing

mercury or lead, did more harm than good. Emetics often weakened the patients they were intended to help, and there was simply no effective remedy or prevention for contagious diseases such as tuberculosis, syphilis, or scarlet fever.

Like herbal remedies, breast milk was believed to have medicinal qualities. Breastfeeding was integral to the early New England community; it was a duty mothers were expected to perform. Public nursing was the norm, and women's lives were affected on many levels by nursing and weaning babies, which was time consuming and sometimes difficult.[1] Breast milk was significant within the community, not only for sustaining infants but also as a medicine. Breast milk was used topically as an analgesic, to cure infection, and for eye ailments in both England and America during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Nursing the elderly and infirm also seems to have been a fairly common practice.[2] Writing during a painful illness in 1752, Congregationalist minister Ebenezer Parkman notes that in addition to receiving a blistering treatment, his wife "tends me o'nights and supply's me with Breast-Milk."[3] Of course, breast milk was a requirement for raising healthy infants, a fact recognized by medical writers who sought to inform young mothers of their duties as "true," or nursing, mothers. Men of medicine "praised breast-feeding mothers and harshly criticized those women who declined their maternal duty."[4] Likewise, sermons listed nursing as one of the expected duties of

---

[1] Rebecca J. Tannenbaum, *The Healer's Calling: Women in Medicine in Early New England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 4-5, 139.

[2] Marylynn Salmon, "The Cultural Significance of Breast-Feeding and Infant Care in Early Modern England and America," in *Mothers and Motherhood: Readings in American History*, ed. Rima Apple and Janet Golden (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1997), 5-6, 7.

[3] Francis G. Walett, ed. *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1974), 260.

[4] Salmon, "The Cultural Significance of Breast-Feeding," 15.

mothers.[5] Nursing was not only an integral part of motherhood, it was also a normalized and accepted part of the community and a form of doctoring. Women nurtured and healed through the production and dissemination of their milk. The various uses of breast milk underscore its importance within New England culture and support the idea that women and the physical mothering they provided were valued therein.

Although maternity and childrearing were ordinary activities in early New England, accurate knowledge of female anatomy and routine gynecological care were not. Female anatomy, infertility, conception, pregnancy, and prenatal and postnatal care were all rather poorly comprehended and administered, and there was some debate as to how conception occurred. In line with the notion that women were men "turned inside out," the "neck of the womb" was thought by some to act as an internal penis which became erect during intercourse; under this line of thinking, women were thought to ejaculate seed.[6] The logical extension of this belief made the female orgasm a requisite part of conception, implying that the ideal marriage bed was a place of sexual equality and satisfaction. Ideas about the origin of life—that is, the beginning of the fetus—were generally divided into two schools of thought. By the late eighteenth century, the ability to view sperm through a microscope lent credence to the notion that the fetus was housed in the male seed, but some doctors continued to assert that the fetus originated with the mother. Conversely, some believed that a disorganized fetus began to form when it "arrived at its destination" in the womb.[7] Understanding of menstruation and female

---

[5] Benjamin Wadsworth, *The Well-Ordered Family* (Boston: Bartholomew Green, 1712), 46.

[6] *Aristotle's master-piece completed: in two parts*, 23-24.

[7] James Walker, *Inquiry into the Causes of Sterility in Both Sexes, With its Method of Cure* (Philadelphia: Elizabeth Oswald, 1797), 10.

physiology correlated to the Galenic belief in humors. *Aristotle's Master-piece*, perhaps the most prolific and extensive work available to the public, asserted that the menses flowed directly from blood vessels rather than from the uterus.[8] Menstruation, according to Galenic medicine, was the purgation of "bad humors from the body." During pregnancy, the suspense of menstrual flow meant that the blood was transformed into breast milk, nourishment for the growing infant, and the placenta.[9]

Like conception, sterility was poorly understood, and was attributed to a number of factors ranging from religious to physical causes. In Puritan New England, childlessness was perceived as God's "disfavor or his desire to test the faith of the couple."[10] Later, physical causes for barrenness included problems with the womb, such as excessive "hot moisture" or "relaxation."[11] Likewise, women who engaged in too much sexual intercourse—or not enough—were stricken with sterility.[12] From the seventeenth century through the mid-eighteenth, childless couples frequently obtained children in a number of ways. In a culture where notions about the family and the roles of its members were based on hierarchy rather than ideas about biologically discrete individuals, barren couples sometimes parented orphaned relatives. In other cases, couples with a bounty of children sent them to childless relatives, and some children were

[8] *Aristotle's master-piece completed: in two parts*, 17.

[9] Paula A. Treckel, "Breastfeeding and Maternal Sexuality in Colonial America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 20, no. 1 (Summer 1989): 26.

[10] Marsh, *The Empty Cradle*, 12.

[11] *Aristotle's master-piece completed: in two parts*, 19.

[12] Walker, *Inquiry into the Causes of Sterility*, 10.

"put out," or sent to other households to learn a trade.[13] Widowers who did not remarry quickly sometimes sent their children to relatives as well. However, as ideas about family and biology changed, so did ideas about infertility. What had been called "barrenness" in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries transformed into "sterility" by the nineteenth, but the inability to conceive a child remained largely a woman's problem. Emerging ideas about the body did not displace restrictive ideas about gender; instead, suspicions about women eventually calcified into a visible misogyny based on the idea that women were less reasonable creatures than men. These notions coexisted with the Victorian-era view that women were passionless and morally superior to men. After the American Revolution, a strongly idealized femininity defined women as "supremely virtuous, pious, tender, and understanding" entities who imparted these virtues in the home and through community activism.[14]

Although male physicians at childbed became accepted in America fairly quickly, the practice of obstetrics, technological advances in the field, and the displacement of women midwives began in Europe. The changes in England were particularly influential on changes in America. In England, until the seventeenth century, the childbed ritual was quite similar to that of New England: it was a social occasion attended by women with a midwife officiating. As in America, men were generally excluded from attending births. English mothers observed a lying-in period, followed by a return to duties marked by a thanksgiving ceremony known as churching. In this ceremony, the new mother, accompanied by her midwife and gossips, knelt to receive a blessing. The lying-in period,

[13] Marsh, *The Empty Cradle*, 18-19.

[14] Ruth Bloch, *Gender and Morality in Anglo-American Culture, 1650-1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 58.

for English women, also meant a cessation of conjugal relations, and the solitary status of husbands was sometimes referred to as the "gander-month."[15] In England, as in the colonies, childbirth was a distinctly feminine experience. As for English midwives, although they were licensed, there was little formal training available apart from manuals such as Nicholas Culpeper's *Directory for Midwives*, which was published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and included chapters on anatomy, conception, attending difficult births, and nursing children. Most midwives in England and America who did receive training probably obtained it by serving under an experienced midwife; however, there was no educational requirement for practicing midwifery during the period dominated by women practitioners.

Although most births proceeded uneventfully both in England and the colonies, there were occasional complications. In those cases, midwives on both continents might employ folk remedies of dubious efficacy. Sneezing, for example, was induced to assist an exhausted mother in bearing down during delivery, and snakeskin placed around the abdomen or an "eagle-stone" bound to the mother's thigh were believed to remedy stalled labor.[16] Midwives routinely lubricated the perineum and vagina to aid stretching, and administered wine or hard spirits to help manage pain or to revive an exhausted mother. In the case of a breech presentation, experienced midwives were able to deliver the infant "footling," or in cases where an arm or shoulder presented, to turn the infant using podalic version. Midwives were generally admonished to call for a doctor in these

[15] Adrian Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery: Childbirth in England, 1660-1770* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 27.

[16] Nicholas Culpeper, *A directory for midwives: or, A guide for women in their conception, bearing, and suckling their children* (London: 1700), 296.

instances.[17] In colonial America, as in England, midwives relied on various medicinal concoctions to aid in delivery. Not surprisingly, Cotton Mather discoursed at length on these remedies in his medical treatise *The Angel of Bethesda*. Citing "the Illustrious [Robert] Boyl," Mather asserted that "the Livers and Galls of Eeles, dried slowly in an Oven, and powdered, and given in Quantity of a Walnut in White Wine, have kept Multitudes of Women, from dying in Hard Labour." Mather was aware of the perils of failed delivery, and recommended syrup made from the juice of Sheep's Sorrel along with sugar "to bring away Every thing that may be left, tho' it were part of a Dead Child."[18] Today, these remedies seem laughable, but Mather is generally considered quite advanced in his medical and scientific understanding, and he relied heavily upon English and other European sources for his information.

Complications in pregnancy, birth, and the postpartum lives of women were quite similar in both England and the colonies. Births ideally—and usually—involved the infant presenting head first, which was the easiest position to deliver. Breech deliveries, in which the baby descended bottom-first, were complicated but generally manageable. Transverse presentation, wherein the infant presents a shoulder or arm first, was the most complicated situation and usually resulted in failed delivery. In addition to irregular engagement of the infant in the birth canal, a variety of complications could occur before, during, and after labor. Tearing of the perineum, fainting, vomiting, and exhaustion were common nuisances. More serious complications included "flooding," or hemorrhaging; convulsions likely caused by eclampsia, and the dreaded puerperal fever, which was not

[17] Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 38-39. See also, Wilson, *Man-Midwifery*, 2.

[18] Cotton Mather, *The Angel of Bethesda*, 245, 47.

understood until well into the nineteenth century.[19] Hemorrhage caused by placenta previa, a condition in which the placenta is situated directly on or very near the cervix, is serious today; for colonial women it was deadly. Fistulas—the tearing of the tissue between the vagina and the bladder or rectum—led to fecal or urinary incontinence, and sometimes resulted in social isolation and embarrassment. Although not particularly common, fistulas were usually caused by improper use of instruments or particularly forceful manual deliveries. Additionally, prolapsed uterus was problematic, although the condition was more common as women began to wear corsets, which pushed the uterus downward into the vagina. The pessary, which was usually prescribed in the case of uterine prolapse, caused damage to delicate tissue, not to mention discomfort.

Finally, and perhaps most alarming, was puerperal fever, which is now attributed to the introduction of bacteria into the uterus or injured birth canal. However, the phenomenon was not understood until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is difficult to ascertain how many women died from this condition, but it is reasonable to assume that due to poor sanitation, the number was high. Before widespread acceptance of germ theory, puerperal fever was thought to be caused by a number of factors, the least of which was transmission by physician or midwife. However, the prevalence of sepsis-induced death increased relative to physician attended clinical births, and by the early twentieth century, when more women were attended by physicians in hospitals, puerperal fever was arguably the largest cause of postpartum death in America.[20]

[19] Wilson, *Man-Midwifery*, 11-12, 15.

[20] Leavitt, *Brought to Bed*, 29, 154-55.

Poor health and disease also created problems for pregnant women and the midwives and physicians who served them. In the more urban seventeenth century England, pelvic malformation due to rickets led to a number of deaths in mothers and infants; in colonial America rickets does not seem to have been a recognized problem, likely due to better nutrition and exposure to sunlight associated with rural settings. Communicable diseases such as syphilis, tuberculosis, and smallpox also complicated pregnancy, although historians acknowledge that it is difficult to understand the effect of these complications, particularly in the colonial period.[21] Medical practice itself undoubtedly contributed to complications—at the very least, common remedies caused discomfort and misery. In addition to the aforementioned herbal remedies, midwives might induce vomiting or diarrhea, and well into the nineteenth century, doctors routinely bled women during labor—sometimes to relieve hemorrhaging.[22] When labor did not progress normally, doctors on both continents prescribed laudanum or other opiates, which frequently stalled labor and likely distressed mother and infant.[23] Although intervention was possible, the primary duty of midwives was to wait and watch, comforting the laboring mother and her attendants. Until the mid-eighteenth century, childbirth was a passive occasion where women simply waited for nature to take its course. However, the introduction of the forceps by mid-century irrevocably changed the childbirth scene.

---

[21] Wilson, *Man-Midwifery*, 14-15. Leavitt, *Brought to Bed*, 69. Caused by poor nutrition and lack of exposure to sunlight, rickets leads to softening and weakening of the bones. It was more common in urban settings.

[22] Leavitt, *Brought to Bed*, 43-44.

[23] Wilson, *Man-Midwifery*, 15.

Tools in the birthing room, until the mid-eighteenth century, struck fear into the laboring mother and her attendants. A midwife's request for a male physician generally indicated dire circumstances. Male doctors, in England and the colonies, almost invariably arrived at childbed prepared to extract an infant by force. Crochets, hooks, and scissors were used to perform craniotomies or fetal dismemberment well into the nineteenth century—all without anesthesia and usually with limited visualization of the target, as modesty dictated that male physicians avoid looking at the laboring mother's exposed body.[24] By the late eighteenth century, books written by English obstetricians, complete with anatomical tables and detailed instructions, were published in America. Although labor and delivery was still a painful and frightening proposition, tools began to change from a signal of disaster to a symbol of hope. As a result, however, some male physicians were chastised for using tools too quickly. Apparently, some male midwives were also less patient than their female counterparts. For example, Martha Ballard disapproved of young physician Ben Page's bedside manner, citing a stillborn delivery in which the infant's "limbs were much dislocated," presumably from Page's manhandling during a rough delivery.

It is easy to understand why doctors were a last resort, as dismembered infants were sometimes delivered alive, and the use of instruments could result in temporary or permanent genital injury to the mother, not to mention additional pain, horror, and distress.[25] Thus, when a male figure arrived to assist the laboring mother, his presence

[24] Jane B. Donegan, *Women and Men Midwives: Medicine, Morality and Misogyny in Early America* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978), 42-43.

[25] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Images and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 178, 180.

was perceived as the harbinger of brutal, decisive action that was quite different than the midwife's nurturing, patient role. As men entered the midwife's domain, medicine became more distinctly gendered. Women continued their socially appropriate passive role, watching and waiting patiently for labor to take its course, and men assumed an active, masculine one, employing tools to take control of childbirth.

Traditional tools such as the crochet were certainly dreadful, but the forceps, which came into widespread use during the eighteenth century, were a successful aid for difficult deliveries. Forceps were used almost exclusively by men, who possessed the training, anatomical knowledge, and perceived innate strength and ability to employ such active methods. During this same period, obstetrics began to emerge as a valid field of study and practice. In England, perhaps the greatest contributor was William Shellie, whose keen interest and active curiosity about the practice of midwifery led to advances in knowledge, education, and skill. Rather rapidly, these changes migrated to New England, where European trained man-midwives sought to ply their trade. Hospitals and clinics, which developed in Europe, were incorporated into American life by 1800. Likewise, man-midwifery was further advanced when the first two American medical schools incorporated obstetrics into the curriculum around 1760. As a result, competition became keen amongst men and women midwives in Boston, New York, and elsewhere. Several New England physicians studied under Smellie, and then returned to the colonies to practice midwifery and to teach it as well. A few midwifery manuals were published in America during the eighteenth century, including Smellie's, and in 1800 the first American manual was published by New York physician Valentine Seaman.[26] The

[26] Donegan, *Women and Men Midwives*, 122-123, 126.

beginning of the nineteenth century definitely marked a new era in politics and gender roles, but the shift in ideology was also apparent in medicine, especially midwifery.

The introduction of the forceps was perhaps the most important development in the history of obstetrics. The Chamberlen family's London midwifery practice, which spanned four generations, was quite successful because the physicians had a reputation for delivering a live child even in the most difficult deliveries. Their secret was the forceps, an instrument of their own design which they managed to use exclusively for nearly one hundred years. In addition to the forceps, a fillet and a vectis were discovered hidden beneath Dr. Peter Chamberlen's attic floorboards 130 years after his death, indicating that all three instruments likely originated with the Chamberlens.[27] When the instruments were introduced into the public domain around 1730, they were not definitively linked to the Chamberlens, but by 1750, the forceps at least were attributed to the family. Like the forceps, the fillet and vectis were quite important in assisting delivery. A single blade, the vectis was used like a lever to reposition the fetal head and to provide traction in some cases. Once the fillet's noose-like strip was passed over the infant's head, the operator pulled the handle, thereby extracting the baby. These instruments were crude but effective in the hands of a skilled operator. However, they were controversial—especially the forceps—since they defied the passive approach to childbirth that had predominated for centuries and replaced it with an active, managed delivery. The inconvenience of waiting for childbirth to take its course was partially mitigated by the forceps. Almost immediately, male physicians were criticized for their rash use of instruments, especially in failed deliveries, by their male peers and the traditional female midwives.

[27] Wilson, *Man-Midwifery*, 56.

One of the most active critics of unnecessary intervention was William Smellie. Born in Lanark, Scotland, Smellie apprenticed in midwifery and returned to Lanark to practice midwifery from 1720 to 1739. Smellie was often called to assist in difficult deliveries, and his experience and interest led him to seek training on the use of forceps. He first went to London and later to Paris, but he found no suitable training in either city. Moreover, Smellie felt that the usual method of employing the forceps, which involved brute force and often resulted in injury to mother and infant, could be improved upon. He began a methodical study of the birthing process, whereby he determined how the fetal head passed through the birth canal; he also learned that some pelvises were malformed. Smellie believed that studying the patient's pelvis would enable the midwife to deliver more adeptly. In 1739, Smellie relocated his practice to London, where he later began teaching midwifery; his work was quite influential, and he soon became a leader in the field. Although Smellie was not the first to teach midwifery in England, he was innovative in providing lifelike mannequins that imitated the birthing process. Furthermore, in an effort to provide actual clinical training, Smellie began delivering indigent women free of charge in exchange for allowing his students to observe births. Smellie and his students delivered over one thousand women by 1751, verifying that both he and his students obtained a great deal of practical experience in obstetrics.[28] During the first decade of teaching, Smellie claimed to have taught over nine hundred men—nine hundred trained male midwives, armed with forceps, who sought to displace the traditional female midwives in England and her colonies.

[28] Donegan, *Women and Men Midwives*, 62-63, 69.

Although Smellie's students were generally male, he did offer courses for women. His courses were segregated, and it is very unlikely that he taught women to use forceps. Smellie felt that women midwives should be physically capable of withstanding a fatiguing labor, have a rudimentary understanding of anatomy, know how to palpate the cervix, be able to recognize the difference between normal and problem deliveries, and know how to deliver the placenta.[29] He probably did not expect them to handle difficult labors alone, despite their training. Smellie did criticize women midwives who neglected to call for help or exhausted the laboring mother due to ignorance. In one case, Smellie arrived to find that a midwife, in attempting to deliver footling, had pulled the infant's body away, leaving the head lodged in the birth canal. After removing the head with a crochet, he remarked that he felt the midwife would prove "more tractable for the future." Likewise, Smellie found that male physicians were remiss in their duties at childbed. He wrote about a case where a male midwife removed an infant's arm but still failed to deliver the baby; the physician then left the scene, instructing the midwife to send for him when the labor pains returned, he promised to send the laboring mother a "cordial julap." Smellie managed to deliver the fetus, but the mother died several hours later. He described the physician as "an ignorant pretender, who had acquired a great reputation, even in spite of several such blunders." [30] These disturbing examples do not seem to be isolated; it is likely that Smellie saw a number of cases such as these since he was, after all, called to attend problem deliveries. The goal of teaching, for Smellie, seems to have

[29] William Smellie, *A treatise on the theory and practice of midwifery*, (London: D. Wilson, 1762), 442.

[30] William Smellie, *A collection of preternatural cases and observations in midwifery*, (London: W. Strahan, 1779), 179-82, 320-22. Smellie believed that the infant had died several days earlier, and the decapitation was the result of decomposition.

arisen from a genuine desire to improve labor and delivery. He sought to study childbirth and female anatomy, thereby offering a theoretical approach that would improve midwifery by "reducing that art into a more simple and mechanical method."[31] Thanks in part to Smellie's work, obstetrics as a field emerged in England and quickly progressed to the colonies, where women midwives were soon marginalized, in part due to lack of training. When obstetrics became a formalized field of study, it began moving toward the sterilized realm of medicine and away from the domain of religious ritual. In the process, childbirth became an event that was actively managed by male midwives, whose theoretical training and access to forceps and other tools led to many changes in midwifery in England and New England.

In the colonies, man midwives—many of whom were trained abroad by Smellie or his associates—entered practice around the mid-eighteenth century. Perhaps the most influential physician was William Shippen, Jr., who trained in London and Edinburgh, then returned to Philadelphia in 1762 to practice medicine. Shippen established the "first systematic series of lectures on midwifery in America," which were initially available to both men and women.[32] Like Smellie and his former assistant Colin Mackenzie (whom Shippen studied under in London), Shippen maintained a lying-in hospital for poor women to provide his students with clinical training.[33] Shippen's introduction of the "new obstetrics" meant that physicians now had the training and credentials to attend normal births rather than only abnormal ones. Moreover, physicians in the birthing room

[31] William Smellie, *An Abridgement of the Practice of Midwifery*, (Worcester: Thomas, 1793), iii.

[32] Leavitt, *Brought to Bed*, 38.

[33] Donegan, *Women and Men Midwives*, 116.

brought some perceived advantages. Tools such as forceps, of course, gave women the expectation of a successful birth. More interesting, however, were additional treatments that physicians brought along: bloodletting and anesthesia in the form of opiates. For the first time, women could expect that they would have tangible aid during labor, rather than simply waiting for the process to run its course. Moreover, women could expect some relief from pain. Finally, it is likely that even when a physician attended a normal birth, the laboring mother felt a greater measure of control over her experience. Unlike the seventeenth century with its prevailing notion that women should bear childbirth appropriately, eighteenth century women began to have options and they began to exercise those options.

Whether these changes actually improved matters is open to interpretation; modern women would likely consider eighteenth century labor and delivery barbaric propositions despite advancements. Eighteenth century participants including doctors, midwives, and laboring mothers probably welcomed emerging medical advancements and considered them both novel and encouraging. For the first time, childbirth could be controlled rather than simply borne with dignity and piety. The easiest way to gain control over the situation was to call for a trained male physician. As a result, the eighteenth century was a period of transition for men and women. The feminine community, which had excluded men before, now began to tolerate a masculine presence in exchange for a perceived measure of progress and improved conditions.

American man-midwifery was accepted relatively quickly. Perhaps, as Jane B. Donegan asserts, advances in English obstetrics, which were well underway before the American Revolution, helped legitimize man-midwifery in the colonies. Training in

obstetrics, certainly, was influential; it was invariably obtained by men, making them preferable to untrained women, regardless of experience or tradition.[34] However, there were probably other factors influencing the advancement of male-controlled obstetrics. Childbed had been, in many ways, a religious occasion whereby women could ascertain the sainthood of the laboring mother. The changes in religion that came about with the Great Awakening offered a somewhat active conversion experience as opposed to the traditionally passive version.

In addition, ideas about the body, conception, and gender played a large part in changing views on childbirth. Philosophical changes revolving around reason, as advanced by philosophes and others associated with what is now termed the Age of Enlightenment, led to a mechanical view of the human body, as well as changes in ideas about how children should be raised. As the more rational and reasonable sex, men were considered imminently qualified to preside over the machinations of the female body during childbirth. It makes sense that the convergence of these changes, and especially changes in the field of medicine, led women to call more frequently on trained male physicians rather than untrained women practitioners. The late eighteenth century saw an increase in publications about midwifery, with the most notable departure from past writers like Cotton Mather being epistemological in nature. No longer was man qualified to preside over woman simply because God made it so; nor were women more knowledgeable about female anatomy and childbearing simply because they were women. Rather, man was physically different than woman, and therefore superior and in a position of authority. Noting that men and women were physically different did not lead

[34] Ibid., 114.

to a stronger female community. Instead, at least in the field of medicine, it encouraged men to seize control of what was formerly the female domain. Publications in the late eighteenth century suggest a greater interest on the part of physicians in obstetrics as a field of study and practice.

"Sometime in the eighteenth century" Thomas Laqueur writes, "sex as we know it was invented." As a result, gender became fixed rather than mutable, and discussions of anatomy began to acknowledge a discrete, biological femininity. Around the time man-midwifery began establishing itself in America, the names of female reproductive organs began changing in medical texts. The vagina and ovaries replaced the inverted penis and female stones. Understanding of conception began to change as well. The female orgasm, some asserted, might not be requisite for conception after all, because the vagina and uterus did not function like male genitalia turned inside out. Whereas before, female orgasm had been widely accepted as necessary for conception, its necessity was questioned more directly during the eighteenth century.[35] Sterility was attributed to both sexes, but the onus generally fell upon women, since a man who could perform sexually was considered fertile. In 1797, American medical student James Walker ascribed female sterility to a number of factors, including disruption in the menses, accidents and diseases, genitourinary problems, and loose morals and intemperance. Male sterility, according to Walker, might be caused by penile deformity or accident, impotence, lusty nature, or disease. A rich diet was problematic for both sexes, he asserted, since those who ate a "low diet" were more prolific than those who indulged in richer foods. Female sterility could be cured by bleeding or sitting over hot steam, but male sterility was

[35] Thomas S.Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 149-150.

usually only treatable through surgery; impotency was "generally considered as incurable."[36] Thus, sterility for women was somewhat more complicated than for men, but with more available remedies. Sperm had been viewed under a microscope by this time, but its relationship to conception was still poorly understood and much debated. Barrenness, formerly God's will, was now sterility, which was rooted in physical causes rather than spiritual ones.

William Smellie published several volumes on midwifery in England, and by the late eighteenth century his abridged work, along with anatomical tables, was published in America. The book contained precise measurements of the normal pelvis and illustrations of normal and abnormal pelvic formations. Smellie's anatomical charts featured cross sections of the uterus, sometimes with a fetus and sometimes without. Unlike past works, which were full of theoretical speculation, Smellie's book revealed a lifetime of practical experience that he was eager to share with his colleagues. It also revealed a scientific approach to the human body that avoided discussions of morality or other issues that were of consequence before. Instead, Smellie discoursed at length about the various fetal presentations and what to do in each case. Anatomical diagrams showed what the forceps and other tools look like, and described how they should be used according to the situation. For Smellie, there was no single strategy for childbirth, no admonitions about proper behavior for the laboring mother. Each case was different, and physicians were advised to study each individual patient to determine the proper course of action rather than expecting the laboring mother to conform to a single standard, either physically or spiritually. The notion of an individual self was applied to women.

[36] Walker, *Inquiry into the Causes of Sterility*, 15-17, 18-22.

While Smellie acknowledged an active approach, he did not advocate it; rather, he advised practitioners, particularly young physicians, to watch and wait. When manual intervention is necessary, Smellie cautioned against rough handling, offering instead specific instructions on what to do when the uterus was not dilated fully or when there was flooding during delivery. He recommended hog's lard as a lubricant, and his discussion assumed the woman would be lying down instead of seated in a birthing chair, as was the practice in previous centuries. Craniotomy should be used only in dire situations, Smellie cautioned, and then great care should be exercised to avoid injuring the mother. Smellie's book epitomized obstetrical advancements as well as the emerging scientific approach to medicine. His attitude was conservative and his approach compassionate, recalling traditional midwifery. He accepted the use of tools, but he did not recommend heavy reliance upon them. Forceps were helpful, asserted Smellie, but they should be used judiciously, "for by the imprudent use of forceps, much more harm may be done than good."[37] Smellie's philosophy exemplified the convergence of traditional midwifery with the new obstetrics, and his book marked the blending of learned man-midwifery with experience. It suggested a respect for women, for female physiology, and for the individual woman. Intended for a male audience, it was simultaneously infused with the emerging confidence of a masculine obstetrics and the waning passivity of traditional female midwifery.

Valentine Seaman published the first American midwifery manual in 1800. His intention was to inform and educate midwives since some women, due to delicacy or prejudice, refused to avail themselves of the new obstetrics or "submit themselves to the

[37] Smellie, *An Abridgement*, 53.

care of male practitioners."[38] Seaman proposed, therefore, that women should be trained as midwives. This approach would doubly serve society by allowing male doctors to attend other patients rather than sit at the laboring mother's bedside. Besides, argued Seaman, in rural areas the scarcity of doctors meant midwives were at least useful to all concerned. Seaman's work suggests several things. First, women made the final decision as to whether they were attended by a female midwife or a male physician. Women were surely swayed by their husbands input, and certainly male doctors were making headway. However, some women still persisted in calling for a woman rather than a man. In addition, Seaman clearly believed midwives were capable of improving their practice through education. Finally, Seaman was adamant that midwives provided an invaluable and necessary service to the community, assuming they worked under a male physician.

These latter two points are notable in that they further Seaman's professional agenda. He was at pains to inform midwives of when they should and should not pursue an unsupervised delivery and when they should call a doctor. In many instances where women would traditionally have ministered to the sick, Seaman instructed midwives to call for a doctor. Most importantly, Seaman made scant mention of helping midwives gain a better understanding of delivering babies. Rather, his intention was to ensure that laboring women had the opportunity for a safer delivery performed by physicians. He also hoped to free male doctors to go about their business while those midwives fortunate enough to have read his manual watched, waited, and called for the doctor at the appropriate time. Overall, Seaman wanted to help women. He also intended to advance the practice of medicine and by extension his own career, and he felt that midwives

[38] Valentine Seaman, *The Midwives Monitor, and Mothers Mirror: Being Three Concluding Lectures of a Course of Instruction on Midwifery* (New York: Isaac Collins, 1800), iv.

should no longer gain instruction and practical experience from an apprenticeship with a fellow midwife. Seaman's book offered information that conformed to a masculine agenda which cast both the laboring mother and the watchful midwife in passive roles overseen by an active male doctor.

In addition to a more active approach to childbirth, an active approach to female health and contraception emerged. As Susan E. Klepp has pointed out, pregnancy was not proven until quickening, or movement of the fetus, occurred; thus, the absence of menstruation could indicate pregnancy, or it could suggest a number of other physical abnormalities. If a woman with amenorrhea interpreted it as a symptom of illness, she might avail herself of treatment for obstructed humors such as purgatives or herbal remedies. In line with Galenic medicine's theory of humoral imbalance, loss of menses might indicate hysteria, intestinal parasites, rheumatism, pleurisy, or even consumption. With pregnancy being only one possible outcome in a list of ailments, women perceived the absence of menstruation as something to be dealt with swiftly. Cookbooks and medicinal manuals provide evidence that the eighteenth century woman had a number of remedies at her disposal should she find herself with obstructed menses. Termination of pregnancy was not explicitly referenced as an outcome of these treatments, but women of the period (and men as well) knew that a restoration of menses could also equate to the end of a pregnancy. Thus, although women did not directly state abortion as a goal of these remedies, it is very likely that they recognized it as a potential—and perhaps welcome—side effect. In addition, women could "employ an emmenagogue just before the menstrual period was due to ensure its arrival." Women were not only aware of when they should expect their menses, they also knew what to do if their monthly cycle did not

arrive on time. Contraception may not have been discussed openly, but evidence suggests that by the mid-eighteenth century, women maintained awareness of their own menstruation and sometimes availed themselves of abortifacients.[39]

By 1800, America was a much different place than when John Winthrop arrived. The goodwives of Puritan New England constituted a strong, insular community wherein women interacted with other women and men scarcely ventured. Female authority was gained through submission and proper behavior. By the 1760s, obstetrics was a valid field of study, and men sought to establish obstetric practices among the families of New England. It is true that childbirth was still a perilous and painful proposition, and the labor process was still attended by midwives and women. However, medical advances meant that women could be hopeful for a positive outcome rather than simply preparing to die. The appearance of a male physician did not automatically inspire fear, meaning that women had a new ally during travail. Doctors studied obstetrics abroad and returned to practice in America, making England and the medical advances there quite important to New England women.

Martha Ballard, practicing at the turn of the century, made several comments about young physician Ben Page, who was beginning to practice midwifery at the conclusion of Ballard's career. Friction arose from Page's encroachment onto female territory and also from his inexperienced mistakes, which included giving laudanum to a laboring woman and delivering a dead infant with dislocated limbs. Despite Page's blunders, he had little trouble establishing a practice. Like other male practitioners, professional training, masculine authority, and options only available in physician-

[39] Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions*, 181-87.

assisted deliveries bolstered his success.[40] Martha Ballard and traditional midwifery's community of women could not effectively compete with opium and forceps.

Female midwives, who traditionally learned through apprenticeship and experience, were displaced as men not only attended an increasing number of normal deliveries, but also refused to apprentice new midwives. The training that was offered to midwives focused on how they could support the male physician and disregarded the spiritual element so central to earlier childbirths. Women midwives who were invited to observe dissections in 1800 were deemed incompetent to practice midwifery twenty years later. The transition may have been gradual in rural areas or among poor or isolated women, and female midwives continued to practice well into the nineteenth century in some areas. But evidence suggests that men had little difficulty establishing practices and gaining patients, particularly among wealthier and more educated clientele. These women, who were likely imbued with the sense of individuality and freedom that accompanied religious and political changes during the eighteenth century, expected to improve matters for themselves beginning at the most fundamental level: childbirth. With the departure of traditional midwives, the communal and spiritual elements of childbirth also dissipated. Medical advances may have empowered women by giving them control over pain and fear, but the decline of the female community meant that a good deal of female authority and power was transferred to men.

---

[40] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on her Diary, 1785*-1812 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 175-77, 255.

CHAPTER THREE

Living Mothers and the New England Feminine Identity

The majority of colonial New England women are now unknown because they avoided scandalous behavior. However, diaries and records of female transgressions do provide limited access to both sensational stories and everyday events from a variety of perspectives. The lives of women changed from 1650 through the American Revolution, but despite these changes women remained aware of what was expected of them, and there is evidence that in most cases they tried to conform. When the behavior of women was deemed inappropriate, punishment was exacted by masculine authority.

At the same time, however, the actions of some women speak to an empowerment based on spirituality and religious prerogative. To be sure, unwed mothers sometimes committed infanticide, and the harsh punishment they received highlights the cultural stigma associated with fornication and the production of bastard children. The actions of notorious women such as Anne Hutchinson suggest that although women were expected to conform to social norms, they sometimes rebelled. The diary of Connecticut farm woman Hannah Heaton shows not only how everyday women lived, but how they interacted with those around them. As the wife of prominent theologian Jonathan Edwards, Sarah Pierpont Edwards's writings and the words that others wrote about her life indicate that her sense of self was, in true Calvinist fashion, completely at odds with how she was perceived by others.

New England women living from 1650 through 1800 navigated a changing cultural milieu by perceiving and being perceived in the context of powerful, appropriate,

and meaningful motherhood. Over more than a century, women drew power from their relationship with God, and their actions suggest a clear sense of feminine empowerment, at least within the context of religious piety and worship. Varying responses to female expressions of power illustrate the cultural changes that occurred during the time between the arrival of the Puritans and the Revolutionary period.

From Anne Hutchinson all the way to Sarah Edwards, submissive behavior and proper mothering were defining factors in female success or failure. Seventeenth-century women shared a common element with their eighteenth-century counterparts: there was a discrepancy between the way women perceived themselves and the way their actions were perceived by their peers. Women seem to have internalized cultural dialogue including ministerial rhetoric and popular writing, but they sometimes interpreted that dialogue differently than their male contemporaries. As a result, images of proper mothering and feminine behavior did not always coincide with everyday actions. The female sense of self might have changed over the centuries, but there was a dichotomy between the idealized mother and the flesh and blood woman that persisted throughout early New England culture. This divergence suggests that women felt empowered, but that there were definite limits placed on exertion of female power.

Given the ritualized and spiritual nature of childbirth and the cultural importance of mothering, it is easy to see how deviations were problematic for the early New England community. Transgressors were punished swiftly and severely, underscoring the importance of adherence to a prescribed version of motherhood. Of course, motherhood was reserved for married women, and unwed mothers sometimes gave birth in secret and killed their infants to cover the birth. When discovered, these women were executed, a

practice that continued well into the eighteenth century. Elizabeth Ambroke, executed in 1735 for murdering "her bastard child," was one of many such women.[1] The law cared little about whether the mother had actually killed her infant, and in fact, execution for infanticide extended to illegitimate stillborn children as well as those who obviously died at their mothers' hands. In 1733, a New England newspaper reported that Rebekah Chamblit was executed for "concealing the birth of her spurious infant, of which she was deliver'd when alone, and was afterwards found dead."[2] The article goes on to state that concealment of a "bastard" child was illegal, and that regardless of whether the child was born dead or alive, any mother who attempted to conceal the birth of a stillborn illegitimate child was subject to execution. Concealment of the birth and the exclusion of the female community from the birthing room were not included in Chamblit's list of offenses by accident. Chamblit shunned the community by refusing to engage in the childbed ritual, which was additional proof of her sinfulness and the unconverted state of her soul.

Elizabeth Emerson, a young Puritan woman, was executed in 1693 for infanticide after her illegitimate twins were discovered buried in her parents' yard. Cotton Mather spoke at her execution, using the occasion to enumerate the "fatal consequences of uncleanness."[3] Mather was proud of the sermon he delivered at Elizabeth Emerson's execution; indeed, it was published, along with another sermon, in a tract entitled

---

[1] "The following Extract from Our Last Letters from Our French Correspondent," *New England Weekly Journal*, June 9, 1735.

[2] "Boston, Sept. 27," *The Boston News-Letter*, September 27, 1733.

[3] Kathleen Brown, "Murderous Uncleanness: The Body of the Female Infanticide in Puritan New England," in *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America*, ed. Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 77-78

Warnings from the Dead. In addition to the sermon, a statement attributed to Emerson appears at the end of the tract, in which she admits her wrongdoing. In addressing Emerson's transgressions, Mather focused on sexual uncleanness, which he believed resulted in spiritual and physical death. Mather considered the "quagmire" of uncleanness progressive, and although all are born into sin, the elect desire to avoid impurity. However, those sinful revelers who renounce God were often marked by sexual uncleanness and the attendant consequences, which implicitly included that perversion of motherhood, illegitimate pregnancy. For Mather, the path of evildoers was littered with sexual uncleanness, including violations of chastity, "self-pollution," fornication, adultery, incest, sodomy, buggery, and unclean thoughts. The unclean were likely, in Mather's estimation, to meet an early demise. Uncleanness manifested in bodily ailments such as "gouts, cramps, palseyes," and "an incurable consumption" that amounted to "self murder." Moreover, uncleanness was passed to the offender's children, if any were born from the polluted body. Unclean individuals were marked by the Angel of Death, and this, said Mather, explained why so many die young.[4] The unclean, finally, were destined for eternal torment in hell, revealing that physical uncleanness had permanent spiritual consequences.

Elizabeth Emerson's mothering served as an example to New Englanders that failure to conform to sexual chastity was an outward manifestation of inner, eternal damnation that results in untimely and miserable death. Sexual licentiousness was no small matter, and although Mather did not explicitly indict Emerson for the murder of her infants, his sermon indicted her regardless of the cause of death. Her unchaste behavior

[4] Cotton Mather, *Warnings from the Dead*, (Boston: Bartholomew Green, 1693), 42-45, 47, 60.

translated into death, both for herself and her children. For Emerson, the consequences for misappropriating motherhood were severe, physical, eternal, and spiritual. Her confession, situated at the end of the tract, was a visible and permanent indication of the state of her soul. Her submission to religious authority suggested that although her uncleanness led to death, she might have been redeemed through contrition. Her confession, contextualized with Mather's sermon, provided an example of proper behavior in the face of the ultimate punishment. Emerson may have been a poor example of motherhood, but her crime and death took on a didactic purpose as they were transformed into examples of both inappropriate and appropriate behavior. Emerson redeemed herself, at least temporally, by submitting to God's will and providing an example of behaviors that others should avoid.

Most of the young women punished for infanticide and other crimes against motherhood and orthodoxy are now obscured by time, resurrected to serve as examples of patriarchy at its worst. Anne Hutchinson is not one of these women. Instead, she was embroiled in one of the most notorious scandals in seventeenth century New England, and her actions have been interpreted in numerous ways. At first glance, a woman "stept out" of her place; however, disregard for gender boundaries was not the only transgression, and certainly not the primary one, engaged in by Mistress Hutchinson. Hutchinson's activities were perhaps intended less as a voyage into male territory and more an attempt to expand an accepted female role, that of teacher to women. The rejection of her activities was likely due to a number of factors, including her personality, which was perceived as haughty and masculine. According to Governor John Winthrop, Hutchinson's conventicles included upwards of sixty women, whom she led "in a

prophetical way, by resolving questions of doctrine and expounding scripture."[5] Although such meetings were a normal part of Puritan religious expression, early leaders found her actions inappropriate and believed that her activities had consequences both symbolic and concrete.[6] Anne Hutchinson encroached into masculine spiritual mothering through teaching both men and women; worse still, she did not even try to appear submissive to male authority. As a result, at least according to her contemporaries, Hutchinson received supernatural punishment through physical manifestations of her perverse maternity when she gave birth to a deformed fetus.

Anne Hutchinson, by Governor John Winthrop's account, was "a woman of ready wit and bold spirit." A glance at her biography reveals a woman whose boldness predated her arrival in New England. Hutchinson was born Anne Marbury in England during the reign of the powerful Queen Elizabeth. Anne was influenced by her father Francis, who was a religious rebel in his own right, having been imprisoned at the age of twenty-two for refusing to cease his denunciations of the Church of England. In 1591, the year of Anne's birth, the Marburys were probably concerned with the legal troubles of their Protestant friends. Francis and his radical Puritan contemporaries wanted to rid the Church of England of popish ceremony and to install a structure more in line with their interpretation of biblical hierarchy. Ideally, their plan included removal of bishops, who were installed by the ruling monarch, in favor of a presbyterian hierarchy, which would place selection of church elders and other leaders in the hands of parishioners.[7] In this

[5] Winthrop, *Journal*, 234.

[6] Michael P. Winship, *The Times and Trials of Anne Hutchinson, Puritans Divided* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005),171.

[7] Ibid., 6-7.

model, with power vested in parishioners, it is not difficult to imagine why the movement was opposed. Like her father, Anne's activities shifted power from the clergy to the laity; however, she also challenged established doctrine. In the Puritan community, this was completely unacceptable, for as Edmund Morgan has pointed out Winthrop "could not regard the case [of Anne Hutchinson] as that of one opinion against another; it was personal opinion against truth."[8] Moreover, Hutchinson's behavior was not submissive, even though she was given opportunity to realign herself with ministerial authority.

Anne's discordant behavior was noted during her voyage to New England when, according to minister Zachariah Simmes, she "did slight the ministers of God." Simmes also "took notice of the corruptness and narrowness of her opinions." Anne was apparently in the habit of questioning men, including ministers, and she felt duly empowered to assert her opinion. Hutchinson's acceptance into the Church of Boston was delayed as she was asked to explain her views. Having established a reputation during the voyage, Mistress Hutchinson presently found herself in the center of what Governor Winthrop characterized as the "the sorest tryall that ever befell" New England Puritans since leaving their "native soyle."[9] The Antinomians were accused of nurturing and propagating erroneous opinions which amounted to an attempt at overturning social hierarchy. The dissenters included several prominent male members, and it is difficult to understand how exactly Anne Hutchinson came to bear most of the responsibility for the controversy. According to Michael Winship, Anne was not the primary dissenter—that

[8] Edmund S. Morgan, "The Case Against Anne Hutchinson," *The New England Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (December 1937): 635-649.

[9] John Winthrop, "A Short Story of the Rise, Reign, and Ruine of the Antinomians, Familists & Libertines," in *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*, ed. David D. Hall (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 199, 201, 263.

role belonged to former Massachusetts Bay Colony governor Henry Vane.[10] In Winship's interpretation, Anne was reviled for failing to adhere to gender roles rather than her dissemination of faulty opinions.

Part of Anne's authority undoubtedly arose from her position in the female community, and this authority was probably enhanced by her strong personality, which was particularly abhorrent to Winthrop. Hutchinson was addressed as mistress rather than goodwife, suggesting higher social status, and although it is unclear whether she was a practicing midwife at the time of her teaching, she did attend travail and minister to women at childbed. Involvement in childbirth afforded Anne status, access to an audience, and authority through the act of supervising and interpreting childbed behavior as a sign of conversion. Thus empowered within the female community, Hutchinson broadened her authority to encompass religious leadership, including leadership of men. In some ways, her transgression was not so much a crossing of the gender line into masculine territory, but rather an attempt to extend an established and accepted female role. According to Michael Winship, Hutchinson's activities were commensurate with her "age and social status,"[11] a sensible assessment of the situation that still does not satisfactorily account for why Hutchinson was so thoroughly prosecuted. One possibility is simple: the prosecution of Anne Hutchinson amounted to John Winthrop's personal vendetta against a woman he found repugnant. In fact, after reading Winthrop's account, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that at least some of Anne's troubles arose from an antagonistic relationship with Winthrop.

---

[10] Michael P. Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636-1641*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 185.

[11] Ibid., 171.

Religion was a central element in the controversy, which can be read as an attack on religious orthodoxy. However, it is important to realize that in a culture so completely centered in religion, polemical discourse necessarily occurred within a religious context. The actions of Hutchinson and the others have also been interpreted as a social movement with distinctly feminist undertones. According to Lyle Koehler, "the individual hungry for power could, as long as he perceived his deep inner feeling of God's grace to be authentic, use that feeling to consecrate his personal rebellion against the contemporary authorities."[12] The "he" used by Koehler is gender specific; there was no room within the culture for female rebellion, since submission was innately and inextricably feminine. Gender roles and the accepted cultural differences inherent to gender were visible in the fundamental arguments of Hutchinson and her accusers: "to Hutchinson, the ministers were mere "legalists," clinging blindly to the letter of the Law, often missing the spirit; to her accusers, she was an Antinomian, one who rejects the Law of God."[13] Anne sought privacy and a feminine intimacy with the Holy Spirit, while masculine authority invoked biblical law as a basis for penetration into the saint's relationship with God.

Because the authority of New England women was predicated upon submission, Hutchinson and her female followers were discredited and disfranchised by their own acts of defiance, and it is not likely their actions would have been acceptable over the long-term even if their opinions had coincided with accepted religious beliefs. Forceful female empowerment was not sustainable in a culture where men and women had clearly

[12] Lyle Koehler, "The Case of the American Jezebels: Anne Hutchinson and Female Agitation during the Years of Antinomian Turmoil, 1636-1640," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (January 1974), 56.

[13] Lad Tobin, "A Radically Different Voice: Gender and Language in the Trials of Anne Hutchinson," *Early American Literature* 25, no. 3 (1990): 258.

delineated, God-given roles which were defined not by an intimate, private relationship with God but rather governed by written law. In early Puritan New England, there was little (if any) room for personal interpretation of doctrine, nor was there much space for an exclusively private relationship with God, as Puritan tribalism and Calvinist sainthood both demanded a visible expression of piety that was witnessed by the entire community. Moreover, wrong living and defiance of religious standards signaled an unconverted heart. Hutchinson's actions defied all tenets of Puritanical piety through defiance, clearly improper behavior, and a disregard for authority that continued despite opportunity for change. If, as Winship asserts, Hutchinson felt that she was acting appropriately for her age and social status, a great disparity appears between the interpretation of social mores by Hutchinson and her cohorts and the official perspective held by Winthrop and the establishment. In early New England, a woman who felt justified in her actions might be deemed out of line by the authorities, resulting in rejection by the community.

Anne Hutchinson's personality and demeanor may have commanded attention and respect from her peers, but they did little to endear her to the authorities. In addition, she did not display proper mothering behavior. She was described as bold with a "sharpe apprehension, a ready utterance and abilitie to exprese" herself.[14] These qualities were acceptable when Hutchinson used them for prescribed womanly business including instruction of children and servants, but when she engaged in misleading "many poore soules," including male souls, through spiritual mothering, her actions became problematic. John Winthrop remarked on her "haughty and fierce carriage…nimble wit and active spirit, and…very voluble tongue" as he described a perverse motherhood

[14] "A Report of the Trial of Mrs. Ann Hutchinson," in *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*, ed. David D. Hall (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 371.

wherein she acted as the "breeder and nourisher" of the "distempers" associated with the Antinomian controversy.[15] Anne was considered competent in assisting women at childbed and in performing other nursing duties, and she had the intellect to manage a household; instead, she helped create and nurture heresies.

The men involved in the Antinomian controversy were also called on to explain themselves, with varying results. Henry Vane, who was governor at the outset of Hutchinson's meetings and also a supporter of her viewpoints, was ousted in favor of John Winthrop. Soon thereafter, banishments began, and Hutchinson's supporters were divested of their "guns, pistols, swords, powder, shot, and match."[16] One of the primary figures was Anne Hutchinson's brother-in-law, the Reverend John Wheelwright. Like Anne, he caused trouble soon after arriving in Boston, and his sermons and involvement with the Antinomians resulted in his exile from the community. Deacon John Cogshall was also called to answer for his involvement, but because "his speech and behavior" were found to be "more modest and submisse, then formerly they had beene" he was not exiled but reduced in status through disfranchisement. Other "principall stirring men" were also questioned, and when some of them did not respond by relinquishing their opinions, their punishments ranged from fines to disfranchisement, or in some cases both. Disfranchisement reduced the men to a feminine status by removing their political participation; Winthrop noted that they were prohibited from holding public office. The men who were not exiled were allowed to remain, but their involvement in the scandal meant that they could no longer fully exercise masculine privilege. For the most part, the

[15] Winthrop, "A Short Story," 262.

[16] David D. Hall, "Introduction," in *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*, ed. David D. Hall (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 10.

men exhibited submissive behavior when questioned, but Anne Hutchinson refused to do so, and as a result was banished to Rhode Island.

As final proof of Hutchinson's errors, Winthrop noted that after her departure she gave birth to what was described as a monstrous infant. Modern medicine suggests that Hutchinson delivered a hydatidiform mole, or molar pregnancy, which occurs when a blighted ovum is fertilized, forming a mass of grape-like tissue; molar pregnancies invariably result in spontaneous abortion. For Winthrop, however, it was logical (and perhaps poetic) that Hutchinson's womb produced fruit as deformed as the notions born in her brain. Moreover, Anne's womb delivered upwards of 30 "monstrous births or thereabouts, at once; some of them bigger, some lesser, some of one shape, some of another; few of any perfect shape, none at all of them…of humane shape." Winthrop interpreted the delivery as a sure sign of God's "displeasure against [Hutchinson's] opinions and practices."[17] It is not clear how Hutchinson interpreted the monstrous birth, but there is no indication that it caused her to question whether her religious beliefs were right.

The Hutchinson episode shows that women not only had power in the community, but also that the actions of women were powerful. Hutchinson's lack of contrition suggests her own sense of empowerment, and she was also perceived as powerful by the community, but in a way that was unacceptable. She was punished through removal from the community of women, and according to John Winthrop, she was also punished with a deformed infant. A great deal of scholarship has been devoted to the interpretation of Anne Hutchinson's actions and the reactions of the patriarchy. Perhaps the most

[17] Winthrop, "A Short Story," 199, 214.

problematic element of the Antinomian controversy is the fact that we cannot know Anne's own thoughts about her prosecution. Instead, we must settle for John Winthrop's version of things, which does not present a flattering portrait of Anne's personality or her actions. Thus, while Anne Hutchinson is a prominent historical figure, we cannot be sure of her motivations or thoughts about the events; what is clear is that Hutchinson's version of acceptable female behavior did not conform to the interpretation set forth by Puritan patriarchy.

The diary of Hannah Heaton, written almost a hundred years after Anne Hutchinson scandalized her peers, offers a rare glimpse into the everyday life and spiritual world of an average woman. The century that divided Anne and Hannah did not negate their shared sense of empowerment, which was grounded in an intimate relationship with God. Likewise, both women felt justified in making disparaging comments about ministers, and both women were taken to task for their refusal to conform to religious authority and orthodoxy. However, the outcomes were very different, which illustrates the cultural changes that occurred between the arrival of the Puritans and the commencement of the Revolutionary War. Moreover, while we do not have Hutchinson's version of things, we can access what Hannah Heaton thought, felt, and believed throughout her adult life in Connecticut. Heaton's account is notable in that we have her perspective written in her own words, and her diary suggests that others did not agree with her interpretation of appropriate female behavior. Both Anne and Hannah felt justified in their actions, and both women were perceived as out of line by their peers.

Hannah Heaton's diary recounts her religious experiences, which are interesting but not particularly surprising. What is unusual is the way Hannah interacted with her

husband and sons, how she perceived herself within the community of women, and her disagreement with ministerial authority; her actions resulted in censure, and she underwent a trial that recalls that of Hutchinson though certainly with less dire consequences. Heaton's life was marked by rejections from her in-laws, immediate family, and community. Trouble usually arose when Hannah's piety did not reconcile with those around her, but according to Hannah, these trials were part of her relationship with God, who tested believers on a personal and communal level. The reactions of others, particularly her husband Theophilus, suggest that Hannah did not adhere to properly submissive behavior, despite what she wrote in her diary.

By her own account, Hannah Heaton was born around "1721 at meacox belonging to south Hampton on Long Island." She seems to have been particularly close to her father, who was both a "religious man" and a surgeon who encouraged his children to engage in religious discussion during his customary reading and prayer.[18] Her early childhood was marked by fear of the devil, agony over the state of her soul, and apprehension about death. She notes more than one serious illness from which she expected to die. These were common themes in diaries of the period. What was less common was Heaton's account of rejection by her husband, children, in-laws, and members of the community. Hannah's marginalization was, at least in part, a result of her own conscious decisions. She took advantage of the increasingly tolerant religious climate in Connecticut, and was able to join the Separates rather than worship with husband Theophilus and his fellow Congregationalists. For Hannah Heaton, dissent was a valid option.

[18] Hannah Heaton, *The World of Hannah Heaton: The Diary of an Eighteenth Century New England Farm Woman*, ed. Barbara E. Lacey (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 4.

Hannah's ability to worship with the Separates rather than the Congregationalists was made possible by several events that resulted in a degree of religious pluralism in Connecticut. The Glorious Revolution in the late seventeenth century imposed a modicum of religious toleration in New England; or at least toleration of Protestant dissenters—Catholicism was still universally reviled in New England. In 1722, New Haven was scandalized by an episode known as the Yale apostasy. Yale's rector, Timothy Cutler, accompanied by several local ministers and Yale tutors, converted to Anglicanism—a move that was considered by some as on par with a flagrant endorsement of popery. Although the defectors were reproached by the establishment, the door to religious pluralism was opened in what was dramatically described as a challenge to Protestantism everywhere.[19] Approximately two decades later, during the Great Awakening, radical New Lights fomented a movement toward renewed purity in the churches. Membership requirements were strict, with no halfway covenant or infant baptism; only adults who expressed conversion were permitted to take communion. The Separates also demanded that their ministers be converted—simply being educated no longer sufficed.[20] The Separatist idea of purity in worship and demand for converted ministers reconciled with Hannah Heaton's piety, as did the notion that she and her fellow saints should set themselves apart from unconverted Congregationalists. The Separates were in the minority, but aside from occasional legal troubles they were generally tolerated. However, Hannah's intense religious expression and her version of womanly submission were strict compared to community values. Quite the opposite of

[19] Thomas S. Kidd, *The Protestant Interest: New England after Puritanism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 121-22, 128.

[20] Joseph A. Conforti, *Saints and Strangers: New England in British North America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 189.

Anne Hutchinson, Heaton's conservative interpretation was at odds with the community's more liberal system.

Hannah Heaton was indeed quite pious, and her spiritual struggles began in childhood. She sought guidance from her father—in fact, her mother is not often cited as a source of spiritual comfort. Following her marriage to Theophilus Heaton and on into her adult life, Hannah was troubled by interactions with her peers. Her relationships suggest that she operated outside the community, both by choice and due to external rejection. Moreover, Hannah's piety set her at odds with her own husband and sons, creating strife within the home. What is clear from Heaton's diary is that she did not feel supported or accepted by those around her, that she was saddened by the lack of piety in her children and husband, and that she viewed herself as something of a martyr whose troubles could serve as a warning to others. Even her spirituality did not always remedy her loneliness, because her Calvinist beliefs precluded certainty about the state of her soul. By her own account, Hannah Heaton conformed to a conservative Calvinist ideal in piety and feminine submission, but she was nevertheless spurned by community and family. The relationships recorded in the diary suggest that Hannah lived within a community in transition. On the surface, Heaton subscribed to and performed approved feminine duties, but problems with those around her show that she was not integrated into the community.

Her troubles began when, in a "dark frame of mind," she married the unconverted Theophilus Heaton and went to live with her new husband and his father's family. During this period, her son Jonathan was born. Describing her difficult travail, Hannah recalled that God promised support in time of trouble, and related her thoughts to the midwife,

who rebuffed her for talking "to that purpose." Soon after, Hannah reproached her husband's family for "wicked practices," and the couple was "turned out" with "not so much as a house to put [their] heads in." Taken in by a neighbor, Hannah was grieved by the actions of her in-laws, and asked God to forgive them. In this account, Hannah was reprimanded for drawing comfort from God during her difficult labor, an act that should have been an acceptable religious expression. Likewise, Hannah (along with Theophilus and the infant Jonathan) was cast out by her in-laws for admonishing their undefined transgressions.[21] Access to a single version makes interpretation challenging, but Hannah intended the story to illustrate the problems that arise when a believer marries a non-believer, which ultimately equates to insubordination to God's word. In her case, no amount of pious submission could rectify matters, and the problems continued throughout her marriage.

Hannah's diary records domestic arguments, instances where Theophilus refused to let her attend church, periods where he hid her diary, and one occasion when he threw the diary into the mud.[22] More than once, she compared him to the biblical Pharaoh, consequently casting herself in the role of a persecuted child of God. Although Hannah usually declined to describe the specifics of their arguments, on one occasion she reported that her habit of praying in the cow house angered Theophilus so much that upon her return home he angrily stated "I hoped you was dead and if it was so ide yoke up my team and sled you to hell." Some of the discord arose due to Hannah's alignment

[21] Heaton, *Diary*, 3-21.

[22] Barbara E. Lacey, "Introduction," in Hannah Heaton, *The World of Hannah Heaton: The Diary of an Eighteenth Century New England Farm Woman*, ed. Barbara E. Lacey (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), xxii.

with the Separates; Theophilus, when he did attend church, went to the Congregationalist meeting headed by Isaac Stiles. In the interest of appropriate submission, Hannah asked her husband's permission prior to petitioning for membership with the Wallingford Separates; he refused to give permission but did not forbid it either, so she "went forward." [23] Hannah disagreed with Stiles's doctrine, which caused her a good deal of trouble. From Hannah's perspective, she was acting on religious conviction while still maintaining appropriate submission.

An additional source of contention in the Heaton household was Hannah's refusal, willful or otherwise, to integrate into the community. Sometime around 1753, Theophilus rebuked Hannah when she refused to attend a frolic "with a company of neighbours and their wives." He went alone, and upon returning, "his enmity raged" because "other men had wives to go with them" but his had refused. Hannah then wrote: "I have in cold weather gone and stayd in the cellar to get rid of vain company when I know I must not reprove these trials." Later, in June of 1774, Hannah wrote that she "had troublesome company for several days. One of the men was a drunkard," a habit that did not seem to bother her husband or sons. As the man was leaving, Hannah spoke with him about the state of his soul. Soon after that, a stranger lodged with the Heatons over the weekend, and Hannah found that he sympathized with the Separates. She enjoyed his company until she discovered his "extreme apetite for sider," and as he departed she rebuked him for intemperate drinking. In all of these instances, Hannah found fault where Theophilus did not, and she set herself apart by refusing to partake of community activities such as frolics. Moreover, she was intent on discussing the faults of others in hopes that they

[23] Heaton, *Diary*, 118, 191.

might repent. In addition, Hannah was directly rebuked on several occasions by neighbors, invariably for her interpretation of religious orthodoxy.[24] Throughout their 47 year marriage, Hannah's piety was a divisive element between herself and her husband, herself and the community, and by extension, her husband and the community. Theophilus's responses illustrate his disapproval of her behavior, even if she felt supported by religious conviction.

Heaton's experiences as a mother were punctuated by sadness and an unrelenting desire for signs of conversion in her offspring. She gave birth to four children, lost two in infancy, and raised two sons to adulthood. These boys caused her grief due to their lack of piety; her comments on their behavior recall ministerial messages regarding godless children of godly parents. In their youth, Jonathan and Calvin were fond of having a good time and by Hannah's standard, they were also neglectful of religion. By the time Jonathan was 31 and Calvin 20 years old, Heaton remarked that she could not "perceive they ever pray alone." Calvin was fond of frolicks, and once asked his mother to get his clothes ready for a night on the town. Hannah "laboured with him but to no purpose." It is unclear whether or not she readied his clothes, but after praying for his return, he came home early. Not long after that, Calvin asked for money for a Christmas Eve frolick, and after Hannah refused, Theophilus obliged his son's request. Some years later, after an illness, Hannah tried to convert Calvin by asking him why God had allowed him to recover; Calvin and his wife "seemd to have a hearing ear." In the end, however, Calvin and his wife conspired against Theophilus by mortgaging the father's land. The debt was relieved once the matter was exposed, but Hannah and Theophilus were understandably

[24] Ibid., 38, 40-50, 64, 77, 91-92.

upset. Calvin's behavior was attributed by Hannah to a combination of her own sins and the fact that she had married an unconverted man. The implication is that she was directly responsible for Calvin's transgressions, which caused her acute suffering, making his behavior a double-edged sword.

Jonathan's behavior was not as willfully hurtful as Calvin's, but the grief associated with him was at least as painful. In February of 1778 Jonathan's wife Isabel gave birth to a son. She died about a month later due to a spontaneous "purging" accompanied by a fever. During this time, she was attended by Hannah and others, who looked for signals of conversion. Isabel bore her illness and impending death with patience, submission, and a consistent reflection on God and her desire for receipt of his grace. She acknowledged her own unworthiness, and stated that if she died she expected to go to heaven. Hannah took comfort in her daughter-in-law's proper expression of piety in death. However, assurance of a heavenly eternity did not solve the temporal problem of feeding an orphaned newborn and caring for newly widowed Jonathan's house. After much prayer, Hannah rejoiced when a Christian woman from the community came forward to offer wet nursing services.[25]

The boy thrived to become "agrowing well likely child" by the age of three, and he was well loved by his father and his grandparents. This overweening love brought about a reprimand from God, and while in Hannah's care the boy played outside unsupervised; as a consequence, he was crushed to death between several fence rails. Hannah was shocked that "the lord was pleased to take away the desire of our eyes with a stroke," and Theophilus took his grandson's death extremely hard, losing his appetite and

[25]Ibid., 162, 168, 188, 252, 257.

pining after the child. Again, Hannah's actions were a causative factor in the child's death. However, she never acknowledged any negligence on her part by permitting the child to play unsupervised. Rather, her grief was focused on the notion that by loving the boy too much, she had caused his death. Although childcare standards were quite different, and there are many examples of accidental deaths of children (including examples in Hannah's diary) it is interesting to note that temporal causes are connected to the deaths in a tertiary way while divine punishment is almost always cited as the direct cause. There was a fine line between loving care and nurturing and the sort of love which invoked the wrath of a jealous God. Heaton felt she had crossed that line on more than one occasion.

In addition to her grandson's death, Hannah lost two of her own children in early childhood. The loss of a two-year-old daughter was followed within a year by the death of an infant son leaving her grief-stricken, suicidal, and humbled before God. Maternal grief, according to Heaton, was imposed upon her because she was "unsubjected to god in the death of [her] children."[26] Hannah had a premonition of an impending trial, and soon her two-year-old "babe was took with the fever and flux and dyed in about 3 days." Following the advice of a neighbor who encouraged observance of Sabbath the following day, Hannah buried the child at sundown, just a few hours after her death. This decision haunted Hannah, who felt that she should have waited to confirm that the child was really dead. Hannah's grief was compounded by ruminations that her child had died due to her own neglectful mothering. The morning of the death, Heaton washed the girl's "lower

[26] Ibid., 24, 95.

parts" in cold water, which was immediately followed by the "violent fever" that precipitated death.

Hannah believed that because of maternal sin and improper care, she was as responsible for the child's death as if she had "cut off its head." These feelings were attributed to Satanic influence, and she was further tempted to commit suicide by hanging whenever she saw a "convenient place." To make matters worse, Heaton gave birth to a son about eight months later; the infant died suddenly at three weeks. She "mourned bitterly" at first, but was soon "stilld" when God sent "the ague in [her] head and teeth." She believed that her physical suffering represented divine retribution for her refusal to bear the punishing deaths of her children with proper submission and acceptance. Once she realized this, and promised to give up mourning, God removed her physical pain.[27] Hannah's ideas about motherhood closely followed the formula outlined by ministers. Parental sins were manifested in children, and pride could be punished swiftly by death. Moreover, grief was limited and expressions of suffering needed strict confinement within the context of submission to God's will. Heaton's response to her children's deaths shows a definite internalization of contemporary rhetoric that linked parental sin to the punishment of children. Moreover, it suggests a fatalistic worldview wherein the physical actions of humans have little impact on the resolution of problems. Death and illness signaled to Hannah that she was not aligned with God's plan, and that she needed to reform her actions.

Submissive behavior might have been a model Hannah tried to follow, but she still felt compelled to question the authority of ministers as well as the conversion of her neighbors. Like Anne Hutchinson, Heaton was tried by the authorities for

[27]Ibid., 24-25, 48.

insubordination; however, she was not harshly punished and in the end she was welcomed into the Separatist congregation. Living in the time of the Great Awakening, Heaton's experiences with religious orthodoxy suggest changes in religious expression and toleration, especially when compared with her predecessor Anne Hutchinson. Like Hutchinson, Heaton felt empowered to question ministerial authority; however, unlike Hutchinson, Heaton was able to join another congregation within the community. Moreover, after hearing the testimony of other women, the charges were dropped. Later, Hannah faced legal troubles for refusing to attend worship; this time, the charges were dropped. By the time Hannah Heaton rebelled, John Winthrop's version of fundamental truth was diluted by Separatism, and challenges to official religion were markedly less scandalous than Anne Hutchinson's were. Hannah Heaton was not perceived as a great threat to social order; rather, she was fined and sent on her way.

Hannah's habitual questioning of the sainthood of everyone around her caused discord, but her trouble with authority arose primarily from her doctrinal disagreement with Congregationalist minister Isaac Stiles. After visiting with her parents some time around 1750, Hannah returned to North Haven where she set about examining her neighbors and impressing upon them the importance of salvation; many of the neighbors would have none of this and Heaton was ridiculed. Shortly thereafter, she visited Minister Stiles who told her that "if he was perswaded man could do nothing towards his own salvation he would never preach no more and many such things." Thus informed of his doctrinal leanings, Hannah concluded that Stiles's congregation was "out of the rules in god as plain as I could see the sun in a clear day." Hannah "withdrew and never heard

Mr. Stiles no more."[28] This episode suggests that Heaton's version of piety was out of line with lay belief and practice and also with clerical authority.

In 1758, being "poor in body" and suffering with an "ague in [her] head," Hannah was served with a writ and taken away in the rain to stand trial on charges of breaking the Sabbath. Hannah attempted to speak during her trial, but was told to hold her tongue by the presiding justice. Four women gave testimony, two in Hannah's defense and two against her. In the end, the charges were thrown out since none of the women provided sufficient evidence of guilt. When she felt herself to be clear of danger, Heaton broke her silence:

> I spoke and told the justice there was a day acoming when justice would be done. I told him God had said he would execute righteousness and judgment for all that was oppressed. I said there is a dreadful day acoming upon them that have no Christ. The justice tole me I talked sasse and he lookt with a lofty angry countenance. And now my husband being scarred he without consideration payd twelve shillings lawful money to the justice. It was contrary to my mind.

Of course, Theophilus was not pleased at having to pay a fine in addition to enduring disgrace at the hands of his impertinent wife. Her husband's displeasure seems to have troubled Hannah very little, and considering their antagonistic relationship and Hannah's sense of moral rightness, she probably came away from the situation feeling largely untouched. Moreover, she noted that her accusers were later punished with various tragedies, recalling John Winthrop's interpretation of Hutchinson's pregnancy. Later, in 1772, other Separates were prosecuted with punishments ranging from confiscation of property to imprisonment. Hannah related that Mr. Beech's cow was taken even though his "little girl…ran crying after them begging for the cow" and calling the officials

[28] Ibid., 28, 67.

thieves. Hannah further notes that the officials "would not hear the cries of women nor children."[29]

These accounts show that the families of religious nonconformists were also on the receiving end of punishment. Hannah's infraction caused her husband monetary damages in addition to humiliation within the community. Mr. Beech's refusal to conform to religious authority caused his wife and child to lose a source of nourishment. However, in both cases, there is little evidence to show that the offenders themselves suffered a severe or lasting impact of their nonconformity. Somewhat ironic is the fact that Heaton's activity echoes that of Anne Hutchinson; however, in this case, Heaton openly questioned ministerial authority and the basis of salvation, was somewhat supported by her husband, and did not endure significant punishment. Her greatest complaint was being forced to travel in the rain with an ague, and her disagreement over the payment of the fine and lack of remorse suggests that Theophilus suffered as much from the punishment than Hannah did. Moreover, Heaton remained within the community and attended the Separatist congregation. This is a clear change from the circumstances and outcome of the Hutchinson trial. Even if Heaton was not as aggressive as Hutchinson, her challenges to authority and her refusal to integrate into the community were at least as subversive as Hutchinson's doctrinal challenges. Heaton seems to have felt empowered and justified in her actions by her relationship with God, and it is clear that the consequences, while unpleasant, were not as severe as those faced by of Anne Hutchinson and her followers; the events were undoubtedly less scandalous. By Heaton's

[29] Ibid., 81-82, 86, 138-39, 153.

time, Puritan majority had clearly given way to a greater degree of religious toleration as well as a less severe version of punishment for infractions.

Sarah Pierpont Edwards provides a sharp contrast to both Anne Hutchinson and Hannah Heaton. Of the three women, she is also the only one that can be viewed from more than one perspective: Sarah's religious account is available, as are documents which show how she was perceived by others. At the core of all three women's religious experiences was the endorsement of a personal and esoteric relationship with God, but the outcome of their experiences underscores great changes in the religious climate. Moreover, the differences illustrate how a submissive demeanor allowed some women to behave assertively, while others who displayed a bold personality were quickly censured. As the wife of Jonathan Edwards, Sarah was afforded some leeway in religious expression, and she also had a prominent position within the community. She was highly regarded as an exemplary mother and wife, but her own version of things shows quite a different picture.

The Pierpont family was a distinguished one. Sarah's mother was Mary Hooker Pierpont, whose grandfather Thomas Hooker is credited with founding Connecticut. James Pierpont, Sarah's father, was minister of New Haven church for three decades and was also involved in establishing Yale College.[30] Young Sarah caught the attention of Jonathan Edwards, who famously described her as so unconcerned with worldly things that "if you present all the world before her, with the richest of its treasures, she disregards it and cares not for it." Sarah was, to young Jonathan, "the perfectly embodied

[30] Dorothy Z. Baker, "Introduction," in *The Silent and Soft Communion: Spiritual Narratives of Sarah Pierpont Edwards and Sarah Prince Gill*, ed. Sue Lane McCulley and Dorothy Z. Baker (Knoxville: University of Chicago Press, 2005), xii, xvi.

ideal of all that he aspired to be."[31] They married in 1727, when Sarah was about seventeen, making her a young bride. Sarah became a mother the next year with the birth of a daughter, also named Sarah, the Edwardses and went on to bear eleven children altogether. Her exemplary motherhood was rewarded not only by approval from her peers, but also by what might have been interpreted as approval from God: all eleven children survived infancy and lived on to young adulthood. While her daily activities revolved around childrearing and maintaining her household, Sarah's internal dialogue more likely focused on spiritual matters, and she expressed a persistent examination of her soul that was punctuated by religious ecstasy and bouts of depression.

Sarah's religious struggles were acknowledged by her husband, who took her experiences as a sign of sainthood. One of the most prominent and prolific theologians in American history, Jonathan Edwards was the only son in a household that, although headed by his father Timothy, was overwhelmingly female in composition, consisting of a mother and nine sisters.[32] Perhaps this made Jonathan more accepting of an intimate, esoteric, and feminized religiosity in addition to his rather masculine and unflinching doctrinal inclinations. Edwards's female relationships can partially account for his acceptance of revivalism and also for his admiration of Sarah's raptures. Sarah's experiences were rooted in her strong desire for absolute submission to God's will, which she translated as a complete disregard for earthly cares, particularly her discomfort at perceived slights from the townspeople and her own feelings of jealousy towards

[31] George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards, A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 94.

[32] Sarah Pierpont Edwards, "'The Comfortor is come!' The Spiritual Narrative of Sarah Pierpont Edwards," in *The Silent and Soft Communion: Spiritual Narratives of Sarah Pierpont Edwards and Sarah Prince Gill*, ed. Sue Lane McCulley and Dorothy Z. Baker (Knoxville: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 19.

Jonathan's colleagues. A breakthrough was felt by Sarah following a sermon by the itinerant Samuel Buell; and she stayed for several hours to "converse with those who were near me, in a very earnest manner." Likely in the presence of men and women, Sarah's actions were acceptable because of the "extraordinary" circumstances surrounding them.

When Sarah arrived home, she expressed her religious delight through physical acts, leaping and praising God vocally; these outward expressions continued on for several days. Sarah's acts were chronicled by her husband Jonathan as an example of "the highest spiritual standards to which most mature Christians should aspire." Sarah's religious expression may have been similar in some ways to Anne Hutchinson's, but there was a clear distinction between the two: Sarah operated within the proscribed context of submissive and appropriately feminine behavior which Hutchinson had disregarded. In the midst of her spiritual raptures, Sarah did not shirk her domestic role, and she continued her requisite duties of mother and hostess. Clearly, Sarah Edwards was able to reconcile important spiritual activities with more mundane domestic ones in a praiseworthy fashion.

As a testament to her virtues, Mrs. Edwards was admired in print and in portraiture as a woman of godly sensibilities. Jonathan first took notice of her when she was a girl of thirteen, and he presented her with a book personally inscribed with his impressions of her. For Jonathan, Sarah was "the perfectly embodied ideal of all that he aspired to be, the pure spiritual being, sweet tempered, singing sweetly, always full of joy and pleasure." Sarah's success as a mother was evidence by her exceptional children. The Edwards children were well-behaved in part because, according to Samuel Hopkins,

Sarah "had an excellent way of governing her children: she knew how to make them regard and obey her cheerfully, without loud angry words, or heavy blows." The Edwards home was orderly and peaceful, thanks to Sarah's oversight. Itinerant minister George Whitefield, after meeting Sarah, was inspired to pray for a wife of his own.[33] Sarah Edwards provided an example for her husband and children to follow, and she was esteemed for achieving success through strict adherence to the feminine ideal.

A portrait of Sarah attributed to artist Joseph Badger reflects these descriptions and underscores how Sarah was perceived by others. Looking toward but past the viewer, Sarah's expression has a mysterious quality that suggests at once meekness and religious piety; Sarah looks exactly as a submissive godly wife and mother should. Sarah's face is presented as nearly incandescent, and Badger sets it against a muted, dark background for a subtle but dramatic effect. The light in the portrait seems to emanate from Sarah rather than from an external source, and the soft lines of her clothing seem almost cloudlike and suggestive of a heavenly theme. There are none of the earthly objects often seen in portraiture of the period—such as books or trees—accompanying Mrs. Edwards. Her smile portrays both confidence and humility, and embodies the paradoxical nature of Calvinist salvation. The portrait imparts the sense that Sarah was a woman of austere, subdued, and ethereal beauty—a beauty that was drawn not from earthly concerns but rather from a sublime, intimate relationship with God. Joseph Badger, like Sarah's other contemporaries, acknowledged her qualities as an indication of sainthood.

[33] Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 94, 208, 321.

Figure 1. Sarah Pierpont Edwards

Sarah's peaceful countenance stands in stark opposition to the description of Anne Hutchinson's haughty demeanor provided by Governor Winthrop. Although both women expressed their religious beliefs similarly, the two were quite distinctly different. Nearly a hundred years after Hutchinson "stept out of her place," Sarah Edwards was allowed to broaden her role by maintaining a submissive demeanor and producing an exemplary family. Her ability to express her faith vocally and joyfully and to exhort men and women was also a product of a religious climate which had already seen a break from strict norms and which allowed saints the possibility of a personal and subjective relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Despite the idealization of Sarah as an example of feminine piety, submission, and mothering, she did not seem to view herself as a spiritual success, which was quite in line with Calvinist view of sinful nature and conversion. Sarah describes her spiritual

state as a feeling of being "very uneasy and unhappy in being so low in grace." She attempted to rectify this lowness by looking to God for help in gaining a "full and entire rest in him." Part of Sarah's depression stemmed from her worry about her reputation and the way she was viewed by the townspeople; she was also troubled by her desire for "esteem, and love and kind treatment" of her husband Jonathan Edwards.[34] The remainder of her spiritual longing came from Calvinist angst about her soul and from constant remembrance of her own sinfulness and lack of redemption. Sarah longed for communion with God, but her Calvinist beliefs would not allow her to gain comfort from the knowledge that others viewed her very positively, and in fact there is no evidence that she was aware of what others thought of her character. Thus, Sarah Edwards was held in the highest regard for her exemplary behavior while at the same time engaging in an internal castigation that demanded submission to God. Like her husband, Sarah Edwards can be considered a quintessential Calvinist. On the other hand, she often spoke with men and discussed sermons and scripture in a fashion that recalls the teaching of Anne Hutchinson, and she also engaged in an intimate, private, relationship with God. Perhaps it was her position as minister's wife that afforded her special dispensation to conduct herself in a way that had been unacceptable not that long before, but most likely her power resided in her submissive nature: Sarah Edwards did not seek direct power but rather perfected the role of submissive mother and wife. She operated under the authority of her husband as something of an unofficial deputy minister, and was therefore an extension of his authority rather than an independent actor.

In the century that passed between Anne Hutchinson and Sarah Edwards, New England was transformed from a homogenous, primarily religious landscape to a culture

[34] McCulley, *The Silent and Soft Communion*, 1.

that began to permit a somewhat tolerant religious climate. Likewise, the lives of women changed, as did the feminine identity and the power inherent to motherhood. What remained was the disparity between the feminine sense of self and the public perception of appropriate female behavior. The primary role of colonial women was motherhood, and a woman's success was evaluated in large part through her performance as a mother. Women occupied a gender-specific space, and when women ventured outside that space, results varied.

Anne Hutchinson's brash confidence was utterly rejected by authority, but her opinions were not successfully reduced; Hutchinson had a strong sense of self that was irreconcilable with communal values. Moreover, although maternal motifs were used to describe her impropriety, Hutchinson herself did not seem to focus on her role as a mother, although there is some evidence that she capitalized on her position in the female community to gain a following. According to John Winthrop, Anne Hutchinson did not conform to a positive version of colonial motherhood, even though it is clear she felt justified in her behavior. In the end, she was punished as a mother both spiritually and temporally—she was separated from her children while jailed and later, removed from the community of women through official exile to Rhode Island. She was finally and symbolically ostracized from the body of fruitful mothers when she birthed a monstrous infant. Although Anne Hutchinson may have felt that she was acting within the boundaries of mothering appropriate for her age and social status, as Michael Winship suggests, that mattered little because she was not authorized to interpret her own behavior. That was a right reserved for masculine authority. Colonial women had power

through motherhood, but that power was not limitless, and certainly not when the woman in question refused to conform to Puritan notions of submission.

Hannah Heaton firmly believed that she was behaving in an appropriately pious and submissive fashion, at least as far as her marital and social relationships were concerned. Her family and her community disagreed, and as a consequence the Heaton household was prone to strife. Hannah herself was subject to censure. Throughout her diary Heaton felt herself the object of divine recrimination—not for the lack of submission that others clearly noted in her behavior, but for her failures as a mother. By loving her children and grandchildren too much, Heaton incurred the wrath of God which resulted in death and maternal grief. Her decision to marry an unconverted man resulted in disrespectful sons who did not conform to her religious standard. The death of two babies and one grandson along with the misbehavior of her unconverted sons were Hannah's greatest sorrows, and she attributed these to her own failings. Thus, despite conforming to traditional versions of piety, Hannah Heaton was the recipient of divine and secular punishments. Moreover, Hannah's piety was not in keeping with the somewhat relaxed religiosity of the period. Unlike Hutchinson, Heaton sought a stricter religious expression. Hannah's ideas about what it meant to be a mother were closely aligned with values set forth by ministers, and she does not seem to have been criticized by others for her maternal behavior. Her actions as a wife, conversely, suggest that she felt duly empowered to circumvent her husband's authority. Theophilus probably would not have called her a submissive wife.

Finally, Sarah Edwards was perceived by her male peers as an embodiment of the feminine ideal, both as a wife and a mother. However, her own writings show that she

consistently felt an inadequacy that, while reflecting her own religious conviction, was inconsistent with her characterization by others. Sarah Edwards seems to have been the only one of the three women who was esteemed by her peers; however, she cited rejection by her fellow church members as a cause of anxiety. Like the other women, Sarah also participated in an intimate relationship with God, but unlike the others she was not subjected to an official trial or to legal punishment. Sarah does not seem to have been directly censured by the community, nor did she note a sense of divine punishment on par with that noted by Hannah Heaton. Sarah Pierpont Edwards's internal dialogue, however, shows a cycle of harsh self-castigation alternating with ecstatic worship. Her preoccupation with the opinion of her husband and the community suggests that she looked outward as well as inward for a sign of conversion: rejection by the community, for Sarah Edwards, indicated that she was not a saint.

The women examined here show us how women felt about themselves, their mothering, and their own place within a changing culture. The responses of others to their actions also reveal that women did have power, but that in order to exercise it effectively, they needed to conform to the strong image of submission associated with Calvinist sainthood. Considered together, these women offer an opportunity to perceive the changes that impacted women in subtle and obvious ways. Most striking are the differences in the women's abilities to express themselves spiritually. In addition, the lives of Anne, Hannah and Sarah show us that women were definitely subject to masculine authority but not necessarily subjugated by it. Anne Hutchinson refused outright to submit, and she had little regard for the consequences, which shows a clear and unmistakable exercise of authority that probably arose from the community of

women that fostered the start of Anne's conventicles. Hannah Heaton cited God as her source of power, and did not hesitate to question ministerial authority. Likewise, Sarah Edwards drew her power from a personal relationship with God; her spiritual performance was also a reflection of her husband Jonathan's position in the community. Her male peers readily identified the primary indicator of Sarah's sainthood: her exemplary mothering.

The behavior the women examined here suggests that women did have power in New England. Because all of the women, including the infanticides, acted within a culture whose government was religious, their rebellions, crimes, and various interpretations of religious efficacy can be defined not just as misbehavior, but also as political acts of varying subtlety and success. Politics and political acts are defined most simply as an individual's access to and exercise of authority and power. In New England, there were several ways a woman might act politically. Due to coverture, women seeking to exercise power could do so by aligning their actions with the authority of their husbands, as Sarah Edwards did. Or, they could act as discrete individuals whose power was supported by God or by the authority associated with motherhood and the community of women, as was the case of Hannah Heaton and Anne Hutchinson. When women acted completely outside of these boundaries and spurned all three sources of power, as the infanticides did, there was no basis for their actions, and the result was permanent removal from society via execution. By the time of the Revolution, women had already been performing politically in the ways afforded them by the culture. Thus, republican motherhood was not necessarily the first foray of women into the political

sphere but a reconsideration of how feminine power fit into the new politics of the republic.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Revolution in Motherhood

The American Revolution was, to say the least, a pivotal turn of events. The war and its accompanying social and political changes had different meanings for men and women. The Revolutionary War was not confined to New England, of course, and the experiences of women throughout the region were similar. Writings of women in Pennsylvania reflected the experiences of women in the British colonies. During the Revolutionary period women began articulating a political identity that, while based on female domestic identity, also differed from the traditional maternal ideal. The gradual movement away from the nurturing, empowering female community that permeated the early colonial period caused women to reexamine traditional identities and consider the possibility of a political role for women. Perhaps one reason that early colonial women did not rally for what was later termed women's rights was because the existence of a powerful female community partially mitigated the need for female agitation. The religious nature of early New England culture also discouraged women from seeking active political participation; to do so would indicate rebellion against the divine hierarchy which placed men over women. Ideological changes in religion, philosophy, and medicine seen throughout the seventeenth century created a new cultural milieu wherein the female community shrank, cultural values began to encompass democracy, and the roles of both genders were inexorably changed. The female sense of self was forever altered as women entered the Revolutionary period as colonial housewives and emerged citizens of a nation centered in freedom, equality, and civic virtue. For some

women, the new American identity included a radically expansive maternal duty that carried with it political power and obligation; for others, it simply meant a subtle re-imagining of traditional domesticity.

In response to changing cultural values, women incorporated patriotism into their lives. "The republican mother," according to historian Linda Kerber, "integrated political values into her domestic life" so that domesticity and "private female virtues might comfortably coexist with the civic virtue that was widely regarded as the cement of the Republic." The goals of republican motherhood were accomplished primarily through rearing of productive male citizens who would act in the public sphere. The emergence of a politicized version of motherhood is well documented, but republican motherhood did not only represent an indirect female entrance into the public sphere—New England mothers already occupied a place there. Nor did the notion of republican motherhood simply rearrange "the female domain in which most women had always lived out their lives" or justify "women's absorption and participation in the civic culture." [1] Rather, republican motherhood seems more of an adaptation to changes in a culture that already expected female participation—it represented the absorption of civic virtue into the preexisting community of women. Already responsible for the religious success of children and for the implications of substandard parenting, mothers now recognized a need for secular success as well. For girls, this was expressed in new standards of education and literacy, and mothering of sons included a focus on fostering successful manhood in the new republic.

[1] Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 284.

During the Revolution, women were politicized through their experiences and participation. The war was fought on American soil, but it also involved the physical bodies of women, who were directly impacted by mandatory quartering of soldiers, loss of property, and the possibility of rape by British soldiers. In addition, women were in many cases forced align themselves with the politics of their husbands, whether they shared those politics or not. Women participated in political activism by altering consumption of consumer goods, and they did so in a purposeful, organized fashion. They provided support for the Continental army, including nursing and domestic duties, and were an annoyance to George Washington, who complained many times that they slowed the army's travel.[2] Wartime women recognized the immediacy of the British threat, and they addressed this threat chiefly through empowered domesticity. Due to wartime experiences, many women emerged with a different understanding of their place in the newly formed republic. The average New England woman had for some time recognized that bearing godly children and rearing them properly for the greater good of the community was her most important job. Ministers knew it as well—they praised women for raising productive citizens and castigated them for raising godless children. Republican motherhood, therefore, did not represent a sharp change in the roles of women so much as a redefining of what it meant to be a productive citizen. Godliness was still important, but citizens of the United States also needed to perform within the model of republicanism that emerged in postwar New England.

While seventeenth-century New England women gained power through submissive behavior, their eighteenth-century counterparts took a more direct route

[2] Ibid., 51-60.

which was still closely aligned with domesticity. The Stamp Act caused indignation throughout the colonies, and resulted in a boycott of British goods. As domestic consumers, women actively participated in the boycott, and groups were organized to produce goods such as homespun fabric. Since the colonies were an important revenue source for England, colonial power lay not only in masculine rhetorical bluster, but also in the practical refusal to purchase British goods or services requiring the odious tax stamp. Propaganda published in the form of verse reminded women that their political efficacy was situated firmly within the domestic realm, where power was formed and displayed in a woman's clothing and her selection of consumer goods. The Stamp Act was repealed, of course, and the colonists soon learned that "united action was more effective than individual responses, and nonimportation and noncomsumption were the most powerful weapons in their arsenal of resistance." Thus, the female sense of efficacy moved away from the submissive paradigm and toward a politicized version of power. To be clear, women were not radicalized overnight, and female political participation was still contextualized within the domestic realm—women were still doing what women were supposed to do. But a shift occurred, and the possibility of an active, independent feminine self was initiated.

Women throughout the colonies, consciously or unconsciously, moved toward a new politicized version of womanhood. Responding to the Tea Act of 1773, a group of Boston women published their intention to abstain from tea as a show of solidarity "with the very respectable Body of Merchants and other Inhabitants" of the town who had determined to do the same. Likewise, North Carolina women pledged to boycott British goods by signing a petition and designating themselves the Ladies' Patriotic Guild.

Women not only felt that something should be done in response to British policy, they felt compelled to act. In addition to boycotts, colonial women participated in "spinning bees," which "transformed what was traditionally a solitary activity into a group effort."[3] Recalling the empowering community of women, members of the spinning bees were typically unmarried young women from wealthy families, although married mothers also participated as their domestic duties allowed.

Like their masculine counterparts, women published articles representing feminine politicization, though they usually did so anonymously. Signed simply "an American Woman," a piece now attributed to Esther DeBerdt Reed, encouraged colonial women to follow the example of their forebears who were "born for Liberty" by setting aside feminine weakness in favor of patriotism. As the first lady of Pennsylvania, Esther Reed founded the Ladies of Philadelphia, a women's group that provided fundraising and domestic support for General George Washington's troops. In support of her cause, Reed stated:

> On the commencement of actual war, the Women of America manifested a firm resolution to contribute as much as could depend on them, to the deliverance of their country. Animated by the purest patriotism, they are sensible of sorrow at this day, in not offering more than barren wishes for the success of so glorious a Revolution. They aspire to render themselves more really useful; and this sentiment is universal from the north to the south of the Thirteen United States.[4]

Evoking the barren womb as a metaphor for inaction, Reed articulated a desire for participation that she believed was universal to women in the colonies. Reed offered women active political participation modeled on and justified by the activities of women

[3] Carol Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America's Independence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 12-15, 18, 21.

[4] [Esther DeBerdt Reed?], *The Sentiments of an American Woman* (Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1780), 1.

portrayed in the Bible and in antiquity: the fictional Roman Volumnia, the biblical Esther, and the mother of the Macabees among others, all of whom achieved notoriety through their relationships with men and within the boundaries of acceptable female behavior. Reed asserted that women should be just as interested in the public good as their male contemporaries because, just like men, women were impacted by British policy and the impending war. As justification for female ambition, Reed suggested that women recall female sovereigns such as Elizabeth and Catharine. Furthermore, asserted Reed, women were indebted to soldiers:

> If I live happy in the midst of my family; if my husband cultivates his field, and reaps his harvest in peace; if, surrounded with my children, I myself nourish the youngest, and press it to my bosom, without being affraid of seeing myself separated from it, by a ferocious enemy; if the house in which we dwell; if our barns, our orchards are safe at the present time from the hands of those incendiaries, it is to you that we owe it.

Women could repay this debt by "renounc[ing] with the highest pleasure those vain ornaments" including clothing and elegant hairstyles.[5] By expressing these sentiments, Reed not only purported to speak for the community of women, she also called on female patriotic fervor because, after all, women ought to support the troops through sacrifice. Should women falter in their support, consequences included not only an affront to peace and liberty, but also a direct and barbaric attack upon the bonds of maternity and family. By supporting the war effort, women supported the safety of their homes and their children.

Sacrifice and outright deprivation accompany war, and whether through voluntary change in style of dress and consumption of goods or by forceful encroachment onto their property and bodies, women of all classes found themselves facing an array of hardships.

[5] Ibid.

Plundering of property by the enemy was certainly problematic, and personal possessions including clothing, food, and livestock were taken by British (and probably also American) soldiers. Homes and barns were burnt to the ground. However, attacks upon the bodies of women—an act that men often considered a spoil of war—degraded the perception of feminine chastity as well as the feminine sense of self on both a personal and a communal level. According to Sharon Block, "tales of rape provided a forum for the creation of a national community of aggrieved American citizens."[6] Although it is unclear how common rape actually was, it is likely that the very idea of rape was a source of anxiety for both men and women. During the Revolution, women found that war was waged not only on the battlefield but also squarely within the domestic realm of home, family, and the female body. Homes and property were destroyed, women and young girls were raped, and civilians were murdered. To make matters worse, women were subjected to the very intimate domestic intrusion associated with quartering of soldiers from both armies. Women were required to house strange male soldiers, to provide them with food, to launder their clothes, and to tolerate barbaric behavior ranging from cursing and drunkenness to rape. Finally, sons, husbands, fathers, and brothers joined the fighting, leaving women alone and vulnerable. Women reacted to these experiences in different ways, but an awareness of female vulnerability was a common theme.

Writing during the Revolutionary period, Hannah Heaton noted alarm as the British approached. The army arrived intending to "burn the town," an attempt that was thwarted by "a good God." The British, however, "burnt a few stores abused women plundered houses carried off what they pleased." Nearby, they destroyed other buildings,

[6] Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 230.

took prisoners of war, and killed 36 men. Hannah was distraught as she considered "how quick they would be in [her] house."[7] Heaton's dismay is clear, but she was not only worried about the loss of property. The British had abused the women in town—they would undoubtedly abuse her as well. Although she does not explicitly name rape, her meaning is clear. Moreover, her statement about the soldiers' behavior suggests that abuses of women were on the same level as plundering houses but not as serious as burning the whole town, and although God stopped the town from being burned, he did not keep the women safe. Hannah was well aware of the possibility that she too would suffer humiliation at the hands of the British, including the plundering of her own body.

Fear of rape and the intrusion of soldiers into the home were not confined to New England or to adult women. For Sally Wister, a sixteen-year-old Quaker living outside Philadelphia, the war also brought excitement and alarm. The comings and goings of soldiers was commented on throughout her diary, and there was a distinct undercurrent of anxiety brought on by the distant sound of cannons and the presence of a great number of men. Sally's diary is punctuated by terrifying moments, mostly related to male behavior, such as when "a large number of wagons, with about three hundred of the Philadelphia Militia" arrived at Sally's home. One "saucy" soldier entered the house, which caused great alarm until Sally determined that the officers were "gentlemanly, and the soldiers civil." Later, when Sally and her family quartered General Smallwood and his troops, she noted that her fear regarding the large number of men dissipated once she realized the men were peaceable in character. In fact, once Sally determined that the men meant no harm, she became rather comfortable with nineteen-year-old Major William Stoddert, and

[7] Hannah Heaton, *The World of Hannah Heaton: The Diary of an Eighteenth Century New England Farm Woman*, ed. Barbara E. Lacey (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003),194.

implied that a romantic attraction was felt by both parties. Although Sally was quite frightened by the sounds of war which surrounded the house, her comments also acknowledge what men were capable of doing to women. Never mentioned directly, rape was always a possibility, and one which was assuaged once gentlemanly behavior was exhibited. Sally was acutely aware that men were both protectors and perpetrators.[8] The experiences of Sally Wister and Hannah Heaton suggest universal concerns among women throughout the countryside.

For Americans, rape was a complex issue. While it may have been a direct physical assault on the female body, rape was also an affront to patriarchy as well as a vehicle for forced motherhood. Traditionally, allegations of rape included the possibility of consent on the woman's part. However, in the Revolutionary period, this element disappeared from propaganda, replaced by commentary on the emasculating effects of rape on husbands and fathers. In fiction of the period, the damages that rape caused men were remarked on more directly than the implications for women. For instance, one anecdote relates the story of a young man who intended to kidnap, rape, and marry a young woman. Hearing of this plan, the victim's brother dressed as a girl and allowed himself to be kidnapped instead. Once inside the kidnapper's home, he was put to bed with the kidnapper's sister, who he raped and impregnated. The impregnator—or so-called "hero"—was "honourably acquitted," while the scheming kidnapper and his unfortunate sister were left to their misery and mortification.[9] The story focused on

[8] Sally Wister, *Sally Wister's Journal: A True Narrative being a Quaker Maiden's Account of Her Experiences with Officers of the Continental Army, 1777-1778*, ed. Albert Cook Myers (Philadelphia: Ferris & Leach, 1902), 66-81.

[9] Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 212, 236.

damages to the man, however, one cannot escape the obvious grief faced by the impregnated sister, who bore humiliation not only on behalf of her brother, but also suffered forced motherhood to an illegitimate child. This fictional account shows that while rape caused injury to masculine pride, there were very real and physical consequences for women, something that was not lost on female readers.

In the Revolutionary period, New Englanders were well aware that forced motherhood was one possible outcome of rape. Immediate physical protection of wives and daughters was certainly a concern, but lurking in the background of the politicized rhetoric of rape was the possibility that wives and daughters could mother the children of British rapists. On an ideological level, this possibility attacked masculinity, male prerogative, patriarchy, and maternity, but in practical terms impregnation through rape meant that women were forced to bear and, along with men, rear children and possibly grandchildren who were the physical embodiment of British tyranny. Certainly, this was a horrific outcome for men and women alike to contemplate. As a result of the physical and ideological consequences of rape, mothering bodies became a symbolic battlefield where American masculine virtue conquered British barbarism. New England men needed to protect themselves and their families from the figurative illegitimacy of British rule and the literal illegitimacy of children fathered by British rapists.

Rape's physical impact was obvious, but the rhetorical power of rape also allowed propagandists to cast America as a chaste female in need of masculine protection. Men were responsible for the chastity of their wives and daughters, but they were also defenders of the virgin republic's honor. Sharon Block has argued that "rape-related stories pitted the upstanding American male citizenry against corrupt British rule and

made rape a powerful rallying cry for a new American nation." Ministerial rhetoric cast men as defenders of female virtue, giving the argument a religious dimension. By using rape as a reminder of Britain's tyranny, men were called upon to avenge not only their wives and daughters but also to put an end—once and for all—to what was considered illegitimate British rule in the colonies. In addition, "defense against rape thus became a means to define the privileges and responsibilities of American [male] citizenry."[10] No longer was submissive behavior on the part of men favorable, and the notion of spiritual mothering gave way to a call to arms in defense of women and a feminized American continent. Maternity and maternal bodies, both literal and figurative, were part of the emerging civic virtue that belonged to fathers as well as mothers. When men fought against British rule, they fought to protect home and family, even if that protection was sometimes outlined in a rhetoric that seems remarkably sexist today. Rhetoric surrounding rape incorporated motherhood into the political discourse, resulting in politicization of maternity for both men and women.

In addition to rape, other deprivations and apprehensions associated with war intruded into the everyday lives of women. For mothers, the sacrifice of sons to the war effort was a source of pain and pride. Hannah Heaton noted the impact of war on her family, including maternal sadness when her misbehaving sons joined the army. Jonathan joined the troops in 1772, and Hannah was troubled because, in her opinion, he had not lived a godly life. In January of 1777, Hannah noted that Calvin went to New York to join "our army."[11] Hannah simply stated: "now I felt a still mind. O god help me give him

[10] Block, *Rape and Sexual Power*, 212.

[11] Heaton, *Diary*, 134-35, 179, 212.

up to thee and leave him with thee wheather in life or death. God be gracious to thee my son. Fareweel." By February Hannah prayed that "God would keep [Calvin]from sin and all evil and if it was his honour and glory he would spare his life and cause him to return again to us." Considering her grief at the earlier loss of her infants, Hannah was probably hesitant to express too much love for Calvin; however, it is clear that she feared not only for his life but for his soul. Around the same time, Hannah "kept a fast alone for [herself] and family and for New England." Hannah dreamt of telling her sons "to pray to god that they might live threw this deluge of war for when it was over …there would be greater glory seen in New England than ever was before." Hannah's entries suggest that she recognized a contribution to the war through the production of sons, and she probably felt that her prayers contributed to the cause as well. For mothers, the contribution of sons to the war was a source of both pain and pride.

Like the remainder of Heaton's diary, the events of the American Revolution were noted in relation to religious belief and the notion of a punishing God. Writing in April 1775, Hannah noted fighting in Boston which resulted in the death of many men. She continued, stating that "our nation…are the wickedest nation on earth because wee have abused our great privilidges." She continued, stating that "has king George forfeited his coronation oath. O does lord north govern king and parliament and must he govern America too by papist laws."[12] Contextualized in religious terms, Heaton's comments show an awareness of what was going on in the political realm. She believed that the actions of British rulers had dire consequences for America, including the ultimate insult of popery. The events of the Revolution, of course, were not afforded religious

[12]Ibid., 159, 160, 170, 180. Heaton also noted fasting in January 1776, this time for the rulers who, while proposing war for secular liberty, had simultaneously prohibited Separate worship.

importance only by Hannah Heaton. She noted sermons which expounded on British rule as a retribution for New England's transgressions. In July 1777 she heard a sermon which focused on sleeping sinners as receiving God's punishment in the form of "old England against us and they have hired a foreign nation to come against us blood running canons roaring and yet asleep."[13] Hannah Heaton was aware of war and the associated politics, and she was interested in such matters, if only in relation to her own piety and the war's impact on her family. Hannah's belief that recent events were a sign of God's wrath translated into constant worry that her spiritually deficient sons were candidates for God's punishment. Despite that, Hannah hoped God would use her sons and the other soldiers for his divine purpose, including the prevention of rule by godless papists. Hannah probably felt some form of participation through her constant intercession for New England's salvation, although she probably would not have considered this political in nature.

Like their New England counterparts, Pennsylvania women found that the vicissitudes of war regularly intruded into everyday life, disrupting society and resulting in macabre displays. In a letter dated January 1777, Deborah Norris wrote Sally Wister to report on the state of affairs in Philadelphia. The city was full of the corpses of soldiers, who were buried unceremoniously, forty or fifty coffins at once, in "large pits… in the negroes burying ground." Living soldiers were "quartered on private families" creating a "great hardship" which was not imposed on Deborah's family[14] In an undated letter thought to be written in 1778, Norris mentions "the Event" which left her incredulous;

---

[13] Ibid., 183.

[14] Deborah Norris, "Letter to Sally Wister," in *Sally Wister's Journal*, ed. Albert Cook Myers (New York: New York Times & Arno Press, 1969). 189-90.

this was perhaps the evacuation of the British from Philadelphia, which meant that Sally could return to the city. After a somewhat cryptic intimation of wartime news obtained from an officer who was quartered in the Norris home, Deborah urges Sally "not to enter on any Political disquisitions with us; it is not our province, and will only serve to create disagreeable sensations." Expressing joy at the possibility of Sally's return, Deborah offers a physical description of her "rather thinner" self that was quite different than the previous months' "best height of…plumpness."[15] Some social boundaries might have been breached, anxiety or hunger might have caused Deborah to become a thinner version of herself, and death and destruction may have been present on a grand scale, but for Deborah Norris, political discourse remained off limits. Women may not have been in a position to express political ideology, but they were certainly in a position to reflect the deprivations of wartime. In private communications and public manifesto, women articulated an awareness of an inaccessible political sphere.

Women were also forced, in some cases, to side with the political associations of their husbands. Along with their children, wives of British loyalists were expelled or divested of property. Tory wives were especially suspicious and subject to community censure in the form of robbery and plunder. In New York, some tory wives were suspected of supporting their husbands, whom authorities believed to be hiding in the woods; these wives were ultimately jailed and later expelled. Similarly, wives in Philadelphia and Newark were also removed based on the assumption that they were aligned with their husband's political beliefs. In some cases of expulsion, the community of patriot women argued against the removal of tory wives. In other instances, women

[15] Ibid., 194.

from the community were selected to examine the wives of British loyalists.[16] Thus, women were propelled toward politicization through wartime necessity. Wives of the opposing side could not be trusted, and were therefore impacted directly by politics, not just wartime deprivations directly associated with fighting.

The challenges facing Revolutionary-era women were not commensurate with the resources available for resolution—something that undoubtedly left them feeling powerless and frightened. The structured environment of Calvinist New England evaporated during wartime, and women's lives were marked by a different set of worries that extended beyond childbirth. Although they participated in the war by providing sons for the army, boycotting British goods, and being associated with the politics of their husbands, women had little control over happenings in the male-dominated public sphere. As a civil war, the Revolution created a divisive environment, even among the community of women as friends were reviled or expelled due to perceived political alignment. But the fighting was not confined to the public sphere. It occurred in homes, in churches, in towns and in the country; it could even invade the physical bodies of women to impose devastation on postwar domesticity and family life. Republican motherhood offered women a means of relieving the anxiety that came from wartime disfranchisement. By raising virtuous sons, women could enact change in the emerging nation. Educated daughters, in turn, would raise their own children. Mothers who had always raised godly children for the good of the community now widened their efforts to ensure that their offspring could function in the new cultural terrain. Women wanted to continue their wartime political participation in the postwar period, and they naturally drew on their most recognizable power: motherhood.

[16] Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 51-54.

Although early colonial women enjoyed some authority and freedom within a culture that valued motherhood and submission, women in the Revolutionary period found themselves in a different situation. The wartime environment forced nearly everyone, in some way, to discard normal life and adopt a combative attitude. Women no longer accessed power through proper submissive behavior, and the notion of masculine spiritual mothering was displaced by a more modern masculine sensibility that cast men as soldiers of Christ rather than nurturers. Revolutionary men were in charge of securing and protecting the newborn nation as well as their womenfolk. New ideas presented by writers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Mary Wollstonecraft and others created fertile ground for discourse about religion, gender, and the human condition in general. Coupled with emerging ideas about science—particularly medicine—ideological changes gave New Englanders a new version of goodness with which to align themselves. Revolutionary Motherhood logically emerged from a generation of women who perceived themselves as mothers not only of their own children, but also to the emerging nation. Just as men needed to protect, women needed to nurture and mother through political participation.

Before the Revolution, changes in religion ushered in by George Whitefield and others placed additional responsibility on the individual. No longer was it sufficient to simply watch and wait for signs of conversion; new ideas about salvation meant that believers, including women, could partake in a more active relationship with God. Moreover, perceived failures in parenting (and especially mothering) which ministers connected to misbehaving young people in the period preceding the Great Awakening also shaped perceptions about the role and performance of mothers. Bolstered by the

Glorious Revolution and by localized events such as the Yale apostasy, religious pluralism and toleration gradually became a part of New England culture. Women such as Hannah Heaton had options when it came to worship, and although there were consequences for assertive behavior, they were in no way as severe as those doled out a century before to heretics such as Anne Hutchinson. Idealized motherhood persisted as a signal of conversion, as evidenced by writings about Sarah Pierpont Edwards. Likewise, Sarah Edwards's own account supports a female internalization of Calvinist rhetoric that disallowed spiritual efficacy. Old Calvinist notions of human depravity were not easily reconciled with the new religious options or with the American sense of individualism and self determination. For New England women, the eighteenth century brought about many changes, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century, as Linda Kerber has pointed out, women could contribute by producing educated, spiritual, and productive male citizens through the role of republican mother. Effective mothering was integral to the success of the emerging nation, both spiritually and politically.

While the first few generations of New England women may have enjoyed the benefits of Calvinism's feminized and passive salvation, their successors found themselves subject to a different view of femininity. Changes in ideas about motherhood are partially explained by the shift in Protestant religious belief. While Linda Kerber demonstrates that maternal roles changed by 1800 to include the notion that women, as republican mothers, should prepare sons for proper citizenship, maternal authority also lost ground to male physicians and an increasingly masculine oversight of childbirth and infant care. The displacement of a strict endorsement of Calvinist predestination with a somewhat democratic means of salvation was reflected not only in political culture, but

also in gender ideology. For Calvinists, conversion could be passed "through the loyns of godly parents," as Increase Mather noted in 1685, a belief that made women just as responsible for the state of their children's souls as men.[17] However, this belief lost relevancy as Calvinism gave way to the notion that salvation was received through an active acceptance of Christ. Female rituals such as childbirth and the childbed vigil, where women sought to determine the status of the laboring mother's soul, lost religious immediacy. Once the need to determine the state of a woman's soul was discarded, childbirth was open to becoming a secular, sterile process that shifted away from midwives and toward trained physicians and hospitals. Likewise, feminine submission became somewhat devalued in a culture where submission was no longer vitally necessary for salvation; masculine submission, especially after the war, retained very little value. The possibility of an active participation in salvation was quite a contrast to the feminine, submissive nature of Calvinist conversion.

By the mid-eighteenth century, beliefs about the body and medicine were changing, and as Laqueur points out, by 1800 notions about the body had shifted towards a one-sex model. Medical practices surrounding childbirth also changed, albeit slowly, as did attitudes toward death. Puritan influence on ideas and rituals surrounding death remained visible in the culture into the era of the Great Awakening, but by the 1740s, traditional Puritanism had been firmly displaced, along with "the Puritan way of death."[18] By 1800, religious pluralism was fairly well established throughout New England.

---

[17] Increase Mather, *A Call From Heaven to the Present and Succeeding Generations* (Boston: 1685), 65.

[18] David E. Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977),146-47.

Moreover, by 1800 midwifery was giving way to male dominated obstetrics, which women were excluded from entering.[19] Male-authored materials on childbirth and nursing became more commonplace in the late eighteenth century, indicating that practices were now not only under male scrutiny, but also subject to masculine authority and opinion.[20] The religious feminization of the male body gave way to overtly masculine motifs—brides of Christ were transformed into soldiers of Christ.[21] Feminine submission had lost its association with salvation, and as a result, its authority in the church and home. Thus, a decidedly masculine patriarchy became the norm in New England society.

The precise end of the American Puritanism is open to interpretation, and the shift away from staunch Calvinism to religious pluralism occurred gradually. The Halfway Covenant of 1662 meant that church membership was open to those awaiting conversion, not only confirmed saints. Later, the Glorious Revolution (1688-89) united Protestants against a larger Catholic menace, and meant that New Englanders identified with a larger, worldwide "Protestant interest" rather than a localized, denominational, or doctrinal one.[22] The Dominion of New England (1685-89) placed the colonies under English authority and included an endorsement of the Church of England, which helped

---

[19] Catherine M. Scholten, "'on the Importance of the Obstetrick Art': Changing Customs of Childbirth in America, 1760 to 1825," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (July 1977): 444-45.

[20] For publications by male physicians, see W. Cadogan, *An essay upon nursing and the management of children, from their birth to three years of age*, (Boston, 1772).; Michael Underwood, *A treatise on the dieases of children, with general directions for the management of infants from the birth*, (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1793).; Hugh Smith, *Letters to married women, on nursing and the management of children*, (Philadephia: Mathew Carey, 1792).; Elisha Cullen Dick, *Doctor Dick's instructions for the nursing and management of lying-in-women: with some remarks concerning the treatment of new-born infants*, (Alexandria: John Thomas, 1793).

[21] Dillon, "Nursing Fathers and Brides of Christ,"138.

[22] Thomas S. Kidd, *The Protestant Interest: New England after Puritanism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

neutralize the exclusivity of Puritanism in New England. In 1691, religious toleration was extended to Massachusetts along with the attachment of voting rights to property holders rather than church members.[23] By 1700, Puritan power in New England was declining, and by the Great Awakening in 1740, American culture was quite different than it had been one hundred years before. Egalitarianism was in the air, manifested religiously in unstructured revivals where men and women mingled freely to receive the outpouring of the Spirit. From this spiritual milieu—with more forcefully voiced ideas about gender, religion, and race—emerged the generation which would lead America toward revolution. The rather radical notions emerging from women writers of the Revolutionary period suggest that women sought to enter the masculine world of political efficacy. But seventeenth and eighteenth century literature reveals that well before that time, it was men who looked for some measure of participation in the feminine community by incorporating the role of wife and mother into religious worship. The era of colonial New England was a period wherein goodwives, though subject to masculine authority, were also empowered through expansive and important nurturing associated with maternity. During this period, men sought to penetrate the female community in subtle ways. For New England Calvinists, most notably the Puritans, a feminized relationship with Christ and its attendant motherhood was not only celebrated and appreciated, it was co-opted by men as a vehicle for submission and receipt of God's grace.

The eighteenth century saw dramatic and seemingly rapid changes for New Englanders. The roles of women seemed to change drastically in part due to a new conception of self. Goodness, though still strongly associated with godliness, was now

[23] Joseph A Conforti, *Saints and Stranger: New England in British North America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 121.

altered to include a consideration of the pluralistic religious climate along with changes in demographics. There were new kinds of people, new kinds of religion, and perhaps most importantly, the emerging notion that mankind might not be quite as depraved as Calvinists had long envisioned. Changes in cultural ideology that included a movement toward secularized values were gradual, but what they meant for women was that the role of motherhood needed restructuring. A feminine identity that was conceived strictly in relation to God and a hierarchical marriage was questioned but not discarded, while female submission lost ground to an increasingly proactive worldview. Changes in medicine meant that women could now, with the help of men, gain control over the pain and fear inherent to childbirth, and perhaps even over reproduction.

By 1800, feminine power was in a state of transition. Female authority associated with the childbed ritual was conceded to men in exchange for forceps and anesthesia. During wartime, the female community directly participated in political activism via boycotts and spinning bees. In the century following the Revolution, the community of women gradually began to address wider social issues, including those associated with motherhood and the domestic realm through increasingly controversial versions of female activism. Women expressed dissatisfaction with their social position and demanded change during the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, and later during the Woman Suffrage and Temperance movements.[24] Like their male counterparts, women living in the post-Revolutionary era struggled to understand how they could best contribute to the new society that both genders had fought to achieve. A reconfiguration of traditional

[24] The activities of women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are explored in the following studies: Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2, (Summer, 1966):151-174. Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 2nd ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2000), passim. Mary Beth Norton and Ruth M. Alexander, ed., *Major Problems in American Women's History: Documents and Essays*, 3rd ed. (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company: 2003).

motherhood was the most direct and sustainable route. Hannah Heaton, Martha Ballard, and even Anne Hutchinson would probably all have readily identified the ideals associated with republican motherhood as an obvious progression of what mothers had been doing all along.

The possibility that matters such as birth, death, conversion, and reproduction might be controlled by someone besides God was truly innovative. Likewise, the idea that religious piety did not singularly equate to productive citizenship was a radical departure from earlier values. Republican motherhood was new primarily because it offered women a valid means of incorporating all of these new ideas into an identity that still allowed for meaningful childrearing. It also created new maternal goals and a new standard of performance. However, republican motherhood was not a first attempt at impacting the public, political sphere. It was a response to the perceived need for a new kind of mothering that had evolved from traditional maternal authority. Women already occupied a place in the public sphere; republican motherhood allowed mothers to produce children who were spiritually and civically virtuous, and who would continue the work accomplished during the Revolution. Linda Kerber's reliance on legal evidence such as

As a component of republican motherhood, education for women gained new importance, because women needed to know exactly what constituted a good citizen. Female education certainly signified a break from the norm, but the changes in women's education were also a reconfiguration of ideas that had been traditionally disseminated to women. Mothers had always taught their daughters what it meant to be women, which invariably included the powerful role of wife and mother, and ministers and fathers had traditionally bore the responsibility of interpreting and imparting religious values.

Women were always educated, but not in the formalized, public ways that align with our current cultural values. Women could not function successfully in the new nation without some incorporation of democratic ideology into the traditional domestic framework. New England ministers had already expounded on what could happen to the community when mothering was deficient. Women therefore needed to update their maternal skill set to address emerging ideology. They also needed to reconsider sources of feminine power and authority, because the female community was changing as well. After the Revolution, the notion of republican motherhood allowed women to enter the political sphere while maintaining a firm foothold in the domestic sphere. In the process, the traditional community of women changed as women discarded the role of doctor, changed their ideas about what it meant to be a mother, and rose to merge with a newborn identity that was inextricably linked to liberty and a masculine version of political efficacy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Aristotle's master-piece completed: in two parts. The first containing the secret of generation in all the parts thereof. Treating of the benefit of marriage, and the prejudice of unequal matches. Signs of insufficiency in men or women. Of the infusion of the soul. Of the likeness of children to parents. Of monstrous births. The cause and cure of the green sickness, a discourse of virginity. Directions and cautions for midwives. Of the organs of generation in women, and the fabric of the womb. The use and action of the genitals. Signs of conception, and whether a male or female; with a word of advice to both sexes in the act of copulation. And the picture of several monstrous births. &c. The second part being A private looking glass for the female sex. Treating of the various maladies of the womb, and all other distempers incident to women of all ages, with proper remedies for the cure of each. The whole being more correct than any thing of the kind hitherto published. New York: Printed for the company of flying stationers, 1798.

Bradstreet, Anne. *The Complete Works of Anne Bradstreet*. Edited by Joseph R. McElrath and Allan P. Robb. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981.

Cadogan, William. *An Essay upon Nursing and the Management of Children, from their Birth to Three Years of Age*. Boston: Cox, 1772.

Colman, Benjamin. *The Duty and Honour of Aged Women, Deliver'd at the Lecture in Boston, March 15. 1711. After the Funeral of the Excellent, Mrs. Abigail Foster. Consort and Relict of the Late Honourable John Foster Esqr. One of Her Majesties Council, etc.* Boston: Bartholomew Green, 1711.

Cotton, John. *Christ the fountaine of life*. London: Robert Ibbitson, 1651.

Culpeper, Nicholas. *A Directory for Midwives: Or, a Guide for Women in their Conception, Bearing, and Suckling their Children*. London: Peter Cole, 1700.

Dick, Elisha Cullen. *Doctor Dick's Instructions for the Nursing and Management of Lying-in-Women: With some Remarks Concerning the Treatment of New-Born Infants*. Alexandria: John Thomas, 1793.

Dorr, Edward. *The Duty of Civil Rulers, to be Nursing Fathers to the Church of Christ. A Sermon Preached before the General Assembly, Connecticut at Hartford; on the Day of the Anniversary Election*. Hartford:Thomas Green, 1765.

Dunn, Richard S., James Savege, and Laetitia Yeandle, eds. *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630-1649*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1996.

Edwards, Jonathan. *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton, and the Neighbouring Towns and Villages of the County of Hampshire, in the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England. in a Letter to the Reverend Dr. Benjamin Colman, of Boston. Written by the Revd Mr. Edwards, Minister of Northampton, Nov. 6. 1736. Published with a Large Preface by the Rev. Dr. Watts and Dr. Guyse of London: To which a Shorter is Added by some of the Reverend Ministers of Boston. Together with an Attestation from some of the Reverend Ministers of Hampshire.* Boston: Samuel Kneeland, 1738.

Hall, David D. *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*. Edited by David D. Hall. Second ed. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990.

Heaton, Hannah. *The World of Hannah Heaton: The Diary of an Eighteenth Century New England Farm Woman*. Edited by Barbara E. Lacey. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan, Or, the Matter, Form, and Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiastical and Civil*. London: Andrew Crooke, 1651.

Mason, John M. *The voice of warning, to Christians, on the ensuing election of a president of the United States.* New York: George Hopkins, 1800.

Mather, Cotton. *The Angel of Bethesda*. Edited by Gordon W. Jones. Barre: American Antiquarian Society, 1972.

———. *Elizabeth in Her Holy Retirement. an Essay to Prepare a Pious Woman for Her Lying in. Or, Maxims and Methods of Piety, to Direct and Support an Handmaid of the Lord, Who Expects a Time of Travail.* Boston: Bartholomew Green, 1710.

———. *The Thoughts of a Dying Man. A Faithful Report of Matters Uttered by Many, in the Last Minutes of their Lives. and, a Solemn Warning Unto all, to Conform their Lives, Unto the Belief of such Unquestionable Matters.* Boston: Bartholomew Green, 1697.

———. *Help for Distressed Parents. Or, Counsels & Comforts for Godly Parents Afflicted with Ungodly Children; and Warnings Unto Children to Beware of all those Evil Courses, which would be Afflictive Unto their Parents*. Boston: John Allen, 1695.

———. *Warnings from the Dead. Or Solemn Admonitions Unto all People; but especially Unto Young Persons to Beware of such Evils as would Bring them to the Dead. by Cotton Mather. in Two Discourses, Occasioned by a Sentence of Death, Executed on some Unhappy Malefactors. Together with the Last Confession, made by a Young Woman, Who Dyed on June 8. 1693. One of these Malefactors.* Boston: Bartholomew Green, 1693.

———. *Small Offers Towards the Service of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. Four Discourses, Accommodated Unto the Designs of Practical Godliness. the First, Concerning the Methods Wherein Men Ought to Engage both Themselves and their Houses in the Service of God. the Second, Concerning the Right and Best Waies of Redeeming Time in the World. the Third, Concerning the Carriage which we should have Under Trials used by God upon Us. the Fourth, Concerning the End, which in our Desires of Life, we should Propound Unto Ourselves. Preached Partly at Boston, Partly at Charleston. by Cotton Mather, Pastor of a Church in Boston. Published by a Gentleman Lately Restored from Threatning Sickness; as an Humble Essay to Serve the Interest of Religion, in Gratitude Unto God for His Recovery.* Boston: Richard Pierce, 1689.

Mather, Increase. *The Mystery of Christ Opened and Applyed. in several Sermons, Concerning the Person, Office, and Glory of Jesus Christ*. Boston: Richard Pierce, 1685.

———. *A Call from Heaven, to the Present and Succeeding Generations Or A Discourse Wherein is Shewed I. that the Children of Godly Parents are Under Special Advantages and Encouragements to Seek the Lord. II. the Exceeding Danger of Apostasie, especially as to those that are the Children and Posterity of such as have been Eminent for God in their Generation. III. that Young Men Ought to Remember God their Creator*. Boston: Richard Pierce, 1685.

Moodey, Samuel. *The Children of the Covenant Under the Promise of Divine Teachings. in a Funeral Discourse, Occasioned by the Death of Student in Harvard College: Who Died at Cambridge July 18th 1716*. Boston: John Allen, 1716.

Norris, Deborah. "Letter to Sally Wister." In *Sally Wister's Journal*, edited by Albert Cook Myers. New York: New York Times & Arno Press, 1969.

Oliver, John. *A Present to be Given to Teeming Women, by their Husbands, Or Friends. Containing Directions for Women with Child. how to Prepare for the Hour of Travail. Written First for the Private use of a Gentlewoman of Quality: And Now Published for the Common Good.* Boston: Benjamin Harris, 1694.

Parkman, Ebenezer. *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782*. Edited by Francis G. Walett.Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1974.

[Reed, Esther DeBerdt?] *The Sentiments of an American Woman*. Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1780.

Seaman, Valentine. *The Midwives Monitor, and Mothers Mirror: Being Three Concluding Lectures of a Course of Instruction on Midwifery*. New York: Isaac Collins, 1800.

Sewell, Samuel. *Puritan Family Life: The Diary of Samuel Sewell*. Edited by Judith S.Graham. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000.

Smellie, William. *An Abridgement of the Practice of Midwifery, and a Set of Anatomical Tables with Explanations*. Worcester: Thomas, 1793.

———. *A collection of preternatural cases and observations in midwifery*, London: W. Strahan, 1779.

———. *A treatise on the theory and practice of midwifery*, 4th ed. London: D. Wilson, 1762.

Smith, Grace. *The Dying Mothers Legacy. Or the Good and Heavenly Counsel of that Eminent and Pious Patron, Mrs. Grace Smith, Late Widow to Mr. Ralph Smith of Eastham in New-England. Left as a Perpetual Monitor to Her Surviving Children; as it was Taken from Her Own Mouth a Little before Her Death, by the Minister from that Town Where She Died.* Boston: Timothy Green, 1712.

Smith, Hugh. *Letters to Married Women, on Nursing and the Management of Children*. Philadelphia: Mathew Carey,1792.

Underwood, Michael. *A Treatise on the Dieases of Children, with General Directions for the Management of Infants from the Birth*. Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1793.

Wadsworth, Benjamin. *The Well-Ordered Family: Or, Relative Duties. being the Substance of several Sermons, about Family Prayer. Duties of Husbands and Wives. Duties of Parents and Children. Duties of Masters and Servants.* Boston: Bartholomew Green, 1712.

Walker, James. *Inquiry into the Causes of Sterility in both Sexes, with its Method of Cure*. Philadelphia: Elizabeth Oswald, 1797.

Westerkamp, Marilyn J. *Women and Religion in Early America, 1600-1850: The Puritan and Evangelical Traditions*. London: Routledge, 1999.

Willard, Samuel. *The Peril of the Times Displayed. Or the Danger of Mens Taking Up with a Form of Godliness, but Denying the Power of it. being the Substance of several Sermons Preached.* Boston: Nathaniel Green, 1700.

Winthrop, John. "A Short Story of the Rise, Reign, and Ruine of the Antinomians, Familists & Libertines." In *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*. Edited by David D. Hall. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990.

Wister, Sally. *Sally Wister's Journal: A True Narrative being a Quaker Maiden's Account of Her Experiences with Officers of the Continental Army, 1777-1778.* Edited by Albert Cook Myers. Philadelphia: Ferris & Leach, 1902.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*. Boston: Peter Edes, 1792.

Secondary Sources

Berkin, Carol. *Revolutionary Mothers : Women in the Struggle for America's Independence*. 1st ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005.

Bloch, Ruth. *Gender and Morality in Anglo-American Culture, 1650-1800*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Block, Sharon. *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

Brown, Kathleen. "Murderous Uncleanness: The Body of the Female Infanticide in Puritan New England." In *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America*, edited by Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter, 77. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Butler, Jon, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer. *Religion in American Life: A Short History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Conforti, Joseph A. *Saints and Strangers: New England in British North America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.

Cowing, Cedric B. "Sex and Preaching in the Great Awakening." *American Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (Autumn, 1968).

Dayton, Cornelia Hughes. *Women before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

Dillon, Elizabeth Maddock. "Nursing Fathers and Brides of Christ." In *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America*. Edited by Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter, 129. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Donegan, Jane B. *Women & Men Midwives: Medicine, Morality, and Mysogyny in Early America*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978.

Gelles, Edith B. *First Thoughts: Life and Letters of Abigail Adams*, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998.

Godbeer, Richard. ""Love Raptures": Marital, Romantic, and Erotic Images of Jesus Christ in Puritan New England, 1670-1730." *The New England Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (September 1995).

Graham, Judith S. *Puritan Family Life: The Diary of Samuel Sewell*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000.

Hall, David D. *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*. Second ed. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990.

———. *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Beliefs in Early New England*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Kerber, Linda K. *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980.

Klepp, Susan E. *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, & Family Limitation in America, 1760-1820*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Kidd, Thomas S. *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

———. *The Protestant Interest: New England After Puritanism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.

Klepp, Susan E. *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, & Family Limitation in America, 1760-1820*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Koehler, Lyle. "The Case of the American Jezebels: Anne Hutchinson and Female Agitation during the Years of Antinomian Turmoil, 1636-1640." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 31 (January 1974): 55-78.

Lacey, Barbara E, ed. *The World of Hannah Heaton: The Diary of an Eighteenth Century New England Farm Woman*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003.

Laqueur, Thomas. *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Leavitt, Judith Walzer. *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750-1950*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Lombard, Anne S. *Making Manhood: Growing Up Male in Colonial New England*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Marsden, George M. *Jonathan Edwards, A Life*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

Marsh, Margaret and Wanda Ronner. *The Empty Cradle: Infertility in America from Colonial Times to the Present*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

McCulley, Sue Lane and Dorothy Z. Baker, eds. *The Silent and Soft Communion: The Spiritual Narratives of Sarah Pierpont Edwards and Sarah Prince Gill*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2005.

McElrath, Joseph R. and Allan P. Robb, eds. *The Complete Works of Anne Bradstreet*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981.

Miller, Perry. *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954.

Vander Molen, Ronald J. "Anglican Against Puritan: Ideological Origins during the Marian Exile," *Church History* 42, no. 1 (March 1973).

Morgan, Edmund S. "The Case Against Anne Hutchinson." *The New England Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (December 1937): 635-649.

Norton, Mary Beth and Ruth M. Alexander, eds. *Major Problems in American Women's History: Documents and Essays*, 3rd ed. (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company: 2003).

Parkes, H. B. "Sexual Morals and the Great Awakening." *The New England Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (January 1930): 133-135.

Porterfield, Amanda. *Female Piety in Puritan New England: The Emergence of Religious Humanism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Reis, Elizabeth. *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Salmon, Marylynn. "The Cultural Significance of Breast-Feeding and Infant Care in Early Modern England and America." In *Mothers and Motherhood: Readings in American History*, edited by Rima Apple and Janet Golden. Columbus: Ohio State University, 1997.

Scholten, Catherine M. *Childbearing in American Society: 1650-1850*. New York: New York University Press, 1985.

Scholten, Catherine M. ""on the Importance of the Obstetrick Art": Changing Customs of Childbirth in America, 1760 to 1825." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (July 1977): 426-445.

Seeman, Erik R. *'She Died Like Good Old Jacob': Deathbed Scenes and Inversions of Power in New England, 1675-1775*. Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1994.

Stannard, David E. *The Puritan Way of Death*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Tannenbaum, Rebecca J. *The Healer's Calling: Women in Medicine in Early New England*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002.

Tarter, Michele Lise. "Quaking in the Light: The Politics of Quaker Women's Corporeal Prophecy in the Seventeenth Century Transantlantic World." In *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America*, Edited by Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter, 145. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Tobin, Lad. "A Radically Different Voice: Gender and Language in the Trials of Anne Hutchinson." *Early American Literature* 25, no. 3 (1990): 253-270.

Toulouse, Teresa. "Hannah Duston's Bodies." In *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America*, edited by Janet Moore Lindman and Michele Lise Tarter, 193. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Treckel, Paula A. "Breastfeeding and Maternal Sexuality in Colonial America." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 20, no. 1 (Summer, 1989): 25-51.

Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. *Good Wives: Images and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.

———. *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990.

Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. “John Winthrop’s City of Women.” *Massachusetts Historical Review* 3 (2001): 19-48.

———. “Vertuous Women found: New England Ministerial Literature, 1668-1735.” *American Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (Spring 1976): 20-40.

Walett, Francis G., ed. *The Diary of Ebenezer Parkman, 1703-1782*. Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1974.

Welter, Barbara. “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860.” *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2, (Summer, 1966):151-174.

Wertz, Richard W. and Dorothy C. Wertz. *Lying-in: A History of Childbirth in America*. New York: The Free Press, 1977.

Westerkamp, Marilyn J. *Women and Religion in Early America, 1600-1850: The Puritan and Evangelical Traditions*. London: Routledge, 1999.

Williams, Selma R. *Divine Rebel: The Life of Anne Marbury Hutchinson*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981.

Wilson, Adrian. *The Making of Man-Midwifery: Childbirth in England, 1660-1770*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Winship, Michael P. *The Times and Trials of Anne Hutchinson, Puritans Divided*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005.

Woloch, Nancy. *Women and the American Experience*, 2nd ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2000).