"Mother Ann's Work at Pleasant Hill: The Career of Sarah Pool, Spirit Medium"
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"Mother Ann's Work" was a period of spiritual renewal in Shaker history. The revival began in 1837 when a young sister from Watervliet, Ohio, fell into a trance and experienced a dramatic vision of Mother Ann Lee. Ecstatic religious experiences—which in many ways mirrored the "exercises" of an earlier generation of frontier camp meetings—spread to other Shaker villages. At Pleasant Hill and elsewhere, young women acting as "instruments" (they were also called "visionists" and "spirit mediums") claimed to have traveled in spirit to heavenly realms and received messages from various angels and spirit beings. Meeting Mother Ann Lee was a frequent occurrence in these unique revelations, though the female visionists also encountered deceased brethren and sisters and celebrities such as Tecumseh, George Washington, and Columbus. Their visions were reported to the community and recorded in large manuscript journals. Many instruments created elaborate drawings depicted scenes from their visions; these private works of art (see slide show) were often presented as gifts to other members of the community. The revival came at a time when young Shakers, who had come of age well after the deaths of the founders, were striving to rediscover their spiritual roots. The messages that the young women brought to their communities helped to enliven the flagging spiritual temper of the Shaker villages and forged a greater sense of ÒunionÓ—both among the Believers and with their spiritual ancestors.

The documents that follow describe the visions of one medium active at Pleasant Hill: Sarah Pool. Little is known about this young woman. Born perhaps in Maryland during the late-eighteenth century, she was brought to Pleasant Hill by her mother shortly after the village was founded. The
Testimony of Sarah Pool
September 4th, 1841.

Having been chosen by our ever blessed Mother to be an instrument in her hands to speak and communicate her mind and will through to her children on earth in the late marvelous and extraordinary work of Mother, and having been favored, by the kindness and goodness of God, with the privilege of visiting the spiritual world and seeing and conversing with our heavenly Father and holy Mother and many of the Fathers and Mothers and the bright and glorious inhabitants of heaven, I count it a great privilege to write the feelings of my soul, & the unbounded thankfulness of my heart, for this special notice, and the many good gifts and rich blessings that have been so abundantly bestowed on me by the kindness and condescension of our heavenly Parents. With my heart fill’d with the sincerest thanks for my great and glorious privilege, yea I will humbly bow my soul in thankfulness and low humiliation to God my
eternal Father and holy Mother and all my heavenly Parents and the bright angels of God and the souls of the just made perfect through suffering, for the love and tender kindness they have bestowed on my poor needy soul. O! Were I to withhold from giving thanks without ceasing and feeling that gratitude of soul which I owe to my eternal Parents, it feels to me the very stones would cry out against me in judgement and condemn me! For I know that I have seen the city of the living God and walked the shining streets of the heavenly Jerusalem. Yea my soul hath seen the beautiful mansions of glory and peace and the bright and pure inhabitants thereof giving glory and honor to God forever. And I have heard their sweet voices singing melodious songs of praise and thanksgiving, and I have united with them to sing praises and adore the eternal Father and Mother. O what a privilege! O what a comfort and satisfaction it is to my soul, to be so noticed and blest! It is worth more to me than all earthly pleasures and the treasures of gold and silver and the vain glory of this world, which will pass away like chaff before a mighty wind; but there heavenly things are eternal and will endure forever. And shall I be unthankful and forgetful of the goodness and mercy of God to me and the kindness and condescension, charity & love of my heavenly Parents in opening the windows of heaven and unfolding the bright treasures and pouring out the richest blessings of heaven upon my unworthy soul, yea to overflowing more abundantly than I was able to receive? Nay, heaven forbid that I should ever be so ungrateful! But my heart shall never cease to flow with thankfulness and my soul to be filled with gratitude. And my voice shall never fail to give utterance to my feelings of obligation. And with my tongue I will ever sound forth praises and thanksgiving to God the giver of all good, and to my heavenly Parents, for the inestimable blessings that I have received and do enjoy.

I know this to be the pure and holy gospel and the only way that will lead the soul to God. And it shall be my constant labor to walk in strict obedience to it, & to grow more meek
humble and low, and to prize my privilege more highly every day. I will be subject to my beloved leads in all things, & obey their counsel, their admonition and reproof; and by so doing I will be true to my own soul and be joined and united to my heavenly Parents. I have no faith that I can be owned of Mother and received into her kingdom in any other way, than in perfect subjection to the orders of the gospel and true submission to my leads that are placed in Zion on earth. And this I am determined to do at the risk of all things else, let it cost what it may. I make this my solemn promise to abide before God and our eternal Parents, and before you my beloved Ministry & Elders, to whom I also return my hearty thanks for your love, charity, and forbearance with me, and your help and protection, for without it I never should have been able to realize those heavenly treasures that I have received. Therefore I thank you with all my heart for all that you have ever done for me, and I love your precious souls and will forever walk in obedience to your counsel; and that I know will lead me safe into the kingdom. I was born December 2nd, 1797, and sometime in the spring of 1808 my Mother brought me in amongst the people of God.
Sarah Pool

A Vision by Sarah Pool.
Pleasant Hill, Kentucky,
Saturday February 2nd, 1838.

At the conclusion of our family meeting in the evening and just as we had formed up to sing the last song, two bright lights extending from the floor upwards and as high as myself appeared close before me; when I instantly fell backwards on the floor. After a few minutes of unconsciousness, I saw Viney Dunlavy and Richard Houlton (two spirits whom I knew). When I told them that I had a message of love from the brethren and sisters, they answered, that Mother had sent them to conduct me to a house in the city for the purpose of delivering it. When we arrived, Mother and fifty sisters met us at the
door; and all bowed to us three times, and said, you are welcome in. My guides then told Mother I had a message of love from the church, and a thanksgiving hymn from the family at home. Mother then said, sisters, you must dress her in a white robe, then we must all retire half an hour, and at 10 o'clock there will be meeting in the meeting house. A robe was then presented me, which I put on; and we then took seats on stationary benches extending around the room and sat strait and kept perfect silence during the whole time. At the second of the bell the whole family marched to the meeting house, my two guides and I following after. The meeting house was immediately opposite and apparently about fifty yards distant. When all were collected, there appeared to be about the same number present, that there was at the time of my last visit to the same place. They formed up as they entered, and my guides and I stood I the alley between the brethren and sisters and about half way up it. They first sung a hymn; after which Mother stepped out and said, "Sarah has brought a message of love from the church at Pleasant Hill, in return for a message she had received on a former and to this place. And also, she has brought a thanksgiving hymn from the family where she lives." I then mentioned that the church had received their love by singing their hymn on their knees; after which, the brethren and sisters sent their thanks in return: by bowing down their heads to the floor and resting their faces on their hands. Mother then said, "How thankful we are, that there are souls on earth who will receive our love, and send their love back in return. Blessed are those who bear a faithful cross on earth! For they shall have a reward in the kingdom of heaven." I then sung the following thanksgiving hymn:

O loving loving Mother, we
They precious gifts adore,
Yet still more humble we will be,
They favor to secure.
Do, do receive our thanks unfeign'd,
From every honest heart
The Ministry with us combine  
And freely send their part.

While here we stand in solemn vows,  
United we'll bend,  
And in eleven humble bows,  
Our kindest love we'll send.  
Do give our thanks to Christ our Lord--  
And blessed Mother dear;  
To all who have on us bestowed,  
Do give our love sincere.

At the conclusion of the hymn, Jesus spoke and  
sent his love to the shepherds of the flock; and  
[he] said, "Herd and protect my sheep. Prowling  
wolves and poisonous serpents are striving to get  
in to destroy souls. What cause have souls to be  
thankful for the gospel? For God has caused his  
church to be the Zion. For it is written: the law  
shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the  
Lord from Jerusalem and it must be as a rock or a  
foundation for other souls to gather to." He then  
sent his love to all the family. Mother then  
again spoke and proposed they should all write  
and send their love back to the family, in the  
same way it had been sent, which they all did, by  
bowing eleven times. They then all marched in a  
circle, as mentioned in my last vision; my guides  
and I being in the way. At the conclusion of the  
marching, they again formed up; when I gave  
Vincent Runyems love and thanks to Christ our  
Lord for the hymn he [Jesus] had sent him. Christ  
[then] said, we would withhold no good thing from  
any faithful soul. I also gave Vincentís love and  
thanks to Mother for the love she had sent him,  
when she made him welcome. After meeting was  
dismissed, Mother came to me and told me in a low  
voice to tell Elder Sister and Polly, to keep  
government over the girls, or they have been  
blest with the gifts and power of God; but they  
have become unmortified. And tell them when they  
find me or my work, they will find me in a still,  
small voice. I then asked if I might go and see  
the young believers. Mother said I might and my  
guides took me to the white square. I was in only  
one room where many were assembled, apparently
waiting our arrival. Among them I saw a number that I had known on the earth, besides many more whom I did not know. When we entered, they all bowed to us. They then sent their love to the first order in four bows. After this we went to the new city; where we found some Union Village and West Union brethren in one room, as also some sisters from both places in another room. They all sent their love to the family in three bows. I now returned home, in company with my guides, having previously given my robe in care of one of the sisters. My arrival was 35 minutes after 10 o'clock.

A Vision by Sarah Pool
Pleasant Hill, Ky. Monday evening, September 17th, 1838.

At our usual evening, on the above mentioned day, after singing a few songs, I was taken with a rapid and involuntary exercise, and whirled for a few minutes, then fell to the floor; but was eased in my fall by the kind of assistance of Ursula Taylor and Lucretia Peas, two disembodied spirits. At the instant of my fall I saw Betsy Banta Sarah Shields, and Sarah Monsort, also Father William Lee and James Neely (all of the spiritual world), the latter seeming to leap with the fulness of joy. As these appeared to my view, I lost all sight of the brethren and sister in the meeting room, and all earthly objects vanished from my view. I then noticed Father William looking around with sweet approbation for a few minutes, after which, he and the little band made a low bow; when Father William turned to me and the angelic company and said, well go. And James Neely said to me, this is Father William Lee. I now started with them, having my hands clasped in Ursula's and Lucretia's, and in a short time we came in view of the walls of a city, which seemed to be composed of no earthly materials. Its appearance was that of pure white. The gate opened at our approach, and as we entered, I beheld an innumerable band of spiritual beings marching towards us: the brethren being to the right hand, and the sisters
to my left. They sang a song saying, Come view, 
come view this beautiful city; where the wicked 
cease from troubling, and the weary souls find 
rest. This song was accompanied by an appropriate 
motion of bowing and rising, which some resembled 
the undulations of a field of wheat, when gently 
put in motion by a gale of wind. As the company 
drew near, I discovered the front ranks to be 
composed of all the believers who had died in the 
church order at Pleasant Hill, with two or three 
exceptions as I afterwards learned. And one of 
these, that is William Bird, has since appeared 
to me in a dream and said, that as I had passed 
him by unnoticed at that time, he was then come 
to tell me know that he yet belonged to that 
order. When the front row drew near, the whole 
band halted. I then, in company with my guides, 
Father William being before, proceeded to the 
right along the front row of the brethren, and we 
made a low bow to every individual while facing 
them. Then, when we had arrived at the far end of 
the line, we returned in the same manner. We then 
performed the same ceremony to the left along the 
sisters line. After which I found myself in my 
first position at the entrance of the gate, and 
fac ing the brilliant host. Sarah Monfort then 
said to me, Sarah, I have a little anthem I want 
you to learn and take home to the brethren and 
sisters: beginning, seek, seek, and ye shall 
find, ask and it shall be given thee. Father 
William then stepped to me and said, the song you 
learned first, I will give to thee. He and all 
the rest then made a low bow. I bowed also, and 
bade them farewell. Peggy Houlton and Electa 
Bryant then took my by the hands, and conducted 
me home to the room where I reside. They danced 
about the room with me. A short time after my 
body resumed its motions again, and then they 
disappeared, when instantly I saw the brethren 
and sisters and found myself at home at 20 
minutes past 11 o'clock.

A Vision by Sarah Pool
Pleasant Hill, Kentucky.
Saturday evening, June 15th, 1839.
On this evening, there were in our family meeting Jesus and Mother Ann, Father James, Mother Lucy and Caroline Bryant, all of whom I saw soon after I fell, which I did after a violent exercise in turning about five minutes. They appeared to be going about among the people, stirring them up and enlivening them. Caroline appeared to pay particular attention to Melinda and at one time caused her to run backwards very swiftly. After the meeting was closed, we all proceeded on to the city. Mother and I went into the fifth house, but the others continued on. In one room in the house we found 32 brethren who had died at South Union; and in another room 42 sisters. Some of them I knew, but not all. One of them was Francis White, who was an aged, white headed man when he died. He appeared as if about 25 years of age, and his hair looked of a light color, but not gray. I put my hand to his head, and it fell soft and smooth. The brethren all united and sent their love to the Church in three bows. And Francis as I left the room desired me to tell the brethren and sisters that when he was on earth he loved their bodies, but now he loved their souls better than he loved their bodies. The sisters also sent their love in three kisses on the palms of their hands. We then went into the 6th house, and entered a room occupied by brethren. They were mostly of those who had died at Pleasant Hill, and were known to me. I asked Davis Dunlavy, (whose back had been broken by a fall from a horse which occasioned his death,) if his back hurt him now. He said nay, it was made whole. And Andrew Burnett (he also fell form a horse which was the cause of his death) said that his head was made whole. I asked Calvin Bruner if he would play on that musical instrument, which I had heard when I was there before, which he did; and I played on it too, but not as well as he did. I told him, I wished I could take the instrument home with me, so that the brethren and sisters could see and play on it; but Mother said, nay, nay. You cannot take it. It is spiritual and belongs to heaven and does not belong on earth. James Congleton then sent his love to the brethren in the Church, and requested
that they would all receive it, by every two of
them kissing each other. And with this all
present united, and Mother said, the gift would
not hurt them, but would simplify them. Mother
and I then went into the opposite room where the
sisters were, the most of whom I knew. They were
mostly sitting around the room on stationary
benches, but some were seated on white chairs;
and a number were standing about on the floor. I
asked the sisters if they wore crowns or caps.
They said caps, and then took off one and we
examined it; and it looked very much after the
order of those we wear. I then asked them what
their robes were made of, and why they shined so
bright. I said they looked as if not made of
muslin, nor any earthly materials. Betsy Banta
said, nay they are neither made of wool nor of
flax nor of any thing that belongs to the earth.
Then Mother said, the first step to make these
robes is to confess and forsake sin and wash the
soul clean from every stain of sin, and
[withdraw] from all unrighteousness and evil of
every kind. Then your robes will never grow old.
I said, if we had them in this world they would
become old and dirty. Mother answered, "If you
attend to the duties laid down for you, your
robes will never grow old, but grow stronger and
brighter and brighter." Mother then said that as
we had of late found considerable increase and
had broken our bands from the lies and affections
of the flesh, we must now be careful and watchful
and never let them get tied again as they had
been; but keep them broke. She said when we are
under trials with our brethren or sisters, we
must not open it out of order, but go to our
Elders and there open it in order. And if we hurt
a brother's or a sister's feelings, we must go to
our Elders and take it out of the way and make
peace with one another; and that by so doing, we
would gain strength and not weakness. Nor must we
backbite, or speak against each other; and that
all must take up their cross against holding to
their old flesh relations. Mother enjoined on all
to be faithful with their hands, and to do their
work neat [and] to attend to the orders strictly:
to retiring time, and meeting. And every one, she
said, must feel zealous for their own souls and not expect for some faithful souls to carry them along, thinking they can take indulgence, and get along somehow or other. Those (she said) who ever expect to enter the kingdom have to do it by their own faithfulness. When Mother had finished speaking, I asked the sisters how they spent their time, and what made them so happy and what their happiness consisted in; and if they neither eat, nor drank, nor washed, nor milked cows. They answered, they had nothing to do with these natural things which belong to the earth. But they said it was their meat and drink to do the will of God, and that their happiness consisted in loving and blessing each other, and building up each other in righteousness. I then asked Mother, if horses and other dumb beasts exist after death. She said, all dumb beasts were made for man, and when they died they were done forever. I said that horses had been seen in visions, as mentioned in the revelations of John, such as the red horse, the black horse, and the white horse. She answered that the red horse was figurative of the bloodshed that was to take place on the earth. The black horse was the darkness and desolation that would be on the face of the earth. And the white horse was a sign of victory; and a sign of gladness and rejoicing. I then said that if horses are seen as figures, some may say, that everything that is seen is a figure. So this I received for answer: that whenever spirits or angels are seen, they are realities and not figures. The sisters present then sent their love to the sisters in the church in the same manner the brethren had sent theirs. I now told Mother that I was beginning to like to come there so well that I would like to stay if I could get to live in the city. Well (said she) you must be faithful while you live on earth, to prepare you to live in the city. Souls, said she, who are faithful on earth to confess and forsake all sin, pass through the resurrection and judgment while on earth, and then their passage in the spiritual world is swift; yet they have to shake off an earthly sense, and travel from the earth before they get into the city. Mother and I
now crossed the street and entered a room in the 3rd house in the 2nd square, where we found brethren who had died at Union Village and West Union. In this house, I was told by Mother, there were 60 rooms and 50 persons in each room. Those present all united and sent their love by clapping their hands. Samuel Rollins then spoke and said, it is a matter of great importance to die with a justified conscience; therefore, he would advise all who now live on earth to live through life so as to prepare for death, and thereby make their calling and election sure. For (said he) there is no greater prize that a soul can gain than a justified conscience in a dying hour. I have experienced this for I have passed through the change; therefore I know the good of it. Also, said he, I have seen the difference between those who were justified and those who were not. We now left this room and went to the sisters room. Of those present I only knew Charity Shields. After spending some time with the sisters, Stephen Williams came into the room and learned me a song. They all then sent their love. Mother and I then returned to the 6th house, where we found Ursula & Electra Bryant in the hall, to whom Mother said, you may go home with Sarah and see your old homes & friends, & when you get into the room you will find them there. We then came home.

A Vision by Sarah Pool
Pleasant Hill, Kentucky
June 20th, 1839.

On the night of the above date, being requested by the Elders to go on a visit to the spiritual world to convey some messages of love and thanks from the brethren and sisters here, to our departed friends and gospel relations in that world: during the course of the meeting, I was taken with a violent exercise and whirling for a few minutes, when I fell in vision, and saw Father James, Father William, Father Joseph and Father Job; Mother Ann, Mother Ruth, Mother Lucy and Eldress Prudence Farrington; who were uniting with the brethren and sisters in meeting, and
passing about among them and appearing to try to revive and encourage them. And when Amos spoke, Father James patted him on the cheek, and Mother Ann stroked him on the head, and then went on noticing others. When meeting closed, Mother told me I might go home with them. As we went along, I asked Mother if I might stop at the 6th house, and she told me I might go in and put on my white robe and retire for meeting, which I did. And when we went to meeting, after the first song was sung, I delivered the love that was sent; and they were greatly rejoiced and danced for joy.

After marching a few songs, Mother spoke and said to me, say to the brethren and sisters [living at Pleasant Hill], that they must labor to hate and purge out all evil and leave it behind: affections, lust, pride, malice, envy, old grudges, hard speeches, and all such things. Purge them out and leave them behind, and labor for the power of God in your souls, that you may be able to overcome the flesh, affections, and lust; nail it to the cross, crucify, and put it to death. O hate it! Hate these things and leave them behind, for these things shall never find a place in my kingdom. Old bands and ties of flesh connections must be broken and put away. It will not do, it will not do for believers to hold to these things. O hate it! Purge it out and leave it behind. Such things never can be owned in the kingdom of God. Some have their hearts too much set on earthly things: fine dress and clothing, to fix yourselves up very fine, to make a fine appearance. And some of you think yourselves very handsome and can primp yourselves before the brethren, to tempt and entice them; and some of the brethren do the same. Forsake it. Forsake it, and leave it behind forever. You have a duty to live in these temporal things; but you can use this world and not abuse it. Some may think this is harsh dealing; but my kingdom must be purged and made clean, and purified from every thing that defileth. This thing of lurking and slipping about in holes and corners and places to indulge the flesh has got to be left behind. Such things shall no more be as they have been. This flesh hunting has got to be left behind and quit
forever, or they never shall see my salvation. Labor! Labor! Labor for the power of God in your souls, and let your light shine, that souls may see the salvation of God and come to Zion. For no soul can ever enter the gate into this City until they are washed and made clean and pure from every stain of sin. Nay! Nay! Nay! There is no unclean thing can enter this kingdom. The soul must be made clean and white, without a spot or stain, before it can enter. You must attend to good order, attend to retiring time, to meeting, and to your meals, and kneel in union, and eat in the fear of God, that you may receive a blessing. And wherever you are and wherever you go, keep the fear of God.

You young men, labor for the power of God in your souls. And when you come into meeting, shake yourselves and labor to hate that nature of lust that his growing up in you. Confess it and leave it behind forever, that you may receive a blessing.

The above is the substance of MotherÌs discourse. At the close of the meeting Christ Jesus spoke and said, take my love to all the brethren and sisters on earth where you live; and tell them that he that will be the least shall be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Mother then proposed for them all to send their love, which they did in two shouts, holding up their hands and letting them fall as they shouted. I then came home.