

JAN STIEVERMANN

Cotton Mather and *Biblia Americana* –
America's First Bible Commentary:
General Introduction

For the past 200 years, whenever Americans have tried to make sense of their national experience, they have regarded the Puritan movement as central. Indeed, an entire history of American culture since independence could be constructed out of the evolution of American attitudes toward and reflections about the Puritans.
David D. Hall

These critics [who argued for a Puritan origin of modern American culture] used Puritanism, however, more than they sought to understand it. They simplified it in order to make it serve as the source of everything right or wrong with twentieth-century America, typecasting the Puritans as heroes or villains in the drama of American history and identity.
Russell Reising

Probably no colonial writer except Benjamin Franklin retains among twentieth-century Americans so wide a fame and so rigidly typical a nature. Mather has been a remarkably useful emblem of puritanical meddling, self-righteousness, bigotry, credulity, pedantry, and reaction, and the efforts of several commentators during the last century to sketch a more complex, more accurate figure have had little effect on prevailing opinion either in the scholarly community or in popular lore.
David Levin

That Cotton Mather's role in American religious and intellectual history is in need of reappraisal, as the title of our collection suggests, should be plausible to any fair-minded student of these fields, even if the reasons why he still figures so poorly demand some explanations. To be sure, Mather was always of interest as a local historian, and perceived as an influential representative of New England Puritanism just before its demise. Even historians of science and medicine now customarily pay him some tribute as a mediator of new ideas and methods from Europe. For the most part, however, this Puritan theologian and prolific scholar is, as Michael Kaufmann writes, still "[b]est known for his worst moment," and serves "inside and outside the academy as the villain of the Salem witch trials." However, as Kaufmann asserts, "this greatly distorted portrayal of Mather as filiopious crank obsessively hunting the devil obscures a richly complex career" (436). We couldn't agree more. It is probably less obvious,

however, even to the fair-minded, that Mather's "Biblia Americana" would serve as the impetus for a call for reassessment, simply because, outside a small circle of specialists, relatively few people know about this work that is only now being published for the very first time. So let us begin with some brief notes on the ill-fated "Biblia Americana" before we turn to the vicissitudes of Mather's reputation.

Cotton Mather and "Biblia Americana": Preliminary Observations

Born in 1663, the scion of one of New England's most powerful dynasties of ministers and church leaders – the Cottons and the Mathers – Cotton Mather received a comprehensive education in divinity, the ancient languages and liberal arts, and early on felt the urge to put these gifts to a godly use.¹ Right after he left Harvard with a B. A. in 1678 (M. A., 1681) and joined his father Increase as a minister of Boston's Old North Church (Congregational) in 1685, he began to publish. Although always busy tending one of the largest congregations in New England, during his lifetime Mather published over 400 works.² Learned in all fields of contemporary knowledge, he wrote on a great variety of subjects. Besides numerous works on theology, church history, and matters of practical piety, he also turned his attention to natural philosophy, medicine, zoology, astronomy, and supernatural wonders. His accomplishments were soon recognized in the wider British Empire and beyond. He received an honorary Doctor of Divinity from one of the ancient Scottish theological strongholds at the University of Glasgow (1710) and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of London (1713). Ironically, however, outside his family and a small group of friends, no one ever saw what Mather himself thought to be his greatest intellectual accomplishment: "Biblia Americana." It was the first comprehensive Bible commentary composed in British North America.³ A great number of explications

1 Mather's life has been written many times. Most recently, he was the subject of two excellent biographies by Levin (*The Young Life*) and Silverman. An annotated bibliography of Mather's works is provided by Holmes.

2 The NAIP (North American Imprints Program), the data-base maintained by the American Antiquarian Society, identifies 3,519 authors up to the Revolution, the vast majority (2,073) represented by a single record and another 543 by two. According to the NAIP, Cotton Mather accounts for 335 records alone, making him by far the most prolific author of British North America during the entire colonial period (Hall and Martin 520). At the height of Mather's career, between 1701 and 1720, his publications account for roughly 15% of all NAIP records, and roughly 25% of all works of personal authorship (Armory 517). T. J. Holmes, Mather's bibliographer, argues that "his known printed works total 444" (1: viii).

3 Although Mather repeatedly advertized the "Biblia Americana" and described it to his many correspondents, he apparently did not circulate the manuscript beyond his immediate Boston circle. And even here he seems to have shown the manuscript to a small number of people only. We know of one instance in which Mather gave parts of the "Biblia" to Joseph

of parts or aspects of the Bible had, of course, been written by other New England Puritans, as well as by ministers and laymen of other colonies. Cotton Mather’s own grandfather John Cotton, for instance, had published the widely esteemed *A Brief Exposition With Practical Observations Upon the Whole Book of Canticles* (1655), and his uncle Samuel Mather was renowned for his *Figures and Types of the Old Testament* (1683).⁴ In a way, the vast majority of writings to come out of British North America, at least for the first century, were, in one way or the other, interpretations of the Holy Scriptures. However, as far as we can see, no colonial figure had previously written a continuous scholarly commentary on all of the canonical books of the Bible. And certainly no one had set for himself the goal, as Mather wrote in September 1693, to elucidate “[God’s] precious Word, and [offer] learned, charming and curious *Notes* on his Word, far beyond any that had yet seen the Light” by gathering “the Treasures of *Illustrations* for the Bible, dispersed in the Volumes of this Age” so “that all the Learning in the World might bee made gloriously subservient unto the *Illustration* of the *Scripture*” (*Diary* 1: 169–70).

Mather quite understandably considered the “*Biblia Americana*” or, as he subtitled his work, “The Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament Illustrated,” to be the most important project of his entire career. Starting in 1693, just as the witch trials were brought to a close, he worked tirelessly on his “*Biblia*” for over thirty years until his death in 1728. During this period of time, he continually added to the manuscript, following his rule of “one gloss each morning,” and so producing more than 4,500 double-spaced folio pages in six volumes. Even in 1706, when Mather began to advertise his “*Biblia*,” in search of subscribers, the manuscript had grown to “two large Volumes in Folio” (*Diary* 1: 564). Transforming them into a printed work would have required a substantial overhead of capital that, as it turned out, was simply not to be found. The ambitious design behind the “*Biblia Americana*” was to produce a synoptic commentary that would satisfy the demands of specialists, biblical scholars, and theologians throughout the Atlantic world, and would simultaneously speak to the needs of a broader, popular audience looking for elucidation of difficult passages or general religious edification.⁵ Mather thus combined the syn-

Dudley, who praised it but failed to extend his help in getting the manuscript published (Silverman 210). Especially when Mather realized that publishing the “*Biblia*” was increasingly unlikely, he began to recycle parts of it for other projects, including *The Christian Philosopher* and, most importantly, *Trip paradisus* that, however, also never found its way into print during his lifetime.

4 In 1636, Hugh Peter had pleaded that John Cotton be given time to “go through the Bible, and raise marginal notes upon all the knotty places of the scriptures” (Hall, “Readers and Writers” 138). However, the project was never realized, and it remained for his grandson to do what Peter had desired.

5 For a detailed account of the history of “*Biblia Americana*,” its design as well as its biographical, historical and intellectual contexts, see Smolinski’s introduction to volume 1. In

optical format of other scholarly commentaries of the period – such as Bishop of Chester John Pearson’s nine volume *Critici Sacri* (1660–69) or the Nonconformist Matthew Poole’s five volume *Synopsis Criticorum* (1669–76) – with the format of popular, English-based annotations such as Poole’s *Annotations upon the Holy Bible* (1683–85) or the Presbyterian Matthew Henry’s *An Exposition of All the Books of the Old and New Testaments* (1708–10).⁶ Like *Critici Sacri* or *Synopsis Criticorum*, Mather’s “Biblia Americana” follows the ancient tradition of the *katena*, offering a chain, or a digest of what he perceived as the most pertinent commentaries in explicating the various meanings (historical, typological, moral) of a given scriptural verse. To these excerpted commentaries, Mather then frequently adds his own original glosses as well as materials from historical or scientific literature. The result is a conceptual and linguistic hybrid – written in English but shot through with thousands of Latin, Greek and Hebrew citations – that, in the illustration of a given verse, could combine philological analysis, learned historical-contextual observations and sometimes-scientific speculations with extensive consideration of dogmatic tradition and pious applications.

Unlike most existing commentators of either scholarly or popular commentaries, Mather chose not to offer elucidation on every single verse, but to concentrate on those which seemed most important, or most in need of explanation because of their centrality, their obscurity, or because of their difficulties regarding textual transmission and translation. He also abandoned the traditional chapter summaries, and reprinting of each verse, instead adopting a question-and-answer method of presentation. For each annotation, he thus devised a rhetorical question that would bring specific topics and interpretative problems into focus. Occasionally, the answers could become so long that they grew into independent essays of ten or twenty pages. With these methods, Mather aligns his “Biblia,” in some ways, with Pierre Bayle’s *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1695–97) or Augustin Calmet’s *Dictionnaire Historique, Critique, Chronologique, Géographique, et Littéral de la Bible* (1722). Indeed, on many of the topics it raises, the “Biblia” assumes encyclopaedic dimensions, and the range of Mather’s reading, from which he draws his annotations, is breathtak-

1706 Mather sent to England “AN AMERICAN OFFER to serve the Great Interests of Learning and Religion in Europe” (*Diary* 1: 570) to promote his commentary in dissenting circles. Mather then advertised the work in the “General Introduction” of his 1702 *Magnalia Christi Americana* (33–34) and in an appendix to his 1710 *Bonifacius: An Essay upon the Good* (159–63). In 1714 he published a separate advertisement in a pamphlet entitled *A New Offer To the Lovers of Religion and Learning*. He also made numerous attempts through letters to solicit subscribers (See, for instance, *Selected Letters* 111–12, 148–49, 155; 170; 181, 188–90, 204, 272–73).

6 Muller and Sheppard provide good general discussions of the important developments in biblical commentaries between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century. The most successful works on the English market are surveyed in Jeffrey and Preston.

ing. As a basis and framework, Mather frequently employs renowned contemporary English commentators; for example, he uses Simon Patrick's annotations for the historical books, William Lowth's for the prophets, or John Hammond's and Daniel Whitby's on the New Testament. He certainly adds to the stack, however. As his 1714 advertising pamphlet for his "Biblia," *A New Offer to the Lovers of Religion and Learning* (1714) announced, Mather made it a principle to always go beyond "the more Illustrious Literators, who are known for *Stars of the first Magnitude*." Indeed, he drew from literally hundreds of "Books that have made no profession of serving this Cause [of illustrating the scriptures] and many of them very unsuspected ones" (5). When it came to the "very unsuspected ones," Mather was by no means just quoting English or Continental Reformed writers. His references are international, interdenominational, multilingual, historically encompassing, and, as we would say today, transdisciplinary. He not only cites the Church Fathers and medieval commentaries, rabbinic literature, ancient history, classical and modern philosophy, philology, and the natural sciences of his day, but also Reformation and post-Reformation theologians of all denominations, including Roman Catholics and Jesuits. Indeed, an ecumenical impulse to transcend old party lines is one of the "Biblia's" most conspicuous features.

Mather's *New Offer* gives us a convenient survey of the topics and issues that are addressed in the commentaries, and also of the hermeneutical approaches that are employed. The last four pages of the pamphlet, which provide a short list of these topics, issues, and hermeneutical approaches under twelve headings, are reproduced as an appendix to this introduction. As can be seen from this list, Mather's interests and methodology clearly mark him as a representative of what Brooks Holifield calls the Baconian paradigm in biblical interpretation, primarily preoccupied with the reasonableness of Christianity and, most importantly, the factuality of the scriptures. Concerned throughout with providing different kinds of proof (prophetical, historical, philological, empirical) for the Bible's factuality, Cotton Mather's "Biblia Americana," together with other works by him and his father, thus stands at the beginning of "what would become an American evidentialist tradition" (Holifield 70).⁷ The list also evinces how deeply immersed Mather was in the rising tide of modern, historical-contextual criticism, which had its origin in the mid-seventeenth century and came to a climax first in the English debates between Deists and orthodox apologists

7 "Deeply informed by parallel patterns of thought in England and on the European continent, this evidentialist position consisted of the claim that rational evidence confirmed the uniqueness and truth of the biblical revelation. Such a claim stood behind the rise of 'evidential Christianity,' a form of theology different in important ways from either the scholastic thought of the medieval church or the theologies of revelation that came out of the Protestant reform" (Holifield 5). On the pre-eminence of evidentialism and a factual understanding of the scriptures in nineteenth-century American theology, and on the long-term consequences of this approach in defending the authority of the scriptures, see Rogers and McKim.

in the early eighteenth century.⁸ The first area of concern that Mather highlights in the promotional pamphlet is, of course, biblical philology, a field that was going through a revolution during the period. All over Europe, specialists in the ancient languages worked to establish reliable texts and improve translations. In England, this communal project had produced the London polyglot Bible (*Biblia Sacra Polyglotta*, 1657), which printed scriptural texts in as many as eight different languages. Brian Walton's tomes were always open on Mather's desk, together with a host of other works by scholars such as Sebastian Münster, Johann Buxtorf the Elder, Hugo Grotius, or John Lightfoot when Mather discusses those cases in which "the most Polite and Pious masters in Philology, have expressed their Wishes to see the Common Translation Amended and Refined" (*New Offer* 11). To offer alternatives where the King James version appeared wanting or misleading, Mather examined not only the original Hebrew or Greek words, but also the Septuagint, Jerome's Vulgate, the Aramaic Targums and French and German translations.

However, Mather's philological interests extended well beyond lexical or grammatical issues. A full century before such concerns became more widespread among New England theologians (Holifield 190–95), he was dealing with questions of authorship, historical transmission, and the integrity of the biblical texts. The overriding goal of his textual criticism was to safeguard the Bible's absolute authority by affirming the general reliability of the canon and the received modern texts. Hence, the thrust of Mather's textual criticism is, for the most part, integrative; that is, he seeks to incorporate variants, and to explain lacunae, interpolations, shifts in point of view, and anachronisms in ways that ultimately affirm the overall coherence and accuracy of the biblical texts under discussion. Nevertheless, his honest engagement with the period's most astute and daring biblical critics forced him to give up many of the axiomatic assumptions then held by the Reformed and Lutheran orthodoxies.

This tendency is highlighted, for instance, by Mather's response to Richard Simon, which is especially visible in Mather's commentaries on the Pentateuch (see Smolinski "Authority and Interpretation"). In his *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* (1678), Simon contested the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch as a whole by arguing that the disparities in these books suggested that multiple authors had written and re-written various parts of the five books in long history of textual transmission (the so-called "Public Scribes" hypothesis). It is quite surprising to see how far Mather was prepared to go in meeting Simon. For example, he willingly admitted that many passages in the Pentateuch were written a long time after Moses's death, and that these books, together

8 For the rise of historical criticism see Scholder, Kraus (44–103), Frei, and vol. 4 of von Reventlow's *Epochen der Bibelauslegung*; von Reventlow's *The Authority of the Bible* offers an in-depth discussion of the Deist debates in Mather's time.

with many of the prophetic scriptures, were compiled in the period after the Babylonian exile by Ezra and other public scribes. He vehemently maintained, however, that neither the multi-layered and heterogeneous character of the Hebrew Bible, nor its long history of textual tradition, put scriptural authority into question, because the work of the interpolators and compilers had been directed by the Holy Spirit, just as much as Moses's composition of the foundational texts. At the same time, Mather moved away from a plenary concept of verbal inspiration, arguing that only the underlying concepts had been supernaturally communicated.⁹ Mather, therefore, no longer regarded the letter of the text as infallible in the sense that events or ideas were always described in a language that would satisfy modern standards of scientific accuracy. He insisted, instead, that the truths, although couched in the culturally specific language of its historical authors and accommodated to their understanding, were certain. In accordance with this accommodationist disposition, he saw it as the main task of a new kind of biblical criticism to help Christians approach the eternal truths of the Bible through the use of reasonable methods, namely by explicating and thereby making transparent its time-bound forms of expression, unveiling the universal truths they carried.

Acquiescing to such a modification of the dogma of inerrancy was one way for Mather to confront the much more radical attacks of the day against scriptural authority by the followers of Thomas Hobbes and Benedict Spinoza. Albeit in different ways, Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651) and Spinoza's *Tractatus Philosophico-Politicus* (1670) had fundamentally challenged the traditional Judeo-Christian understanding of biblical revelation by arguing that the scriptures do not offer reliable historical truths at all, but have to be understood as fanciful expressions of religious devotions, written by infant peoples according to their primitive knowledge and cultural traditions. Accordingly, the Bible needed to be subjected to rational, demystifying modes of explication to separate the wheat of valid moral teachings from the chaff of ancient customs and fantastic stories (see Preus, Frampton). Mather was very much alarmed by this kind of rationalism and attempted, in every way possible, to defend the Bible's position as supernatural revelation by proving its historical veracity.

Because Mather, like most Protestant exegetes of his time, was so invested in corroborating the *sensus historicus*, his "Biblia" gives ample space to the fields advertised under headings II, III, VII, and VIII in *A New Offer*. Mather drew

9 In "An Essay for further Commentary, on the Sacred Scriptures," which Mather appended to the "Biblia" he writes: "In things which only fell under *Human Prudence*, the Holy Spirit seems not immediately to have Dictated unto the Men of God; but only to have used a *Directive* or *Conductive* Power upon them; to supply them with suitable Apprehensions, & keep them in the Use of their own Rational Judgment within the Bounds of Infallible Truth, & of Expediency for the Present Occasion." In so doing, God allowed his prophets the "Use of their *own Words*, and of the *Style* that was most natural to them" (qtd. in Smolinski, "Authority and Interpretation" 198).

equally on a wide array of classical sources and the burgeoning literatures of early modern para-theology (*historia sacra*, *geographia sacra* etc.). His commentaries are bustling with discussions of biblical antiquities, chronologies, and geographies, and rarely overlook sparkling gems of Jewish and Early Christian histories, mores, customs, arcane traditions, and laws of peoples long forgotten. These preoccupations were by no means idiosyncratic, for Mather inherited them (along with many of his actual illustrations) from some of the greatest scholars of his period such as James Ussher, Samuel Bochart, Johann Heinrich Heidegger, or Gerard Vossius. With the help of these luminaries, Mather worked to clear up difficulties in dating events or explaining obscure references and to gather evidence to prove the reliability of the scriptural narratives as history and the general truthfulness of the biblical world picture. His efforts to substantiate historic truth are directed towards the fundamentals of the Christian faith – as, for instance, when he demonstrates the congruence of the gospel accounts – as much as they are extended to rather trivial matters pertaining to the history of Jerusalem or certain customs of the ancient Middle East. Behind this urge to historicize, however, was also an anxious awareness of how alien and often incomprehensible the world of the scriptures was to the modern mind. In the manner of humanist philology, Mather therefore sought to establish the linguistic, cultural, material, and biographical contexts of the biblical authors, attempting to bridge these historical differences and to decipher the original intentions of their writings from which – according to his accommodationist hermeneutics – the divine truth had to be reconstructed.

As heading VI in *A New Offer* announces, Mather's "Biblia" also undertakes frequent and extensive excursions into "Natural Philosophy," in the service of offering empirical proof of "Scriptural Religion" (see Smolinski "Natural Science and Interpretation"). Seeking to reconcile the biblical narrative with the findings of the new sciences, Mather's glosses offer what he calls the "fairest Hypotheses of those Grand *Revolutions*, the *Making*, the *Drowning*, and the *Burning* of the WORLD," which incorporate Copernican cosmology, Descartes's corpuscular theory, and Newtonian physics. Likewise, the countless natural as well as the supernatural or miraculous phenomena and events mentioned in the scriptures are represented with what he calls "the *Best Thoughts of our Times* upon them" (*New Offer* 12). Moreover, on many occasions Mather inserts physico-theological reflections upon the natural world, in which he argues from the design of creation to show God's omnipotence and benevolence towards humanity.

In addition to such empirical evidence, "Biblia Americana" amasses what Mather considered historical evidence demonstrating the accuracy of scriptural prophecies and their fulfilment in Christ's incarnation and redemptive work. For Mather, such "prophetic proof" was central to asserting the organic coherence and symmetry of the Old and New Testaments, and to supporting the

truth of Christianity. That the Old Testament prophets really spoke of Jesus was, for Mather, a non-negotiable position, one which he everywhere defends against critics such as Hugo Grotius (*Annotationes ad Vetus Testamentum* [1644]) and the early English Deist Anthony Collins (*A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* [1724]), who viewed the traditional messianic readings of many Old Testament passages as unwarranted allegorizations. In this crusade, Mather joins a host of other contemporary Christian apologists, including Edward Chandler, John Edwards, Robert Jenkin, Richard Kidder, and Humphrey Prideaux. In addition to traditional intertextual arguments, Mather's commentaries present historical evidence – advertised under heading X-from secular and ecclesiastical “HISTORIES of all Ages, brought in, to show how the Prophecies of this Invaluable Book, have had their most punctual Accomplishment” (*New Offer* 13). Moreover, with the help of the most accomplished Christian Hebraists of his time, Mather frequently draws on Talmudic and other Rabbinical commentaries to back up his messianic interpretations of Old Testament prophecies. This method ties in with a more general immersion-evident everywhere in the “*Biblia Americana*”-in post-biblical “*Jewish writings*; not only to Illustrate the Oracles once committed unto the distinguished nation; but also to demonstrate the Truths of Christianity” (*New Offer* 12).

Heading X in *A New Offer* also draws attention to another important area of interest: eschatology. Throughout the “*Biblia Americana*,” and with heightened intensity in his commentaries on the Books of Daniel and Revelation, Mather offers what he calls “strongly established *Conjectures*, (yet made with all due Modesty,)” on those prophecies which, in his opinion, “remain to be Accomplished ...” (*New Offer* 14) before the second coming. Heading XI of *A New Offer* reminds us that Mather was a staunch millennialist, who insisted on literalist readings of most prophecies regarding the apocalyptic tribulations and Christ's peaceable kingdom on earth (see Smolinski, Introduction and *Three-fold Paradise*). He knew, however, that there were objections (which, to some extent, he himself shared) in many established Protestant churches of the early eighteenth century against chiliastic enthusiasms. Consequently, his glosses steer a middle-course between laying out in vivid descriptions such eschatological events as the global conflagration ushering in Christ's kingdom on earth (which, he conjectured, might occur in 1736), the resurrection of the saints, and the descent of the (literal, cubical) New Jerusalem. Yet he also cautioned rabid millenarians against “the more Arbitrary and less Defensible Conceits, of *over-doing Students* in the Prophecies” (*New Offer* 14). Nowhere is the peculiar Matherite mixture of rationalism, empiricism, hyperliteralism, and heightened supernaturalism more clearly on display than in his millennialist speculations.

Much more conventional is his typology (heading IV), perhaps the most conservative aspect of the “*Biblia Americana*.” In principle, Mather remains in

a patristic and orthodox Reformed framework of interpretation. While his commentaries on the books of the Hebrew Bible provide typological readings of every conceivable figure or event, even those, as heading IV puts it, “which have sometimes appeared the least Fruitful with Instruction” (*New Offer* 12), these readings never suggest anything but fulfilment in Christ. Whatever has been written about Mather’s Americanization of typology (or millennialism, for that matter) is not borne out by his “Biblia.”¹⁰

Although freighted with the learning of ages, Mather’s “Biblia” again and again asserts that, at least until the return of Christ, the full meaning of God’s secrets revealed in the scriptures will elude the grasp of human reason. Indeed, Mather’s biblical criticism seems to have led him to the conclusion that on this side of the millennium the infallible truthfulness of the scriptures could not be irrefutably proven by rational methods of exegesis, but could only be recognized with the eyes of living faith bestowed upon those who are reborn in Christ. Thus, he came to consider the ultimate evidence of scriptural authority to be internal, rather than external. It was, he thought, something only obtained through a life of faith in Christ. The later entries in “Biblia Americana” especially reflect this Pietist inclination (expressed under heading XII), which promises the reader illustrations of “the Scriptures from EXPERIMENTAL PIETY, or the Observations of Christian Experience” (*New Offer* 14). Thus, the “Biblia Americana” develops a conceptual framework of experiential theology that promises a practical certainty even where the confidence in the absolute authority of the Bible’s textual form was shaken. Influenced by Halle Pietism and the hermeneutics of August Hermann Francke (1663–1727), Mather asserted in his later years that a right way of reading of the Bible can only be established through an intimate relationship of the believer to the text that finds expression in practical devotion and good deeds. In accordance with this experiential theology, the “Biblia Americana” often puts a special emphasis on lesson of practical piety and holy living when interpreting scriptural passages.¹¹

10 The literature on typology in early American culture and literature is extensive. See, for instance, Brumm, Bercovitch, *Typology and Puritan Origins*, and Lowance. Due in no small part to the formidable influence of Bercovitch, there has been a long-standing consensus amongst Americanists that the Puritans transformed typology into the central mode of their cultural imagination by extending the limits of traditional typological readings to include events and persons of New England history. In this Americanized form typology is then believed to have become an important part of U.S. national culture and art. For a critique of this interpretative paradigm, see Smolinski (“*Israel Redivivus*”). Significantly, we have so far not discovered one single instance in which Mather’s “Biblia” uses typology other than in a traditional Christo-centric form.

11 Mather was familiar with Francke’s most important programmatic writings on the interpretation of the Bible such as *Manuductio ad lectionem scripturae Sacrae* (1693). On Francke’s Pietist hermeneutics, see the essays in Aland. For a discussion of Mather’s relation with Halle and the relevant scholarly literature, see Scheiding’s essay in this collection.

Woefully inadequate as such a cursory account must be, it should suffice to suggest that the “*Biblia Americana*” is a unique work not only because of its massive size (indeed, had it been printed it would have been the largest book published in British North America), but it is also with regard to its design and format, combining, as it does, scholarly, speculative, apologetic, and practical inquiries. It seems fair to say, too, that Mather’s commentaries mark the beginning of historical criticism in North America, and, although hidden from the eyes of the public, remained unrivalled in its engagement with modern hermeneutical concerns until the early nineteenth century when German Higher Criticism gained a permanent foothold in New England theological seminaries.¹² To be sure, the foundations of Mather’s understanding of the Bible as the revealed and ultimately infallible word of God are still “pre-critical,” to use a term suggested by Hans Frei. A wholesale historicization of the biblical texts and canon formation was yet unthinkable for Mather’s generation. His commentaries, however, clearly reflect and react to those intellectual forces that were beginning to put pressure on the authority of the Bible and the literal truthfulness of its historical narrative and world picture. In Mather’s sophisticated and unpublished responses to these forces, which are defensive as well as adaptive in nature, he introduced the new European exegetical methods into the British colonies of North America that would come to define modern historical criticism, even if the methods employed were intended to defend orthodoxy.

The Fate of “*Biblia Americana*”

Mather probably thought that the wide range of topics in his “*Biblia*” would attract a broad audience across denominational lines and straddle different markets, for its ecumenical orientation and hybrid format attempted to catch both the scholarly and the popular eye. Tragically, however, his “*Biblia*” never reached anyone and seems to have fallen in the chasm between the two markets. Perhaps it was simply a case of market saturation. When Mather rather ineptly attempted to stake his claim in the highly competitive world of the London print market, the popular and scholarly fields had been claimed by the commentaries of Matthew Poole and Matthew Henry. Or, perhaps it was just too

¹² It has been generally assumed that historical-contextual criticism or “higher criticism” was only imported to New England from Germany by the generation of Moses Stuart (1780–1852), the so-called father of exegetical studies in America, and Joseph Stevens Buckminster (1785–1812), who studied the works of J.D. Michaelis, Jakob Griesbach, and Johann Gottfried Eichhorn in Göttingen. On the rise of German “Higher Criticism” in New England seminaries, see J. Brow, Giltner and Holifield. More recently, Stephen Stein and R. Brown have pointed to Jonathan Edwards’ engagement with issues of biblical authorship, integrity, and historical settings. The publication of the “*Biblia Americana*,” however, will reveal that the beginnings of historical-contextual criticism have to be pushed back another generation.

early and far too unusual for the backwater colonies to produce such massive tomes of research demanding large investments. In any case, in his lifespan, Mather failed to find patrons and publishers in the metropolitan centers (production in the colonies was impossible), and the manuscript never left Boston. Since Mather's descendants gave the six folio volumes to the Massachusetts Historical Society sometime at the beginning of the nineteenth century, they have remained in the archives, unpublished and largely unstudied.

Not that the "Biblia" was entirely forgotten. In most of the larger examinations of Mather's life or work, and sometimes in related studies, one can find brief references to his monumental Bible commentary, or a cursory account of its design and Mather's frustrated attempts to market his *magnum opus*. Except for Theodore Hornberger's lone early study, "Cotton Mather's Annotations on the First Chapter of Genesis" (1938), Cheryl Rivers' unpublished dissertation (1977), Middlekauff's brief examination of Mather's commentary on Genesis and Revelation (284–90, 344–45), Feldman's study on Mather's use of Josephus in his "Biblia" (1983), and recent articles by Smolinski and Maddux, in-depth examinations of specific aspects of the "Biblia" have not been undertaken.¹³ Prior to the General Introduction to the edition (see *BA* 1: 3–210), no comprehensive assessment of the work was ever attempted. Why has the "Biblia" been overlooked for so long? And why, in light of its importance, as is here suggested, hasn't an edition been undertaken earlier?

One reason seems to be that commentaries, as a genre have, unfortunately, not attracted much scholarly attention. While we have seen significant forays into the cultural history of the Bible in early America (see Hatch and Noll; Gutjahr), the history of Bible commentaries still remains, for the most part, a *terra incognita*. Another important factor was certainly the forbidding size and format of Mather's commentary. The countless (often unidentified) quotes in ancient languages surely repelled many modern scholars as well. It should be noted, moreover, that the reluctance of publishers to touch this gargantuan project – the printed edition will comprise nearly 15,000 pages – has not diminished since Mather's days, and it is no coincidence that it will take two publishing houses, in a transatlantic cooperation, to shoulder the financial burden to bring it to print. It is also no coincidence that the initiative came from a distinguished German publishing house specializing in theology, whose board of directors cared little about Mather's popular image in America, and so were uninhibited by any preconceptions in judging the significance of Mather's "Biblia Americana" as a work of biblical criticism. And here we probably get to the heart of the matter.

¹³ Another study that deals with "Biblia Americana" in a rather tangential fashion is Winship's *Seers of God* (95–98, 132–33).

Very likely, one of the main reasons why the “*Biblia Americana*” was so long neglected is the still prevailing negative image of Mather. Moreover, there were and still are disciplinary blinders keeping American scholars of Puritanism from looking at this work for what it is. Mather’s more recent and more sympathetic biographers, as well as a number of important studies on Puritanism in which Mather played a key-role, have all suggested that his “*Biblia*” was of considerable importance, yet the majority of references to the “*Biblia*” – most of them made in passing or in footnotes – are rather dismissive. These judgments inevitably reflect popular stereotypes about Mather and were formed without careful analysis of the work in the context of contemporary Bible commentaries. A striking example of such a dismissive comment on the “*Biblia*” appears in a footnote of Worthington C. Ford, the editor of the *Diary of Cotton Mather*, who called the manuscript “a great indigested mass of material, drawn from many sources, and with no evidence of design or settled plan,” making it the most conspicuous example of “the ill-regulated activity of Mather’s labors” (*Diary* 1: 170n). Similar judgments were passed on virtually all of Mather’s works, especially the *Magnalia Christi Americana*, since the early nineteenth century.¹⁴ Had Ford, and others before or after him, been able to put aside the general anti-Puritan bias and prejudices against Mather, as well as their (post-)Romantic concern with organic expression and originality, and had they studied the “*Biblia*” alongside Poole, Henry or Bayle, they surely would have come to different conclusions.

Mather’s Popular Reputation and Place in Academic Criticism

What, then, are the reigning prejudices about Mather that have also obscured the “*Biblia*”? For the vast majority of modern Americans, if they know anything about the colonial period, Cotton Mather is essentially an iconic embodiment of Puritan bigotry and what Hawthorne called the “persecuting spirit,” which in the nation’s collective memory found its most infamous manifestations in the witch trials at Salem village. In this view, Mather had not only inherited the religious dogmatism, intolerance, and moral self-righteousness commonly attributed to Puritan culture, but also represented the epitome of superstition and credulity of his age, but these traits were aggravated by a deeply twisted character, deformed through nagging insecurities, repressed desires and overweening pride. Predisposed in this manner and eager to assert his place, the young Mather, according to this long-prevailing narrative, put himself at the forefront of the escalating developments in Salem during the fateful summer

¹⁴ For a discussion of Romantic and post-Romantic criticism of Mather’s works in the context of his literary aesthetics (rather than theology), see Stievermann.

of 1692. Having already contributed much to inciting the witch-craze from the pulpit and through publications, Mather, driven by zealotry and personal ambition, then assumed a leading role in the persecutions. After the first accusations were made, he lent his clerical authority to the court, and urged the judges on until hundreds of people were in jail and 19 hanged. Or so it is widely believed. It makes little difference that Mather's two most recent biographies agree with much current scholarship on the witch trials that this popular narrative is a gross misrepresentation. This is not to say that Mather was fully exculpated by any of these studies, for unlike some other ministers he never called for an end to the trials, and he afterwards wrote New England's official defense of the court's procedures, the infamous *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693). Still, there is now a general agreement that his beliefs about the invisible world were very typical of the period, that he acted as a moderating force in the context of the trials, and never directly participated in the proceedings. He advised the judges against using spectral evidence and offered recommendations to proceed with caution lest innocents come to harm. In the end, Mather's role in the witchcraft episode was thus ambivalent and conflicted.¹⁵

In the popular imagination, however, Mather remains *the* psychopathic witch-doctor, and a main culprit for the tragic events at Salem. In this role he has gained a very doubtful, but also very powerful and resilient reputation. He is probably the only figure from colonial history who ever appeared in Marvel comic books, where he briefly had a role as a cross-wielding villain fighting Spider Man. It's also not unlikely to go to a Halloween party and meet someone dressed up as Cotton Mather, complete with wig and some instrument of torture. Even in historical literature that is geared to a broader audience, in journalism or TV-documentaries, one still finds the same old "polemical stereotypes which earlier historians have built on a relatively small basis of evidence, which have an odd way of persisting and coloring the judgments of later historians even when that basis has been destroyed" (Lovelace 291).

How Mather, to borrow a phrase from Brooks Holifield's essay in this collection, came to be "trapped in Salem" in the first place is a long and complex story. There is no room and really no need here to tell that story in any detail and unravel its various strands. Skilful hands have done much of that work for us.¹⁶ Broadly speaking, David Levin and Richard Lovelace have shown that it

15 For even-handed accounts of Mather's role in the witch trials, see Levin (*Cotton Mather* 195–222), Silverman (83–138), Rosenthal (esp. 135–48, 202), and Norton (esp. 203–07, 212–15, 246–52, 268–69, 284–85). The wide-spread supernatural beliefs in all segments of early modern New England society and the magical elements of both orthodox and folk religion are treated in Butler, Hall (*World of Wonder*), and Demos.

16 For anyone interested in understanding the "The Hazing of Cotton Mather" in American culture and academic discourse, David Levin's groundbreaking revisionist essay of the same title, together with Richard Lovelace's perceptive meta-historiographical study "Mather's Changing Image: A Bibliographic Inquiry" (published as an appendix to his *The Ameri-*

was polemics sparked by various socio-religious conflicts rather than careful historical inquiry that gave birth to and sustained the interpretative tradition according to which the tragedy of Salem was blamed primarily on the clergy, and in particular on Cotton Mather. Remembering Mather as the villain of Salem has always served the political, ecclesiastical needs of specific groups and helped them to define their cultural and religious identity. The origin of that tradition lies in the fierce battles over the authority of the ministers in Massachusetts's new social order, battles in which anti-clerical polemicists such as Robert Calef or William Douglass used the witch trials as a means to smear representatives of the old theocracy.

During Mather's lifetime and in the decades after his death, these attacks caused only limited damage to his overwhelmingly positive reputation as a caring pastor and renowned scholar. At the end of the eighteenth century, however, Calef's *More Wonders of the Invisible World* (1700) would then provide ammunition for quite different debates that *prima facie* had very little to do with Mather. In the intellectual debates of the early republic, America's national identity was often negotiated through a discourse about New England's history. "[M]any early republican historians," as William Van Arragon argues in this volume,

looked to the colonial past for antecedents and icons for the new nation and found useful progenitors in the Pilgrims and Puritans, whose complex history was reduced to the famous national myth of the band of proto-democrats seeking a land of religious liberty. But the Puritan past had to be selectively purged of elements deemed incompatible with the new republican ideals. Thus Cotton Mather was found guilty by many antiquarians and scholars of fomenting the Salem witch trials and, by association, came to represent all in the Puritan past that was un-American: religious fanaticism, priestcraft, political aristocracy. (Van Arragon 1–2)

But the real blow was yet to come. As Lovelace suggested and the new research by Van Arragon and Holifield demonstrates, Mather's reputation was compromised for good in the battles over church government that followed upon the Unitarian "take-over" of Harvard and of many New England churches in the early nineteenth century. Now the old accusations about Mather's role in Salem were revived by the religious liberals to bring into disrepute the traditional Calvinistic theology for which Mather stood, and especially his ecclesiastical writings to which conservative Congregationalists liked to refer in debates over church organization. An especially acrimonious and influential product of this struggle for control over the New England churches are the *Lectures in Witchcraft* (1831) written by the Unitarian clergyman Charles W.

can Pietism of Cotton Mather), remain the best starting points. More recently, William Van Arragon has undertaken an extensive examination of Mather's role in American cultural memory. For a larger examination of the cultural function of the Salem witch trials in America's collective memory, see Adams.

Upham of Salem.¹⁷ The Unitarian polemics against Mather also found their way into the fictional literature of the American Renaissance (see Felker), the works of Romantic historians and, subsequently, into the progressive school of historiography, whose view of American history as a struggle of the common man against undemocratic and oppressive authorities dominated the field through the first decades of the twentieth century. One need only look at George Bancroft's account of Salem in the first volume of his 1834 *History of the United States* (1: 83–84, 95) and Vernon Parrington's treatment of Mather in the first volume (1927) of his *Main Current's in American Thought* (93–117) to appreciate the continuities.

Parrington's portrayal of Mather as a "crooked and diseased mind," "over-sexed and overwrought," "an attractive subject for the psychoanalyst," whose *Diary* "was a treasure-trove for the abnormal psychologist" (107, 109) bespeaks a general resentment towards everything Puritan, which was widespread amongst modernist theologians and intellectuals of the early twentieth century. "By the early decades of the twentieth century," as George Marsden has written, "Puritan bashing had become widely acceptable as a way for progressive Americans to free themselves from Victorian moralism" (501). Cotton Mather, like Jonathan Edwards, was an easy and welcome target for cultural critics such as H.L. Mencken and William Carlos Williams (Reising 49–53), whose vituperations ultimately had very little to do with the Puritanism of the colonial period and everything to do with the conservative Christians of their own time. But the prevalent anti-Puritan bias of the Jazz Age very much impeded a revisionist re-assessment of Mather even when earlier controversies over church organization had long faded, and evidence was undeniable for his rather moderate role in Salem.

As Parrington's language also demonstrates, twentieth-century judgments on Mather and other Puritans have often been informed by a cavalier understanding of psychology and especially Freudian psychoanalysis. Even in recent and more sympathetic studies of Mather's life and work, the language of what Lovelace calls "psychohistorical critique" (299) frequently intrudes. In effect, this type of critique rather bluntly pathologizes Puritan views and religious practices, thereby obstructing more insightful consideration of the complex theological, cultural or social contexts from which these views and practices emerged. David Levin ("The Hazing") convincingly argued that Mather scholars were particularly prone to misconstrue—using virtually no reliable evidence—a psychoanalytical narrative of the precocious, stuttering Puritan child-prodigy who is subjected to an intense religious indoctrination, stifled by an oppressive filiofetism and the expectations of an overpowering, yet frequently absent father, at the same time that he is being bullied by his class-mates. From this

17 Upham reiterated his views on Mather in his *Salem Witchcraft* (1867).

unhappy boyhood, so the line of reasoning goes, grows a highly irritable and at times paranoid egomaniac who is eager to please and subservient to his elders, but plagued by fears of impotence and brimming with pent-up (sexual) aggression and fantasies of self-importance. Needless to say, such a view reinforced existing assumptions about Mather's involvement in the witch craze even by explaining it as something for which his childhood might be to blame.

With this narrative in place, everything in Mather's adult life, from his engagement with colonial politics to his philanthropic schemes, becomes somehow symptomatic of his frenetic personality or appears as an act of overcompensation. The latter explanation has in fact been frequently cited to account for Mather's massive output as an author and even for his elaborate and hyperbolic style.¹⁸ Explicitly or implicitly, this idea of Mather as a neurotic genius who, driven by his secret impulses, churned out dozens of works each year as compensatory acts of self-aggrandizement, belittles the stature of his works as the products of an uncontrolled, almost compulsive writing that lacked in reason and design, and were somehow deviant or unhealthy. A striking example for this would be Fords above-cited judgment on the "*Biblia Americana*." Much to their credit, all of our contributors refrain from putting Mather on the (amateur) psychologist's couch. They rather study his work as they would that of any other scholar of Mather's generation in which ornate styles and large oeuvres were nothing out of the ordinary¹⁹

18 For all its great merits and wonderfully lucid consideration of cultural and historical contexts, even Silverman's biography frequently drifts into a rather heavy-handed psychologizing of Mather that is as speculative as it is unfair and patronizing. A particularly crude example is Silverman's treatment of Mather's famous vision (*Diary* 1: 86–87) in which an angelic being promised him – with reference to Ezekiel's prophecy (31:3–9) of the Cedar in Lebanon with its lengthening branches – a fruitful career in the service of God's church, and spoke of the many godly books he would publish not only in America but also in Europe. In Silverman's reading, "the figure whose shoulders were wings spoke Cotton Mather's own thoughts. Among other things, the angel gave expression to the 'ambitious Affectation of Praeheminencies' that had troubled him since youth, the much censored longing for applause and fame which the childlike view he maintained of himself helped restrain. Mather's need to demonstrate copious productivity appears as early as his youthful stammer, of course, and all of his writings teem with images of size. The angel merely articulated these while omitting the guilty reproofs that otherwise accompanied them, forecasting that 'a certain youth' would enjoy some enormous potency ..." Silverman continues, "Explaining Ezekiel's prediction of the 'greatness, in the Length of his Branches,' as referring to the books Mather would publish not only in America but also in Europe, the angel in effect promised him a transatlantic penis" (128–29). For an astute criticism of the judgmental, frequently contemptuous assessments of Mather's psychological character in recent scholarship, including Silverman's biography, see Levin, "Edwards, Franklin, and Cotton Mather."

19 How much of the perceived defects and idiosyncrasies of Mather's writings disappear when we analyze it in the context of classical literary genres, such as the Plutarchian parallel biography and the Aeniad, or in the context of certain rhetorical traditions, such as the ideal of *copia*, was demonstrated by Manierre, Van Cromphout, Bercovitch (*The Puritan Origins*), and Stievermann. See also Kennedy's essay in this volume.

It is interesting to see how the inveterate psychologizing about Mather's personality and authorship conveniently connects with the way that modern intellectual historians have often interpreted the culture of third- and fourth-generation Puritanism as a whole. In the "declension narrative" of New England Puritanism, codified in Perry Miller's *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (1953) and since then recast in many variants, Cotton Mather figures as the representative of a late and decadent phase. For Miller and countless others, Mather's purported propensity to shrill invectives and endless jeremiads about a backsliding populace are symptomatic of a cultural moment in which New England Puritanism had lost its earlier organic wholeness and vitality, which was fed by a robust fusion of piety and intellect. Similarly, Mather's quarrelsomeness, his fears of political plots and demonic conspiracies, is thought to indicate an anxious awareness that the traditional faith was following the old charter to its grave. With all its invocations of God's providential care for New England, its fliopious representations of an exemplary past and rhetorical affirmations of theological orthodoxy, a work like Mather's *Magnalia*, in this view, thus really bespeaks a pathetic "loss of mastery" (Peter Gay) and signals a giving in to the new order and new ideas. In this still-influential declension narrative, which ultimately is part of a larger secularization narrative,²⁰ Mather therefore has the rhetorical and organizational function of a typical latecomer, whose works serve as a lens of retrospection or as telescopes to look into the future of American culture.²¹ By implication, the value of these works was mostly seen in either their antiquarian character as documents of what was about to be lost, or in what they anticipated and would later come to fruition.²²

Indeed, besides his insoluble association with Salem, it seems to be Cotton Mather's historical fate, as Levin puts it, "to be considered largely as a transitional figure whose prodigious but narrow mind stretched inadequately between the zealous founding of the bible Commonwealth and the enlightened struggle for the Republic" (Levin, Introduction vii). For the Perry Miller school of American intellectual history, Mather's engagement with Enlightenment ideas, just like his turn towards European Pietism, were not part of a genuine renewal or reformulation of his ancestor's religion, but reflected the decline of New England Puritanism as it gave way to a more secular society and a this-worldly philosophy of human self-determination. Mather's perceived dabbling

20 For a succinct discussion of revisionist criticism of the traditional declension narrative, see Bremer (161–67 and 212–20) and the literature cited there.

21 Although well-informed and free from open hostility, Emory Elliott's portrait of Mather in *The Cambridge History of American Literature* (esp. 271–78), the most prestigious literary history at present, in many ways recasts some of the derogatory assumptions inscribed into the declension narrative.

22 For two excellent revisionist readings of Mather's *Magnalia* which challenge both the traditional declension narrative and its critical modifications at the hand of the New Americanists, see Felker (17–87) and Arch (136–89).

with natural philosophy in *The Christian Philosopher* is thus read as an inadvertent accommodation to the Deist rationalism that eventually evolved into the nature religion of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Mather's *Bonifacius* is understood as an unconscious surrender to Arminian tendencies leading to a Franklinesque ethics of self-improvement. Thanks to Winton U. Solberg, Mather's reputation as a serious Enlightenment scientist has improved in recent years, and his *Christian Philosopher* is now more widely acknowledged as "the first comprehensive account of physical and natural sciences" (Solberg xxi) written in British North America.²³ In many respects, however, the old view persists, not least because of a general disregard of the early Enlightenment and the first half of the eighteenth century as a transitional period.

The above-cited American genealogies bring us back to another problematic tendency in interpreting Mather that has too often restricted the angle on his work and strengthened the derogatory assumptions about his character. Like many figures of the colonial era, Mather has been subject to a retrospective Americanization, that is, he has been read time and again as illustrating certain aspects or a certain developmental stage in the life of the American mind. Our habit to think of Mather as an "Early American" shows how deeply ingrained the assumption is in our minds that, in general, the Puritans formidably contributed to the making of the US and those qualities we now associate with Americanness. Indeed, the Puritans are either viewed as antagonistic forces that needed to be overcome or model forefathers bequeathing an enduring cultural legacy to the embryonic world power. As suggested above, this notion was historically born out of the search for national origins in the post-revolutionary period (see Kemmen; Hall, "Puritanism"), and then became widely accepted as something of an ideological axiom by the nascent American Studies movement after WWII. With Mather in particular, the utilization of New England Puritanism as a "usable past" for the construction of a literary and cultural tradition frequently led to his reduction to an allegorical function in the ongoing processes of national self-reflection and self-definition.²⁴

23 Earlier assessments of Mather's response to Enlightenment sciences can be found in Stearns, Beall and Shyrock. More recently, Michael P. Winship devotes much of his important book-length study on the transformation of Puritan providentialism to Cotton Mather. Winship argues that Mather's reception of early Enlightenment thought and his wish to be acknowledged in the learned culture of Britain that was moving away from the unabashed supernaturalism of the seventeenth century forced him to reformulate the Puritan belief in God's providence in the language of reason and natural philosophy that de-emphasized the importance of miracles, prodigies and demonic forces. Mather did so, Winship argues, without being able to really resolve the fundamental contradictions between providentialism and the emerging scientific world view. Mark Noll's study ("Science, Theology, and Society") of the evangelical engagement with science portrays Mather as the American theologian who "established the main evangelical tradition with the publication in 1721 of *The Christian Philosopher*" (101).

24 In Reising's seminal study of the discipline, he discusses the "The Puritan origins theo-

“[I]n the popular panorama of the American past,” as Kenneth Silverman writes, Mather is the dark forefather from whose shadow emerge the shining figures of Franklin, Jefferson and Washington to define what is quintessentially American. If the country wishes to think of its national ideology in terms of “democratic tolerance, reasonableness, individuality, and downrightness, this nebulous mythological Mather serves to symbolize what American character is not, or should not be—bigoted, superstitious, authoritarian, and devious.” Hence, the “gross distortion of so complex a man into a national gargoye” (Silverman 425) took place almost independently of Mather’s actual writings or doings. Instead, as Silverman notes, it was defined by a mechanism of cultural psychology (mainly the mechanism of “Othering”) at work in the construction of collective self-images. Mather’s part in American “public memory” as a personification of “the worst elements of Puritanism” (Lovell 290) that needed to be expunged or transfigured in the building of the nation has its structural parallels in the explanatory function which was assigned to him in American scholarly discourse. Here, too, one notices a long-standing obsession with Mather’s meaning for America’s future history and for the formation of national culture and identity. This approach to Mather is, of course, by no means singular. Indeed, as the name suggests, the entire sub-field of “Early American Studies” used to be oriented towards such nationalist mappings, searching for origins and foreshadowing, and drawing lines of continuity from Edwards to Emerson, from Bradstreet to Dickinson, and so on (see Gura). Over the past two decades, however, the discipline of American Studies has undergone an intense process of self-examination in which this nation-based paradigm of cultural and literary studies was subjected to much necessary criticism. There is now a widespread awareness of the ways in which the constitution of the discipline of American Studies had, from the beginning, simultaneously been informed by and reinforced ideas of American exceptionalism.²⁵

In this spirit, the sub-field of Early American Studies has done much soul-searching in recent years, and has generally followed the discipline’s overall “transnational turn” away from the U.S.-centered paradigm. Today most schol-

rists” as one of three major schools in the formative debates over what constituted a specifically American cultural and literary tradition (49–92).

25 In the preface to the collection *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature*, Wai Chee Dimock, quoting Janice Radway’s 1998 presidential address to the American Studies Association, neatly sums up the drift of much recent revisionist criticism when she writes: “A field calling itself ‘American’ imagines that there is something exceptional about the United States, manifesting itself as a ‘distinctive set of properties and themes in all things American, whether individuals, institutions, or cultural products.’ This premise of exceptionalism translates into a methodology that privileges the national above all else. The field legitimizes itself as a field only because the nation does the legitimizing. The disciplinary sovereignty of the former owes everything to the territorial sovereignty of the latter” (Dimock 3).

ars of the colonial era self-consciously work not to project the conceptual framework of the nation back onto this period. The English colonies are no longer envisioned as self-contained, self-evolving cultural units that would eventually merge and come to fruition in a presumed new totality of U.S. culture. Consequently, there has been a good deal of re-evaluation of earlier scholarship, but not in all areas, and not for all key-figures. While, for instance, we had critical examinations of the retrospective Americanization of Benjamin Franklin (see Wood), unfortunately no such project has yet been undertaken with regard to Mather. Although some of the leading practitioners of contemporary Puritan studies have been champions of a transatlantic approach, this particular branch of scholarship seems, broadly speaking, most resistant to a methodological de-nationalization. This is perhaps not altogether surprising, considering how deeply entrenched Puritan origin theories are in the discipline's "field imaginary."

In the grand narratives about the formation of America's national identity construed by some of the most influential Americanists of the second half of the twentieth century, the New England Puritans figured prominently as forerunners or originators. Depending on the individual perspective, the Puritans were either celebrated or blamed for having established certain features and themes presumed to be distinctively American. Cotton Mather in particular was seen as someone foreshadowing various aspects of a presumed "American self," especially those features that were rather unlikable. We already spoke of Miller's assumption that, in Mather's later works, the Puritan notion of self-sanctification evolved into moral perfectionism and a "do gooder"-reformist mentality, which he passed down to Franklin who, after purging it of Mather's elitism and religious fanaticism, made it an essential part of the national mentality. Mather also loomed large in Sacvan Bercovitch's argument about the origins of an American exceptionalist ideology and the oppressive culture of hegemonic consensus, which he located in the Puritan transformation of a traditional Christian hermeneutics into a symbolic rhetoric of American identity. Making the *Magnalia Christi Americana* the paradigmatic text for what Bercovitch describes as the genre of representative American (auto-)biography, he turned Mather into a figurehead of US-national literature *avant la lettre*, a figurehead who anticipated many facets in the works of the American Renaissance.²⁶ Similarly, studies of gender and race relations in the United States have frequently traced the ideological formations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries back to a presumed Puritan origin. As it was for the critics of exceptionalism, the study of Puritanism was, here, a way to attack aspects of American culture by

26 For insightful criticism of Bercovitch's master-thesis of a Puritan-derived civil theology, see Reising (74–92), Delbanco, and Harlan.

digging up the assumed historical roots of racism and oppressive gender hierarchies.²⁷

We do not wish to imply that the Puritan origins theorists got it all wrong, for many of their specific findings are undoubtedly valid. Our concern is with the facets of Mather that have been obscured and sometimes distorted by the “Puritan legacy model of conceptualizing American distinctiveness” (Buell 11). Because of the search for distinctive qualities of “Americanness” in Mather’s work, too much attention was given to a small number of texts in Mather’s huge oeuvre, focusing on local affairs (such as the Salem trials) or New England’s history, specifically the *Magnalia*. But, more importantly, the tendency to use Puritanism and Mather as convenient shorthand for a critique of modern American culture has, in our opinion, led in many cases to a problematic, backward projection of the concepts or ideas in question. Furthermore, the guiding assumption that the meaning of Mather as a historical and transitional figure had to be primarily found in his relation to the future nation and its ideological formations, or that he himself primarily cared about the meaning of America, has all too often made scholars overlook the strong international or, more accurately, supra-regional dimensions of his thinking and writing. Because Americanists, compelled by their “field imaginary,” were so busy inquiring into Mather’s role in America’s future history, and in the creation of national culture and identity, they rarely asked other questions which we think are at least as significant, and, from a historical point of view, more to the point: What, for instance, was his role in defining a specifically Christian Enlightenment in the Atlantic world? What was his role in the development of Protestant ecumenism, or in the rise of the international evangelical awakening in the early eighteenth century? What part did he play in contemporary world mission endeavors, transatlantic reform movements or the early attempts to abolish the slave trade? How did he position himself in the central scholarly and theological debates of his time over the authority of the Bible, the new historical-contextual approach in scriptural exegesis, and the relationship between revelation and reason?²⁸ Such questions are begging to be answered today.

That Mather was commonly interpreted in the framework, or measured by the standards of a theology created by early seventeenth century American Puritanism is understandable, if not entirely accurate or satisfactory. For doing so,

27 The scholarly literature on the construction of gender in Mather’s writings is surveyed in Gelina’s essay in this collection. Mather’s role in scholarly narratives of America’s racial history or history of racism are discussed in Stievermann’s essay.

28 Tellingly enough, those scholars of Mather’s works who have begun to pursue these and similar questions in an international context are usually not Americanists. Mather’s activities in the transatlantic networks of early Enlightenment science are discussed in Beall, Stearns, and Solberg. Mather’s role in paving the way for the First Great Awakening is discussed in Lovelace. For a review of the literature on his ecumenical contacts and activities, see Scheiding’s essay in this collection.

on the one hand, parochialized Mather and, on the other, almost inevitably lends support to some sort of declension narrative. It is inappropriate, however, that Mather's works have more often been read with an eye to later U.S. authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and their (alleged) nationalist ideas than in dialogue with his contemporary peers across the Christian world and their intellectual agendas or practical projects. However strongly he felt obliged to the Reformed tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Mather was very much a theologian and scholar of the early eighteenth century, and he has to be read in the context of the transatlantic debates that occupied this period if we want to understand him better. One need only look at the vast corpus of Mather's letters (of which only a small part has survived, and an even smaller fraction edited) to appreciate that he consistently looked beyond the horizon of his native province onto the broad and rapidly shifting intellectual panorama of the period. He exchanged news and debated ideas with literally hundreds of clerics, scientists and missionaries across Europe and as far away as India. Mather corresponded with Nonconformist as well as Anglican ministers across England, Scotland, and Ireland, such as John Edwards, Robert Wodrow and William Whiston; with Richard Waller and Sir Hans Sloane, two presidents of the Royal Society; with the Lutheran Pietist August Hermann Francke in Halle, with the Lutheran missionary in Tranquebar Bartholomäus Ziegenbalgh (see Benz "Pietist and Puritan Sources"), and with the great Reformed theologian Herman Witsius at Utrecht, to name just a few examples (see Mather, *Selected Letters*).

If his network of actual correspondents was large, the cosmos of thinkers with whose works he engaged was infinitely more expansive. Mather developed his ideas and wrote his works in conversation with a vast multitude of theologians, scholars and literary authors across the contemporary Atlantic world, but also, to borrow a phrase from Wai Chee Dimock, across "deep time." For Mather's writing continuously moves between centuries and millennia as well as between continents. Virtually everything Mather composed was either primarily exegetical, or had the Bible as its primary frame of reference, and the way he approached scripture had a strongly historical, and indeed historicist bend. Following a broad trend in Protestant theology of the era, he regarded the scriptures not simply as revelations of God's universal truth, but also as ancient documents whose full meaning could only be unlocked through rigid philological work, careful contextualization, and with the help of modern science. About the authors and cultural circumstances that brought forth these documents as well as about their textual tradition, history of reception, and history interpretation, he probably knew more than anyone in British North America at the turn of the eighteenth century. When constructing an argument, be it from the Bible or about it, he would habitually respond to the latest European studies in biblical scholarship, historiography, and the natural sciences. Consulting the original languages in which the texts were written, he draws upon

African Church Fathers, ancient Roman historians, Greek philosophers and poets, Targums, Rabbinical commentaries, and medieval scholastic works. Interpretation of Mather must therefore shift from an exclusive lens of earlier Puritans or later American writers, to a side-by-side account of his work with the authors whom he actually studied and admired and, consequently, had the greatest influence on his work. Among these, some, if by no means most, are English theologians, a very few are New English divines (mostly his father, uncle and grandfather), but the majority are either Continental or ancient figures. To really de-nationalize our approach to Mather would thus mean to study him alongside, say, his favored Church Fathers Theodoret and Chrysostom (*Manuductio* 89), the historians Eusebius and Flavius Josephus, or contemporary scholars such as Johannes Buxtorf, Samuel Bochart, John Spencer, Sebastian Münster, Johann Heinrich Heidegger, or the more carefully handled Hugo Grotius.

To anyone who had eyes to see it, the broad range and historical depth of Mather's mind was evident all along in his well-known publications, but it becomes undeniable with the "Biblia Americana." His synoptic commentary shows how far removed he was from the stereotype of the provincial Puritan, and how mistaken the old clichés about his pedantry were. Belonging themselves to a discipline characterized by an inveterate monolingualism, Americanist in particular had been fond of denouncing the many quotes from the ancient languages in Mather's texts as ornamental bombast serving no purpose other than (out of some assumed inferiority complex) showing off the author's erudition. Measured against works of an American literary canon that had been constructed on the basis of a (post-) Romantic aesthetics, Mather's sprawling and multilingual writing simply appeared as bad taste. If seen in the context of early eighteenth-century scholarship, however, it appears as a perfectly normal *modus operandi*.

For one thing, Mather approached the Bible, and through it, all of nature and secular history, as a trained philologist who sought the meaning of God's truth by analyzing and comparing the linguistic forms in which it had been originally expressed (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek), and into which it had been later translated, such as Latin (VUL), Greek (LXX) and also later Aramaic versions of the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, he also considered the later vernaculars in which the Holy Bible was translated such as French, German and Spanish. More than any other of his works, the "Biblia Americana" also reveals that Mather did not just decorate his ideas and thoughts with foreign learning, but, in accordance with the prevailing methodologies of both biblical criticism and historiography, developed them through extensive dialogues with multiple sources, most of which were in languages other than English. In an age that considered it good academic practice to quote one's sources in the original, the nineteenth- and twentieth-century complaints about the *Magnalia's* "numer-

ous quotations in Latin, Greek and Hebrew which rise up like so many decayed, hideous stumps ... to deform the surface" (Tudor 256) would have sounded odd to any scholar's ear. Moreover, at the time Latin was still the *lingua franca* amongst the learned, and a good many of the contemporary works that Mather cites were written in that language. Seen in its proper context, Mather's citation-laden style, and especially his frequent recourse to Latin (the language in which he, out of necessity, also conducted his correspondence with Continental theologians such as Francke or Witsius) were neither marks of Mather's foppish pompousness nor of his antiquarian backwardness, as many Americanist liked to think, but the required graces of any and every serious theologian in the early eighteenth century and long before.

It is one of the central goals of this collection to demonstrate that Mather is most fruitfully studied as a figure whose thinking was not so much inward-looking as intensely transatlantic in orientation. For one thing, his publications drew on a vast array of Old World sources and often responded to European debates. Furthermore, the texts show the marks of being written for an audience beyond that of his geographical location. This is also the case with regard to his practical projects of religious revival, church reform or mission: again and again his pen points to the world outside and ties him inextricably into the context of Protestantism both within and beyond Britain. Having said all this, we do not wish to deny that Mather, maybe more so than many of his fellow New Englanders at the time, was conscious of living in America, and of being a colonial. There undoubtedly is a pronounced regionalist dimension to a lot of the things he wrote. After all, according to the *OED*, he was the first white British colonial to refer to himself as an American,²⁹ and he used this adjective in the titles of some of his most important works, including: *Magnalia Christi Americana*, *Corderius Americanus*, *Theopolis Americana*, *Psalterium Americanum* and, of course, "*Biblia Americana*." Nevertheless, taking this regionalist dimension of his work as something like a proto-nationalist mentality would be a misinterpretation of this early eighteenth-century mind.

It is certainly no coincidence that most of the works to which he gave the epithet "American" have titles in Latin, the language of international scholarship-marking this rhetorical gesture as an intersection of regional concerns, colonial self-consciousness and cosmopolitan aspiration. Behind this contrary gesture we sense feelings of inferiority, a dogged sense of pride, and the wish for recognition. In his biography, Silverman has given us a vivid picture of how

²⁹ According to the *OED*, Cotton Mather was the first writer of English descent born in the New World who used the adjective American in the sense of "a native or inhabitant of America; especially of the British colonies in North America; of European descent." In this way the adjective was first employed in Mather's 1691 *The Triumph of the Reformed Religion in America* (88), and then in self-reference ("One poor feeble American") in the General Introduction of the *Magnalia* (33).

painfully self-aware Mather was of his colonial condition, of the remoteness from the metropolitan center, and how conscious he was of the dominant European perception of people in America as backward, uncouth and incapable of cultural or scholarly accomplishments. In his many transatlantic conversations Mather thus felt “both challenged to report the uniqueness of his country and pained by the relative crudeness of its intellectual life ...” (Silverman 245). Simultaneously embarrassed about his provinciality, and determined to assert the significance of New England’s religious legacy (most importantly the legacy of the Mather dynasty!), he indeed strove “to become conspicuous as an American. For he looked out eagerly from the New World on major intellectual developments abroad, aspiring to contribute to them ...” in the “hope of putting America on the cultural map” (425–26).³⁰

However, Mather’s hope and the undeniable wish for cultural self-assertion as an American did not relate to a “country,” not even an “infant country” (245), as Silverman and others would have it. Mather’s aspiration and emotional bonds related to his native New England as an outward province of the British Empire. The national framework is misleading here, since someone like Mather certainly had little sense of community with Anglican planters in Virginia or Quakers in Pennsylvania. The self-identification as American should not be interpreted as an expression of solidarity with other groups of colonials across British North America, but as the message of a Boston scholar directed at a European audience of peers from which he strove to gain recognition. The message Mather sent, however, is decidedly mixed and constitutes, on the one hand, an act of proud defiance of the “poor American” (as he liked to style himself), who could produce such wondrous works despite the circumstances in which he lived and, on the other hand, a subservient *captatio benevolentiae* intended to evoke sympathetic interest or to sequester potential criticism.³¹

Both Mather’s ambition to become the first New England luminary in the intercontinental Republic of Letters and his anxious self-consciousness as a marginalized colonial are clearly on display in the rhetorical gymnastics he performs to advertise his “Biblia Americana” in *A New Offer*. Biblical scholarship was probably the most prestigious intellectual discipline at the turn of the eight-

30 Winship’s insightful comment on this matter deserves to be quoted here: “Although he never traveled far from Boston, he always saw himself as a transatlantic figure, a person out to make his mark on a European intellectual and religious world, which he did with a respectable degree of success” (87).

31 Interestingly enough, Mather also attributed part of his difficulties to find subscribers for “Biblia Americana” to metropolitan arrogance towards the colonial provinces. In a 1715 letter to Sir William Ashurst he complained that many London Dissenters “seem to be of the opinion, that a poor American must never be allow’d capable of doing any thing worth any ones regarding; or to have ever look’d on a Book. And the Truth is, we are under such Disadvantages, that if we do any thing to purpose, it must carry in it a tacit Rebuke to the sloth of people more advantageously circumstanced” (*Diary* 2: 331).

eenth century and, as Peter N. Miller has written, comparable in status to rocket science in the second half of the twentieth century. No one knew this better than Mather, but he also knew that Britain had just recently launched such prestigious spaceships as *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta*, *Critici Sacri*, and *Synopsis Criticorum*. Thus, in his 1714 pamphlet he staked his claim in the market with considerable nervousness and trepidations. “Sometimes very mean things,” he winked at potential subscribers with one of his characteristic puns, “have on the score of their being *Far-fetcht*, had a Value set upon them, and not been look'd upon as too Dear-bought, when a great Price has been given for them.”

If a Work, which is a *Tree*, that grew on the Western side of the *Atlantic*, may on *that score* hope to be valued by good Men, in the *other Hemisphere*, there will be an accession of *this peculiar Circumstance*, that, *Gentlemen*, the *Fruits* upon it, or at least, the *Seeds* that produced them, were most of them, Originally *Your own*: And it cannot but be a *Pleasure*, if not a *Surprize* unto you, to find that so many of your *Best Things*, have passed over *the great and wide Sea* unto the *American Strand*. Nor will it be New or Strange, if some Things happen to be *Meliorated*, and made more *Sweet and Fine*, by passing over this mighty Ocean. Or, to address you under *another Figure*; The Writers whom you made much of, while you had them *at Home* with you in a more *separate Condition*, certainly, will not lose your Favour, for having *Travelled Abroad*, and now *Returned Home in Company*; tho' with their *Habit and Language* having something of an *American Change* upon it. (*A New Offer* 10)³²

You can trust the quality of this American product, Mather – in a figurative reversal of the mercantile relations between the colonies and the motherland – is telling his target audience across the British Empire, because all the wonderful intellectual raw materials that went into its production have been originally imported from Europe. Besides the insights this passage offers us into the psychology of the colonial condition, it is also highly revealing with respect to Mather's self-understanding as a New England intellectual, and with respect to the question: what did he think was specifically American about his “*Biblia Americana*”? Obviously, Mather did not aspire for originality in the Romantic sense, and he had no notion of an autochthonous American writing. Rather, he saw his own role as that of a collector, organizer, amalgamator, and, ideally, a creative emendator of European learning. The word “European” needs emphasis here because the seeds of learning, which Mather hoped to bring into fruition, were by no means predominantly English. Guided by the early modern

32 The trope of the towering tree on the Western side of the Atlantic recalls the imagery from the prophecy of Ezekiel (31:3–9) and the imagery with which the angel in Mather's vision spoke to him “of the books this youth should write and publish, not only in America, but in Europe” and “of the great works this youth should do for the church of Christ in the revolutions that are now at hand” (*Diary* 1: 86–87). This suggests that Mather looked at his “*Biblia Americana*” as the true fulfillment of his calling and expected that its publication would bring him lasting glory.

ideal of *copia*, he imagined the Americanness of his work to lie in the unprecedented breadth and abundance of accumulated knowledge. More importantly, the “American Change” of which *A New Offer* speaks points to Mather’s hope of achieving a pious synthesis of biblical revelation with the various branches of contemporary knowledge in a manner that would also translate into practical lessons for holy living and evangelical renewal (see Stievermann).

In no way, however, does the identification (either of himself or his works) as American imply an attempt to achieve a cultural “divorce from Europe” (Silverman 426). This is the agenda of other New England intellectuals a hundred years later. If Silverman repeats the old Americanist *topos* according to which Mather’s works “contain an embryonic element of nationalism” (245), Silverman, without acknowledging the contradiction, corrects this misjudgment in a wonderfully perceptive commentary on the *Magnalia*. Whereas generations of Americanists have read the *Magnalia* as something of an early patriotic epic—invariably quoting its famous opening sentence, “I WRITE the WONDERS of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION, flying from the depravations of Europe to the American Strand ...” — Silverman notices that almost the entire “General Introduction” of that work is a qualification of its first paragraph. Because he wrote the book primarily for a European readership, “specifically for an English audience,” Mather is indeed anxious “to exhibit New England’s affection for the mother country, aware, and not distressed that New England’s place in history was that of one outpost in a taut new transatlantic imperial network” (Silverman 160). The same can be said for his “Biblia” which, as he puts it in *A New Offer*, was undertaken in the hope “that AMERICA may at length, with a Benign and Smiling Aspect of her Lady-Mother upon her, come to something, for an Interest that must *have these uttermost Parts of the Earth for its Possession*” (9).

Mather was therefore eager to demonstrate the religious and cultural significance of these “*uttermost Parts of the Earth*” vis-à-vis the Old World, but never entertained any fantasies about American (cultural) autonomy. Such fantasies would have been virtually unthinkable for him. Not just because he understood himself as a loyal subject of the British crown, but because God’s true Church, as the community which mattered most to him, was, like the international Republic of Letters, a global community. In fact, as he grew older, Mather’s understanding of the Church became increasingly ecumenical and thus transnational. Although it has never been widely acknowledged in the field of American Studies, Mather’s strong ecumenism has long been established beyond doubt by church historians such as Ernst Benz (“Ecumenical Relations”) and Richard Lovelace, and shown to be an integral part of his theology, especially regarding his eschatology (Middlekauff 227–32). Nowhere is this ecumenical spirit more clearly on display than in Mather’s “Biblia Americana.” In his advertisement of the “Biblia,” Mather announced that the commentary was written by one “strictly adhering to the principles of the *Christian Religion*,

professed in the *Reformed Churches*,” but that it was “not a Work animated with the *Spirit of Party*.” Ultimately, the target audience for “the Oblations which he brings from those that may be accounted *Better than himself*,” he writes, is “the Church, to which we all owe our *All*” (*New Offer* 9). Spelled with a capital C, the Church here clearly signifies an international community of Protestants “who embrace the *True Religion*, tho’ of different Perswasions in some lesser Points of it” (*A New Offer* 7–8).

By offering the collected fruits of his scholarship to this international and inter-denominational community of “Impartial Christians, of whatever Denomination or Subdivision in Christianity” (*New Offer* 7), Mather wished to draw them together on the basis of the essential points demonstrated from the scriptures so that they could engage in worldwide co-operations for reformist and missionary work. For Mather, fostering an active Christian union of Protestant churches under the banner of Pietist renewal was “a necessary part of the preparation for the Second Coming” (Middlekauff 231) and the rise of the millennium. He hoped that New England would be allowed a place in the millennial kingdom, but never thought his native province and its churches would take center stage in Christ’s reign. In his view, New England (be it as a community or as a model of church government) was neither the hub of the universe, nor the primary frame of reference; furthermore, there is no reason to claim that his eschatological hopes were invested in America as a region or special agent in redemption history (see Smolinski “*Israel Redivivus*”).

Multilingual, of enormous geographical and temporal range, cosmopolitan and ecumenical in orientation, the “*Biblia Americana*,” for all intents and purposes, was probably the closest thing to a genuine work of American world literature before the syncretistic world scriptures of the Transcendentalists. With this collection, we make an attempt to do more justice to these dimensions of Mather’s work. Although completely free in their choice of topics, none of our contributors had anything to say about Mather’s contributions to a presumed American character or ideology. Apart from a general weariness with this kind of approach, it seems as if working with the “*Biblia Americana*” makes one almost automatically gravitate away from the nation-centered paradigm of Puritan studies. This does not mean that our contributors overlook how deeply Mather was involved in regional affairs and how much his writings, by responding to these affairs, reveal about the religious, cultural and political life in British North America. Mather, Michael Kaufmann rightly says, “provides an entry into virtually every area of the colonial experience.” Through his published works, we can study the gradual transformation from “colony to province,” the interaction between learned theology, Enlightenment science and folk religion, the formation of the Great Awakening and rise of Evangelicalism, “gender relations and the domestic scene” or “the racial politics of the New World” (Kaufmann 437–38).

As a number of essays in this volume show, his “*Biblia Americana*” greatly adds to all of these areas of insight and often complicates previous findings. For example, his commentaries on the Bible shed new light on his understanding of gender hierarchies, his promotion of female education, but also on his ambiguous views of slavery and Anglo-Indian relations. However, even with a subject such as Mather’s response to the spread of slavery in New England, his position is best understood as the result of intersecting local and transatlantic developments, both on the level of changing ideas and beliefs, and on the level of socio-political or economical shifts. When it comes to his positions on the more abstract or academic questions of natural philosophy, theology, or biblical criticism, a failure to connect them to contemporary European trends or debates inevitably leads to very serious misunderstandings and distortions. Arguably, this all-too-common failure, which is a direct outgrowth of passé Americanists’ agendas and their monopolization of Mather, has done almost as much as the specter of Salem to diminish his stature as a scholar and theologian.

Towards A New Mather

In the predominant view, Cotton Mather still appears as the villain of Salem at worst and as a significant, if transitional figure of early American cultural and religious history at best. Very rarely, however, has he been deemed a scholar or theologian of any lasting consequence. While there has been an intense revival of interest in Jonathan Edwards as a theologian since WWII, which brought his writings to the curricula of seminaries as well as philosophy or history departments, and generated a plethora of scholarly works on all aspects of Edwards’s thinking, Mather did not fare so well.³³ With the exception of his eschatology, the various aspects of Mather’s thinking on divinity (e.g. his Christology, his understanding of the Trinity, his interpretation of redemption history) and their philosophical foundations and implications (e.g. his metaphysics, epistemology, or moral thought) have not received an even comparable degree of systematic study.³⁴ Thanks in no small part to the now complete Yale edition, Edwards’s writings are appreciated by academics, ministers, and many lay Christians alike. Over the last few decades, Edwards has thus been promoted to the role of the first great American theologian in the evangelical tradition; he is attributed with having successfully led Calvinism into modernity, and even granted the universal honorary title of “America’s theologian.” It has

33 On Edwards’s reputation and the Edwards Renaissance since the 1990s see Part III in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, especially the essays by Sweeney, Lesser, and Crocco and the literature cited there.

34 For studies of Mather’s eschatology, see Smolinski (“*Israel Redivivus*”; Introduction) and Erwin.

also been suggested that if one considered his many manuscript works in the field of biblical studies “Edwards may be the most prolific exegetical scholar in American history” (Sweeney, “Jonathan Edwards” 311). By contrast, Mather’s theology is usually approached for purely historical reasons and with detachment, if not disdain. As a major biblical interpreter he does not figure at all, even though his unpublished exegetical work and sermons at least matches the size of the Edwardsean corpus. Of course, there have been a number of noteworthy attempts to correct this picture, efforts which have very much influenced the essays in this collection. However, so far the impact on academic culture at large (not to speak of popular culture) has been limited.

The most momentous work was probably Robert Middlekauff’s *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals* (1977), in which Cotton is reassessed as “the most admirable of the three because he was the most daring (and the most driven),” and who, by the time of his death, had refashioned, with the help of his father, much in Puritanism-ecclesiastical theory, the psychology of religious experience, covenant preaching, and the conception of Christian history and prophecy” (xvii). Contra the old declension narrative, Middlekauff convincingly argues that Cotton Mather’s openness to Enlightenment ideas or ecumenical trends in international Protestantism, and his emphasis on practical piety, was not a symptom of intellectual surrender or weakening faith, but rather reflected his ability to incorporate new elements into the traditional tenets of Reformed orthodoxy without eroding their substance. More specifically, Mather did not give up the covenantal framework of his forebears, but rather reinterpreted it in more Christocentric terms, de-emphasizing human agency in the salvation process. Middlekauff is also able to show that the strong attention given to the emotional dimension of man’s regeneration through the free gift of a saving faith in Christ gave Mather’s theology an experiential orientation that in many respects anticipated the “religious style” of a Jonathan Edwards.

This vital continuity between Mather’s and the new type of theology that evolved from the First Great Awakening is the central subject of Richard L. Lovelace’s *The American Pietism of Cotton Mather* (1979). Lovelace’s greatest merit is that he completely overturned the old perception of Mather as a late-comer, in whom a great tradition came to its end, maintaining instead that we should see him as a great innovator who stands-as the subtitle of Lovelace’s study suggests-at the very beginnings of modern American Evangelicalism. Now we know that it is no coincidence that Mather was the first writer in the English language to use the term “revival” in a religious sense.³⁵ Lovelace also earns praise for drawing more attention to the significance of Mather’s transat-

35 According to the *OED*, Mather was the first to use the noun “revival” (*Magnalia*, bk. 3, p. 323) in the sense of “A general reawakening of or in religion in a community or some part of one.”

lantic connections with other Protestant groups, especially with Halle Pietism, and also for helping to understand why and how he sought to revitalize the Puritan faith under dramatically altered circumstances. Like Middlekauff, Lovelace stresses how central Mather's millennialism and his end-time expectations were to every aspect of his theology. Yet, only through Smolinski's annotated edition of the unpublished *Trip paradisus* (written 1726/27) and a series of revisionist studies has the development of Mather's eschatology emerged in all its complexity.

The findings of Middlekauff, Lovelace, and Smolinski are reflected in the best recent survey histories of theology in North America. Both Holifield and Noll (*America's God*), acknowledge Mather as a notable representative of the New England tradition of divinity who ensured the transition of the Reformed faith into the eighteenth century by recasting its essence in modernized forms.³⁶ Similarly, Mather is frequently mentioned now, if only in passing, as a precursor of the Great Awakening in histories of evangelicalism.³⁷ Yet, measured by the attention that is bestowed on Edwards, Mather the theologian still stands as a relatively minor figure. It is to be hoped that the participation of prominent Edwards scholars both in the edition and in this collection will serve as a catalyst for a theological rediscovery of Mather. Besides the preconceptions of Mather that were already discussed, one significant reason for the lack of attention given to Mather, in contrast to Edwards, is the enduring lack of a comprehensive edition of his works. Some of his publications have been reprinted, some even appeared in scholarly editions.³⁸ The bulk of Mather's printed books, however, including some of his most interesting theological, philosophical and reformist treatises, are no longer easily accessible and are virtually unknown except to a very small number of specialists. In addition, the vast majority of Mather's sermons and some larger works still remain in manuscript.

Above all, of course, the "Biblia Americana," the work that he considered the crowning achievement and sum of his theological career, never saw the light of day, and even Mather scholars consulted the manuscript only sporadically and, even then, quite selectively. As our preliminary discussion of this wide-ranging, erudite and very sophisticated commentary suggests, its availability to a wider public promises to fundamentally change the ways Mather is perceived and to foster the appreciation of his standing as a theologian, philosopher, historical thinker, reformist and, most importantly, as a philologist and scriptural

36 Holifield's discussion of Increase and Cotton Mather (68–78) is probably the most lucid and balanced survey.

37 See Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (esp. 272–75) and *Early Evangelicalism* (91–95); Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism* (58).

38 Currently, we have scholarly editions of the first two books of *Magnalia Christi Americana*, of Bonifacius, "Problema Theologicum," *Angel of Bethesda*, *The Christian Philosopher*, and *Trip paradisus*.

exegete. The first fruits of Smolinski and Maddux's recent editorial labours provide a foretaste of what lies in store. Already we have learned that Mather was not afraid to venture onto dangerous water in defence of scriptural authority. He took on the radical challenges posed by the rise of historical criticism, such as "the debate about the authorship of the Pentateuch and the dispute about the divine inspiration of the scriptures" (Smolinski, "Authority and Interpretation" 178), and he was "more audacious in employing the new sciences as an exegetical tool than most of his peers who supplied American pulpits until the Revolution" (Smolinski, "Natural Science and Interpretation"). This volume is intended to continue the process of discovery in attempting to re-examine the familiar "old Mather" from different angles without claiming to have invented a definite "new Mather." The studies brought together here should be understood, quite literally, as *essays* in reappraisal, that is, as tentative attempts to sketch out new interpretative perspectives when no definitive conclusions can yet be offered. As pioneering and impressive a work we believe our contributors have done, we think that the significance of their essays lies at least as much in showing what remains to be done.

Quite likely, the ongoing edition of the "Biblia Americana" will produce insights which, in turn, demand further modification or even critical reassessment of some of the preliminary appraisals offered here. We welcome this critical reception and acknowledge that it is the risk that everybody runs who chooses to delve into fresh materials and to explore new territory. All of our contributors made that choice. Without exception, their essays look beyond Mather's well-thumbed works, such as the *Magnalia*, which come freighted with so much ideological baggage, and approach their respective subjects by a direct examination of understudied or never-before-studied sources. In most cases, these sources are the newly transcribed scriptural commentaries from various parts of the "Biblia Americana"; in others cases, they are neglected works by Mather or new contexts that shed a different light on Mather. Secondly, all of the essays seek to engage with Mather on fair terms, that is, to discuss his ideas and arguments with due consideration of their respective historical, religious and intellectual backgrounds. Whatever methodological approach the different studies follow—most fall under the capacious rubric of intellectual and religious history; others lean towards theology or literary studies—they are consistently informed by a healthy skepticism against grand theoretical narratives (be it "secularization as progress" theories or "Puritan origin" narratives) and, as much as possible, abstain from presentist judgments about the attitudes of the early eighteenth century. Thirdly, and maybe most importantly, all of them make a conscious effort to disentangle themselves from popular prejudices and disciplinary preconceptions about Mather and Puritanism in general. For as many new insights lie buried in the manuscript pages of his "Biblia Americana," they will only show themselves to us if we uproot the recalcitrant

stereotypes from our minds. The attempt to fathom the “Biblia Americana” and the revisionist endeavor to reassess its prodigious author are mutually dependent upon each other.

Summary of the Essays

If twentieth century scholars have been generally disinclined to treat Mather in a respectful, subtle and circumspect manner and have been more prone towards unsympathetic generalizations about his questionable character or role in American history, his image in modern popular culture is even less nuanced, and indeed outright cartoonish. The two essays in **Section 1 (The Vicissitudes of Mather’s Reputation)** remind us that this was not always so, and investigate when and how the dramatic eclipse of Mather’s reputation came about.

As a kind of prequel to his book-length study on the construction of Mather in nineteenth-century historiography, *William Van Arragon* goes back to the year 1728 to examine both public and private responses to Mather’s death. Through detailed readings not only of textual representations in funeral sermons, biographies and unpublished diary accounts, but also of the ways in which Mather’s deathbed rituals and funeral procession were performed by the Boston community, Van Arragon’s essay arrives at a twofold conclusion: although Mather’s immediate contemporaries acknowledged that he was a complex, sometimes perplexing and controversial character, they unanimously chose to remember him as a great man of enormous learning, deep piety and untiring commitment to the community’s well-being, as one of New England’s eminent spiritual leaders. While in their essence these assessments of Mather and his death were doubtlessly heartfelt, they also fulfilled, as Van Arragon argues, a socio-political function. By creating an exemplary image of Mather, which embodied Puritan virtues as a model for self-fashioning, the mourners were at the same time contributing to the ongoing negotiations of New England’s collective identity.

E. Brooks Holifield basically takes things up where Van Arragon leaves them. How do we explain, Holifield asks, the relatively swift and steep decline of Mather’s once glorious reputation from 1728 to the mid-nineteenth century, when, to many Americans, the name of Cotton Mather already signified little but “Salem”? Drawing on a vast array of primary sources and his profound knowledge of American religious history, Holifield argues that Mather’s reduction to the role of the witch-doctor had only indirectly to do with his writings on the invisible world or his actual involvement with the Salem trials. In the final analysis, Mather was something like a collateral victim in the battles over church government that were waged in the early decades of the nineteenth cen-

tury between the orthodox establishment of Massachusetts and its liberal opponents. Mainly because of his now almost forgotten ecclesiastical work *Ratio Disciplinae Fratrum* (1726), Mather served for both parties as a reference point for traditionalist views on church government. It was in this context that religious liberals exploited Mather's supernaturalism and the association with Salem as a means of subverting his authority on questions of church government and thereby to weaken their antagonists. While the conflicts between Unitarians and Congregationalists were soon forgotten, the damage done to Mather's image would prove more permanent.

Professional historians of American culture, of course, always knew that there was much more to Mather than his caricature in popular culture suggested. In fact, academic interest in the Puritan clergyman was consistently strong. However, in academic discourse, especially in that of the newly founded discipline of American Studies, Mather frequently suffered another abridgement: his retrospective Americanization. It has been suggested above that for a long time, Puritan studies in general, and Mather scholarship in particular, tended to look at their subjects with-to borrow from Lawrence Buell's astute assessment of American Studies movement as a whole-an anachronistic "nation-focusedness [that] uncritically reinforced a posture of U.S. exceptionalism even and indeed perhaps especially when," as in the case of Bercovitch "dissent from mainstream American values has been basic to the critical orientation" (Buell 2). While the entire collection makes an attempt at deparochializing Mather, the essays in **Section 2 (Cotton Mather in the Context of International Protestantism)** do so in a pointed and programmatic manner.

In the first two essays of the section, Mather's Protestant ecumenism and his connections with continental Pietism serve as the point of departure. Drawing on the scholarship of Benz, Lovelace, and others, *Francis J. Bremer*, a long-standing critic of Americanist insularity in Puritan studies, simply takes as a given Mather's ecumenism and his close associations with scholars all over Europe. For Bremer, Cotton Mather's outspoken internationalism and inter-denominationalism serve as a springboard for a larger argument about the need to recognize the often more covert ecumenical and cosmopolitan tendencies in the generation of his father and grandfather. The essay thus sets out to demonstrate that Mather's openness to Protestants across the board and his far-flung connections were not something new that occurred only in response to the downfall of the Puritan theocracy, but actually constituted the product of a long history of Puritan contacts with Continental reform. Without studying these contacts more closely, Bremer says, we cannot properly understand New England's heavy involvement in the evangelical awakenings that began to gather momentum around the Protestant world toward the end of Cotton Mather's life. After surveying the intimate ties between England and the Continent during the Reformation age, Bremer zeroes in on the group around Samuel Hartlib, a key

figure in furthering the connection of English Puritans with Continental clergy. During the great migration, the Hartlib network then also expanded across the Atlantic and included figures such John Davenport and John Winthrop, Jr., who in turn set a model for the transatlantic activities of Increase Mather.

Oliver Scheiding revisits the transatlantic exchange between Cotton Mather and August and Hermann Francke, the great leader of Halle Pietism. Although it is well-known that such an exchange existed, its significance, Scheiding claims, has been at least partly underestimated. While Mather undeniably showed great enthusiasm for German Pietism, most existing studies agree that this enthusiasm remained largely unrequited and ultimately did not play a decisive role for his reformulation of Puritanism into an “American Pietism” (Lovelace) or evangelicalism. However, Scheiding’s essay presents fresh evidence that the religious network between Boston and Halle was characterized by much greater reciprocity in terms of mutual interest and influence than is commonly understood or acknowledged. After reviewing the extant archival record together with the current state of the scholarly debate, Scheiding focuses on the *Narratio Epistolica Ad Cott. Matherum* (1735), a historical narrative written by August Hermann Francke, in part, and completed, edited, and published by his close associate Johann Heinrich Callenberg, a Lutheran church historian and important second-generation promoter of the Pietist movement. In his reading of Callenberg, Scheiding convincingly demonstrates that this hitherto-ignored document reveals substantial new information about Halle’s relationship with and impact on Mather. Published after Mather’s death, the *Narratio* shows the great degree of attitudinal congruence, affections, and shared religious dispositions between both sides that formed the foundation for joined projects centering on the notion of universal religious improvement (*Universalverbesserung*).

Given their natural affinities as revitalization movements within the Reformed fold, it is surprising that we know even less about the connections that existed between New England Puritanism and the Dutch *Nadere Reformatie* than we know about the Puritan ties to Lutheran Pietism. An authority on Peter van Mastricht, *Adriaan Neele* brings more light into this darkness. Neele offers striking proof for the great appreciation Cotton Mather had for Mastricht’s *Theoretico-practica theologia* (1682–87) and for the ample use Mather made of this important work. However, the essay moves beyond a simple influence study and examines the dialogue between Mastricht and Mather not just in terms of explicit reference, but also with a view to their close similarities in their approaches to practicing and teaching theology. According to Neele, the *theoretico-practica* motif or paradigm that informs Mastricht’s *opus magnum* and gives it its title is also a fruitful interpretive framework for many works of Cotton Mather as it characteristically combines scholarly biblical exegesis, speculative theology, and a deep concern for practical piety. With an eye to the future,

Neele’s essay shows how much could be gained if one studied Mather side by side with some of his frequently cited authorities such as Herman Witsius.

The essays in **Section 3 (Enlightenment Rationalism, Biblical Literalism and the Supernatural)** look at another transatlantic network in which Mather participated. Like few other people in British North America at the time, Mather followed and actively involved himself in the multifarious discourses we now associate with the terms “Early Enlightenment” and “Scientific Revolution.” While Mather’s much-coveted membership in the Royal Society is an outward emblem of this involvement, its strongest expression through his own publications can be found in the physico-theological compendium *The Christian Philosopher* (1721). At least since Winton U. Solberg’s new edition of this work, Mather has gained some recognition in academia (though the wider public still needs to take notice) as an important early representative of Enlightenment thought in America. This recognition, though, has raised a number of difficult questions which still need to be answered. Where precisely did Mather position himself in the broad spectrum of attitudes, convictions, and ideas which the Enlightenment comprised? How exactly did he reconcile (or attempted to reconcile) the methods and findings of the new sciences with his biblical literalism and the belief in the infallible authority of the scriptures? And how could he harmonize, if at all, a support for scientific empiricism with his pronounced supernaturalism, his unshakeable belief in ghosts, demons, and witches which earned him his modern reputation as a credulous witch-doctor? These are the problems which the essays in this section explore by studying sections of the “*Biblia Americana*” in the contexts of Mather’s published works.

Building on his earlier study of *The Christian Philosopher*, **Winton U. Solberg** attempts a reappraisal of Mather’s place in the complex history of the Enlightenment. To simply say that Mather was a representative of the Enlightenment, Solberg suggests, is not saying very much. When seen in the rather conservative context of intellectual life in the British colonies, Mather certainly strikes one as an intellectual innovator and pioneer of the new sciences. However, if we view him through the lens of works by Baruch Spinoza and his European followers, who have recently attracted much attention as representatives of the so-called Radical Enlightenment, Mather appears as a defender of Christian orthodoxy. After tracing the outlines of Spinoza’s fundamental critique of revealed religion in his famous *Tractatus Theologico-Politico* (1670) and surveying the early history of Spinozism on the Continent and in Britain, Solberg gauges Mather’s response to the Radical Enlightenment in the “*Biblia Americana*.” Only on some occasions does Mather target Spinoza directly. He is more concerned with the reception of Spinoza’s ideas among prominent biblical critics such as Jean LeClerc and English Deists such as Charles Blount or Anthony Collins. Attacks on these figures abound. The Mather who emerges from Solberg’s essay is a champion of a moderate Enlightenment who seeks to defend the

authority of the scriptural revelations and demonstrate its reconcilability with reason, while being anxiously aware of growing conflicts between traditional religion and science.

Michael Dopffel undertakes an in-depth study of Mather's gloss on Jer. 8:7 that formed the basis for one of the first "Curiosa Americana" sent to the Royal Society and later published in its *Transactions*. In this lengthy commentary and the subsequent letter to London, which derive much of their argument from a tract by Charles Morton, a teacher at Harvard, Mather constructs the hypothesis that the migratory birds, whose whereabouts during the absences from their normal habitats was then still a mystery to science, were flying to planetoids circling between the earth and the moon. What makes this (from our point of view) rather amusing theory so interesting is that it showcases the relationship in Mather's thinking between orthodox scripturalism and a scientific approach to the world, a relationship which, despite his own rhetoric of harmonious progress, was in fact riddled by tensions and increasing problems. More specifically, Dopffel's essay throws into relief the complicated interplay between a literalist hermeneutics and an empiricist epistemology that especially marks Mather's later writings. If in many entries of the "Biblia" Mather felt either forced to abandon a traditional literalist hermeneutics or openly embrace anti-scientific supernaturalism, the various "Curiosa" developed from scriptural illustration, such as this theory about migratory birds, offer quite a different picture. In these "Curiosa," which are mostly concerned with occult phenomena of nature (i.e., phenomena that in all probability lay within the realm of nature, but could not yet be explained by man's currently still very limited knowledge), Mather was free, as it were, to engage in wishful thinking rather than having to squeeze biblical revelations into a Procrustean bed of natural laws irrefutably established by science. In so doing, Dopffel argues, Mather left us significant testimony of what he had hoped for from the marriage between science and religion. Since he was dealing with phenomena for which the sciences had as yet no convincing answer, or which were outside the reach of its methods of observation, literalism and empiricism could still be rendered as complementary, mutually reinforcing methods of interpretation. Here, Mather could offer a speculative hypothesis that was empiricist in its basic approach or rationale and, at the same time, based on a strictly literalist reading of a specific verse of the Bible.

Finally, *Paul Wise* takes a shot at what is the proverbial six-hundred pound gorilla in the room whenever Mather is discussed: his belief in the wonders of the invisible world. At the most basic level, Wise's essay is a plea for careful contextualization. That Mather championed the new sciences at the same time that he vehemently affirmed the existence of ghosts and witchcraft may seem contradictory to most people today, but this belief would have been perfectly normal to the vast majority of contemporary intellectuals. Through an exten-

sive survey of English-language publications relating to the subjects of demonology and witchcraft up through the middle of the eighteenth century, Wise comes to the conclusion that outspoken skepticism on these matters was an exceptional position during the early stages of the Enlightenment. In the broad mainstream of the moderate Enlightenment, in which Solberg has located Mather, there was an almost unanimous consensus that demons and witches existed as reported in the scriptures, a consensus that was carried by the very alliance of biblical literalism and empiricism that Dopffel's essay examines. More specifically, Wise demonstrates that in the "Biblia," Mather's approach to many of the scriptural passages that speak about the supernatural, whether demonic or angelic, is decidedly empiricist in orientation. He frequently argues from personal experience that he had (often after long sessions of praying and fasting) throughout his life. In fact, it may have been Mather's capacity for "particular faiths" and dream visions, his ability to witness visitors from the invisible world that gave his biblical interpretations such a decidedly literal cast. "[E]ven my *Senses* have been convinced of such a World," he wrote in *The Christian Philosopher*, "by as clear, plain, full *Proofs* as ever any Man's have had of what is most obvious in the *sensible World*" (306). At the same time, however, Mather's deliberations on such experiences always aim at establishing, in quasi-scientific manner, the laws of the supernatural realm and to link these to the known laws of the natural realm through speculations about a connecting medium or agency he termed, following the Hebrew, the *Nishmath-Chajim* (נשמת חיים, "breath of life", cf. Gen. 2:7). Again, none of this was wholly unusual. As Wise reminds us, many prominent members of the Royal Society at the time, including, for instance, Joseph Glanvill, Henry More, or Robert Boyle, advocated and often undertook research both into the natural and the supernatural worlds. For these men, as for Mather, the reality of spirits and devils could not be separated from the reality of the spirit of God, or the immortality of the soul. Hence, in their view, to "assert the reality of supernatural phenomena" against the skeptical philosophers of the Radical Enlightenment, such as Spinoza or Hobbes, was equivalent to "defending Christianity itself" (Silverman 92).

In the introductory observations we noted our reservations about reading Mather as an early link in a chain of distinctively American authors. To the many other reasons that speak against such an interpretative practice, one might add that the emphatic emphasis on the present, the desire to forget the past that supposedly characterizes the American vein of writing, is entirely alien to Mather. Mather's mind, we said earlier, was of a strongly historical, and indeed, historicist, bent. He lived in a period which, on the one hand, still continued in the accustomed intellectual habit which instinctively ascribed authority to the past, not just to the Bible as God's past revelations, but also to other traditions of learning, accepting a historical continuum of *auctoritates* and *exempla* that reached all the way back into Greco-Roman antiquity. On the other hand,

Mather's time was marked by a rapid growth of knowledge about bygone ages and ancient cultures, which led to an increasing awareness of historical difference, an awareness that problematized any easy recurrence to the precepts of the past. The essays in **Section 4 (Mather's Historical Method, and His Approach to the History of Religions)** explore the multiple tensions that arose from this constellation. They show how Mather consistently argues from history, that is, from received opinions and ancient authorities, while he is simultaneously embroiled in arguments about history, especially about the history of religions, arguments that are preoccupied with the dynamic development of human cultures in biblical and post-biblical times, and thereby highlight the remoteness of the past.

Rick Kennedy attends to Mather's historical method of composition, which, among other things, gave the "Biblia Americana" its massive shape. Mather's working practice as an author, Kennedy states, owes much to a commonplace book tradition of history, which had its origins in Aristotelian rhetoric and pervaded all fields of learning in the early modern period. The commonplace book tradition gave rise to the ubiquitous anthologies or *florilegia* of classical writers, as well as to theological *katena*-texts, *loci communes*-collections for students of divinity, and synoptic commentaries of the Bible such as Matthew Poole's *Synopsis Criticorum*. In almost any self-description of his writing, Mather signals a deliberate continuity with this tradition through the use of certain key-metaphors (most importantly, those of flower-picking and the beehive). Accordingly, he perceives the historian's or exegete's role to lie primarily in gathering, selecting, and re-organizing past opinions for improved effect and usage. It was this communal understanding of authorship that defined Mather's heavily intertextual style, piling citation upon citation. Moreover, Kennedy suggests that the Aristotelian tradition, with its roots in a forensic context, also defined the "Question and Answer" format of the "Biblia," in which Mather raises a critical issue and then allows a variety of commentators to have their say, often without forcing contradictory views into a final conclusion.

Kenneth P. Minkema offers the first findings from his edition of Mather's commentaries on the Historical Books. Perhaps even more than other parts, this section of the "Biblia" shows Mather following a trend in contemporary Protestant hermeneutics that Peter Miller has called the antiquarianization of biblical scholarship. Feeding this trend was, in part, the desire to establish the *sensus literalis* which, however, was frustrated in so many parts of the Bible by seemingly irresolvable obscurities or ambiguities, creating the need for ever more excessive historical contextualization. Like so many of his European colleagues, Mather thus exhibits an intense interest in the ancient Hebrew lifestyle and society, focusing on even the most minute details of the customs, practices, and language in biblical times. Moreover, the attention to historical detail, Minkema explains, is a response to the rising tide of rationalist and liberal criti-

cism led by Thomas Hobbes, Baruch Spinoza, Richard Simon, and others. The great length to which Mather goes in locating events, in reconciling the seeming discrepancies in the historical accounts, or in explaining the dizzying genealogies of the various kings and the lengths of their reigns thus have to be seen as part of his overall effort to defend the historical veracity of the biblical texts on which the other levels of scriptural truth depended. The subject of false idols and idolatry is Minkema's prime example for how Mather builds typological, prophetic, and moral readings, as well as apologetic or polemical readings, upon a primarily historical interpretation. In numerous glosses, Mather, in the manner of a religious historian, discusses the origin and nature of false gods mentioned in the Historical Books, the worship of them, their priests, and related topics—all with the ultimate goal of authenticating the higher meanings he draws from the scriptural passages. To approach the ancient cults in a historical and comparative fashion, though, and to place Israel's relationship with Yahweh in the context of neighboring religions, was not without risk for orthodox Christians such as Mather. Ultimately, the antiquarianization of biblical scholarship, as Miller observes, carried the danger of undermining the authority of the scriptures for "once the sacred was made fully and finally historical, it ceased to be sacred" (Miller 465).

In his essay, *Reiner Smolinski* discusses a scholarly *cause célèbre* of the late seventeenth century in which this danger of historicizing became especially conspicuous, causing an international debate over decades which left many traces in the "Biblia." First published in 1685, John Spencer's *De Legibus Hebraeorum Ritualibus Earumque Rationibus* deeply disturbed many contemporary theologians because it presented with great erudition and persuasiveness the argument that most of the ceremonial and cultic laws of the Levites were not given to Moses by the God of the Israelites, but were indeed adapted from their Egyptian, Chaldaean, and Canaanite neighbors. After more than four-hundred years in Egyptian exile, Spencer maintained, the Israelites had completely assimilated to pagan cults, and the only way in which Moses was able to bring his people back to a worship of their ancestor's God was by indulging their penchant for heathen rituals and tangible idols while redirecting their devotions to the service of Yahweh. Since it denied an origin in supernatural revelation, Spencer's evolutionary explanation of the Mosaic laws, rites, and customs, in the final analysis, also invalidated their typological or prophetic interpretations by Christian exegetes. It is therefore rather unexpected to see how much Mather respected Spencer's scholarly work and sought to accommodate his findings. Focusing on Mather's commentaries on several cultic instruments (Aaron's golden calf, the polymorphous cherubim, and the ark of the covenant), Smolinski investigates just how far Mather is prepared to go along with Spencer's argument and where and why he departs from Spencer. As the essay demonstrates, Mather generally welcomes Spencer's historical contextualization of the Mosaic

laws and their origin within the dictates of ancient Egyptian culture. Using the same ambidextrous approach that can also be observed in engagements with Richard Simon or Jean LeClerc, Mather incorporates Spencer's learned exegesis wherever it appeared relevant and acceptable to his own purposes and praises Spencer for his vast reading and erudition. Yet wherever Spencer directly threatens the divine authority of the scriptures, Mather challenges his radical conclusions.

Harry Clark Maddux explores Mather's frequent use of two favored concepts amongst biblical scholars of the period for countering historical-evolutionist arguments about the Israelites and gentiles borrowing their religion from one another: *prisca theologia* (ancient theology) and Euhemerism. All over the "Biblia," Mather finds occasion to assert that the many parallels between ancient myths the world over, between pagan stories and the heroes in the Hebrew Scriptures, as well as the cultic similarities between Jewish and pagan religion, sprang from the fountainhead of their common ancestor: the Patriarch Noah. Expanding upon the research of his European peers, Mather provides ample space to demonstrating how Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth carried the religion of their father, the ancient theology, into all the corners of the world, and how, following the dispersal of the people after Babel, the true religion that God had taught Adam and passed down to Noah became corrupted by the admixture of human inventions and errors. Within this larger framework of *prisca theologia*, Mather frequently employs the interpretative method known as Euhemerism (after the ancient Greek historian Euhemerus), attributing the origins of deities to the apotheosis of historical heroes and explained mythological stories as dimly remembered historical events. After this fashion, the "Biblia" attempts to prove that many mythologies of ancient cultures derived from the Hebrew patriarchs and from corrupted memories of God's providential interventions into history as they were recorded in the Bible. By leading all pagan religions back to an aboriginal Noachic monotheism, as Maddux makes clear, Mather thus hoped to deflate arguments such as Spencer's claim that Moses gleaned his ceremonial laws from the Egyptians.

Just as we are only beginning to understand him as an historical thinker, Mather, the biblical theologian, is still largely unknown. With some notable exceptions, Mather's exegetical work has not received much consideration. For reasons discussed above, this central aspect of his work has been eclipsed by the predominant Americanist interest in the relatively small number of his publications that deal with colonial history or seem to speak to the development of an American national ideology. Indeed, most theologians assume that Jonathan Edwards was the only biblical exegete from pre-revolutionary North America whose studies of the scriptures are still worth reading for other than antiquarian reasons. The essays in **Section 5 (Aspects of Scriptural Exegesis in the *Biblia Americana*)** suggest differently, showing a Mather who not only worked di-

rectly at the forefront of contemporary developments in international biblical scholarship, but also wrestled with theological questions that are still relevant for many Christians today. All four studies demonstrate what treasures the “*Biblia Americana*” still holds for further inquiries into the history of biblical scholarship in America. Stein, Peterson, and Clark, moreover, give us fine examples of how fruitful a comparison of Mather’s exegetical works with those of Edwards can be.

In his trailblazing essay, *Stephen J. Stein* compares Mather’s commentaries on the Epistle of James with the notes Edwards made in his recently edited “Blank Bible” on this controversial part of the New Testament canon. Stein pays special attention to the ways in which Mather and Edwards addressed issues of continuing concern to interpreters of the epistle, namely, the history as well as the early reception of the text and its views on the role of human conduct in the salvation process. The similarities regarding methods, thematic concerns, and theological judgment are as striking as the contrasts. Amongst the many fascinating findings that the essay has to offer, two of Stein’s conclusions can be singled out here as particularly significant. Both exegetes are in agreement that Luther’s famous condemnation of the epistle was unfounded and that the teaching of James, with its emphasis on the importance of good works, are not in irreconcilable conflict with the Pauline corpus in the New Testament where the saving grace of faith—*sola fide*—is foregrounded. Both hold that the contradiction is only apparent because Paul and James are speaking about different stages in the process of salvation. For both Mather and Edwards, good works are ultimately an essential and necessary manifestation of justifying faith. For all their closeness in terms of essential theological judgments, Stein also suggests that Mather’s exegetical method might have differed from Edwards’s in that it devoted more space to philological as well as to historical-contextual questions. Stein notes that Mather shows a more academic interest in the Greek text and, in contrast to Edwards, engaged critical issues concerning the epistle’s authorship, time of composition, and reception within the Christian community—issues which are still debated in exegetical circles today. For instance, Mather suggests the possibility that the text was written by Jews and for Jews and, therefore, the epistle acquired its Christian character later, when this epistle was judged, in the fourth century, to be consistent with Christian teachings. Moreover, he rejects the notion that the Epistle of James was received uniformly by all Christian communities, thereby relegating the epistle to a lower status within the canon and lending support to a later time of composition than the lifetime of James, the brother of Christ, whom many interpreters still believed to be the author.

Paul S. Peterson opens a window onto a very important, but so far almost completely neglected dimension of Mather’s thought that is evident throughout the “*Biblia Americana*.” Mather shared with many Protestant and especially

many Reformed exegetes of the period a strong interest in post-biblical Jewish traditions and Rabbinical commentaries. As one striking example of Mather's Christian Hebraism, Peterson examines the re-interpretation of the Shechinah, the ancient Jewish conception of God's visible manifestation in history. The essay shows how Mather, in conversation with other contemporary Christian Hebraists (especially John Stillingfleet and Thomas Tenison), appropriated commentaries on the Shechinah from Rabbinical commentaries and adopted them into a Christological framework, thereby turning many of the Theophanies of the Hebrew Bible into Christophanies. According to Peterson, the Christianized concept of the Shechinah helped Mather argue not only for the Christocentric unity of redemption history spanning both the Old and New covenants, but also to defend the organic wholeness and harmony of the scriptures against the rise of historical criticism by locating an interpretive center of the Old and New Testament. In his concluding observations Peterson contrasts Mather's understanding of the Shechinah with that of Jonathan Edwards, whose notion of God's indwelling has a strong neo-platonic bent and thus de-emphasizes the disruption of the natural order.

Albeit in quite different ways, the last two essays in this section both examine Mather's eschatological readings of the scriptures. *Michael P. Clark* starts from the observation that, throughout his life, Mather was concerned with the nature of signs. Behind this conspicuous interest, Clark suggests, was an anxiety about the capacity of material signifiers to reveal spiritual truths; an anxiety that bespeaks more general conflicts in Puritan thought, which looked back to medieval mysticism and incorporated elements of Enlightenment empiricism simultaneously. The essay argues that, as a consequence of these tensions, Mather developed what Clark calls an eschatological semiotics. Generally speaking, this semiotics was still rooted in a strictly dualistic ontology that made a sharp distinction between the world of nature and a higher realm of the spirit, and hence assumed that the spiritual significance of natural or historical referents could not be completely known to the finite mind of mortal man. More specifically, Mather thought that the full meaning of signs, including those given in the scriptures, would not be revealed on this side of the millennium. At the same time, his exegetical writings show how this rather pessimistic belief in the continuous temporal deferral of scriptural meaning was frequently counterbalanced by the hopeful expectation that, with the end-time approaching, more and more glimpses of divine truth could be caught through the disintegration of material signifiers. In the "Biblia"-and especially in his commentary on Hebrews and Revelation-Mather thus sketches a hermeneutics that seeks to look beyond the progressively disintegrating referents of the biblical texts and their *sensus literalis* in order to grasp their true significance. Mather's eschatological semiotics, Clark finally points out, differ markedly from the more neo-platonic theory of signs embraced by Jonathan Edwards, who, gener-

ally speaking, showed more confidence in the legibility of the scriptures even before the end of days.

The essay by *David Komline* seeks to elucidate the development of Mather’s late eschatology. Since the appearance of Smolinski’s edition of the *Tripuradisus*, we have known that late in his life, Mather adopted a preterite interpretation of several biblical prophecies (most importantly, those believed to pertain to the national conversion of the Jews and to a great reformation of the church rooted in ecumenical union) that most of his contemporary millenarians, including his own father, believed were yet to be fulfilled prior to Christ’s second coming. However, the reasons underlying this shift, says Komline, have not been fully understood. His study, which considers Mather’s published works as well as his relevant commentaries in the “Biblia,” contends that an essential factor that contributed to Mather’s change of position was his response to a conflict in England among the Dissenting churches over Arianism, which erupted in the second decade of the eighteenth century. The so-called Arian controversy severely undermined Mather’s conviction that the hoped-for ecumenical regeneration of the Church was imminent. With this hope overturned, Mather slowly changed his mind not merely about the awaited reformation, but also about all the other signs—including the conversion of the Jews—that he had expected to occur before the coming of his Lord. According to Komline, a key-player both in the Arian controversy and in the intellectual drama of Mather’s final years was the Newtonian scientist and well-known millennialist William Whiston. Earlier in Mather’s life, Whiston had played a prominent role in reinforcing Mather’s expectations that the above-mentioned eschatological events would occur in the early eighteenth century and usher in the millennium. As evidenced by multiple revisions in the “Biblia,” Whiston’s “Arian coming out” deeply disturbed Mather and led him to reconsider his previous acceptance of his theories.

Recent scholarship in early modern intellectual history has given new consideration to the highly complex ways in which the period’s changing concepts of gender and race were being constructed and contested through interpretations of the Bible. The essays in **Section 6 (Gender, Race, and Slavery in the *Biblia Americana*)** use the untapped resource of the “Biblia” to reassess Mather’s positions on the religious or social meaning of human difference in sex and skin color. At the same time, both Gelinias and Stievermann inquire into the practical consequences which Mather’s biblical exegesis had on his social activities related to women and African slaves.

Helen K. Gelinias begins by arguing that, as in so many other respects, when it came to the role of women, Cotton Mather was simultaneously a guardian of orthodoxy and an innovator. On the one hand, Mather upheld a traditionalist understanding of women’s subordinate position in the social and ecclesiastical order, largely excluding them from political and economic realms

and confining them to a domestic sphere under male authority. On the other hand, with regard to the question as to whether females could or should be offered more than a basic education and what part intellectually gifted women who were pious ought to play in the reformation of church and society, he differed sharply from the majority of earlier Puritan ministers. Not only did he emphasize the spiritual and intellectual equality of women, but he also called for wider access of women to higher learning and hailed their great potential as writers from whose pious labours of the pen church and society might greatly profit. Gelinas's essay helps us to understand that this ambiguous stance grew directly from the scriptural exegesis Mather was pursuing in the "Biblia." Of central importance in this regard are Mather's literalist readings of the Pauline teachings on women that contend with his sympathetic interpretation of Eve before, in, and after the fall. Moreover, the ecclesiology Mather developed in the commentary on Canticles had a significant bearing on his understanding of gender roles. Finally, Gelinas demonstrates that Mather's millennialist eschatology held out an egalitarian promise which seeped increasingly into his reformist agendas as he saw the final days drawing closer.

Robert E. Brown opens up an unusual but very revealing perspective on the negotiation of gender identity in the "Biblia Americana." The essay scrutinizes Mather's commentaries on the Pauline expositions on the gendered significance of long hair in 1 Cor. 11 (natural for women, unnatural for men), expositions which drew considerable attention throughout the early modern period and served as a reference point in the seventeenth-century battles over male hair-fashion. Underlying these battles on both sides of the Atlantic, Brown explains, was an anxiety over the relative instability and mutability of sex that stemmed from the Galenic paradigm of human physiology. Nature and culture, sex and gender thus shared a significant degree of interchangeability. How the body was fashioned, what came into contact with it, and what the wearer imagined or desired his or her appearance to provoke could direct the transformation of the body. Such a prospect was destabilizing to the entire social fabric, premised as it was on the hierarchy of men. In the absence of notions of an anatomically permanent sexual distinctiveness, gender-coded norms such as hair and clothing were vital for stabilizing sexual identity, both physically and socially. Mather's foray into his exposition of 1 Cor. 11, therefore, was heavily freighted with ideological controversy. It is all the more surprising, then, to find Mather take an approach to the text that strongly historicizes Paul's propositions. In so doing, says Brown, Mather relativizes the social and religious meaning of hair. Mather marshals evidence suggesting that men's (and women's) hair styles differed between cultures, differed within cultures over time, and was altered by contextual considerations such as class, occupation, emotional states, and ritual settings. From these insights, Mather constructs an argument that Paul's concerns and instructions for the Corinthians were cultural, particular, and tempo-

rally restricted, rather than doctrinal, universal, and indifferent to time or place. If in this specific gloss Mather emphasizes the conventional nature of gender identity, this stress reflects a more general tendency of his commentary to contextualize the Bible and reveals his penchant for anthropological explanation.

Jan Stievermann takes issue with the deeply ingrained habit of American cultural historians of reading modern concepts of race back into the writings of Puritan authors such as Mather. Racism, Stievermann asserts, is not an interpretative framework that allows us to understand why Mather ultimately fell short of calling for an end to the institution of slavery or for a fundamental reorientation of New England’s Indian policy, even though he was highly concerned about the breakdown of Anglo-Indian relations and also condemned the evil of the slave trade together with the inhumane treatment of black bondsmen. In fact, Mather’s extensive commentaries on Genesis show that he was a guardian of the orthodox belief in mankind’s common origin, universal consanguinity, and spiritual unity in Christ, a belief which rendered phenotypical diversity largely insignificant. He defends this position against both the older theories of polygenesis and a new kind of racial thinking which had begun to arise under the impact of developments in early Enlightenment natural philosophy. Moreover, he refutes any theological theories or popular myths, such as the curse of Noah, in which biblical stories were taken as proof that Africans or Native Americans had been expelled from the community of God’s children or relegated to perpetual social subordination. With regard to Mather’s concrete social agendas, the “*Biblia*” provides valuable new insights into the scriptural motivation of Mather’s stubborn support for the flagging Indian mission in New England, and sheds more light on his increasingly complicated and critical engagement with American slavery. While he maintains that the institution of slavery was in principal agreement with Old Testament precepts and had been condoned by Christianity (especially in its Pauline interpretation), he simultaneously argues that the enslaving of innocent Africans on grounds of skin color was by no means scripturally justified and amounted to “manstealing,” which the Bible condemned as a deadly sin. As Stievermann proposes, Mather’s simultaneous condemnation of the slave trade and defense of the institution of slavery were both a direct outgrowth of Mather’s conservative theology and his biblical literalism. The manifest tensions between his growing awareness that, by his understanding of biblical precepts, most slaves were unlawfully brought to the colonies, and his refusal to challenge the legal status of bondsmen already in the colony cannot be adequately explained in terms of Mather’s supposed racist attitudes. Instead, these tensions primarily reflect an impasse into which he was led by his radical scripturalism, as well as his closely related social conservatism, and his millennialist expectations.

Works Cited

Primary Sources

- Bancroft, George. *History of the United States: From the Discovery of the American Continent*. Vol. 1. Boston, 1834.
- Calef, Robert. *More Wonders of the Invisible World*. London, 1700.
- Calmet, Augustin. *Dictionnaire Historique, Critique, Chronologique, Géographique, et Littéral de la Bible*. 2 vols. Paris, 1722.
- Chandler, Edward. *A Defense of Christianity from the Prophecies of the Old Testament Wherein are Considered All the Objections against this Kind of Proof, Advanced in a Late Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*. London, 1725.
- Cotton, John. *A Brief Exposition With Practical Observations Upon the Whole Book of Canticles, or, Song of Solomon*. London, 1642.
- Francke, August Hermann. *Manuductio ad lectionem scripturae Sacrae historicam, grammaticam et practicam . . .* Halle, 1693.
- Henry, Matthew. *An Exposition of All the Books of the Old and New Testaments: Wherein the Chapters are summ'd up in Contents; the Sacred Text inserted at large, in Paragraphs, or Verses; and each Paragraph, or Verse, reduc'd to its proper Heads: the Sense given, and largely illustrated, with Practical Remarks and Observations*. 6 vols. London, 1708–10.
- Jenkin, Robert. *The Reasonableness and Certainty of the Christian Religion*. 1696–97. 6th ed. London, 1735.
- Kidder, Richard. *A Demonstration of the Messiah. In which the Truth of the Christian Religion is Defended, Especially against the Jews*. London, 1700.
- Lowth, William. *A Commentary upon the Prophet Isaiah*. London, 1714.
- Mather, Cotton. *The Angel of Bethesda: An Essay Upon the Common Maladies of Mankind*. Ed. Gordon W. Jones. Barre: American Antiquarian Society and Barre Publishers, 1972.
- . *Biblia Americana*. Ed. Reiner Smolinski. Vol. 1. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010.
- . *Bonifacius. An Essay Upon the Good*. 1710. Ed. David Levin. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1966.
- . *The Christian Philosopher*. 1720/21. Ed. Winton U. Solberg. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1994.
- . *Diary of Cotton Mather*. Ed. Worthington C. Ford. Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society 7th series. Vols. 7–8. Boston: MHS, 1911–12.
- . *Magnalia Christi Americana: Or, The Ecclesiastical History of New England*. 1702. New York: Arno Press, 1972.
- . *Manuductio ad Ministerium*. Boston, 1726.
- . *A New Offer to the Lovers of Religion and Learning*. Boston, 1714.
- . “Cotton Mather’s ‘Problema Theologicum’: An Authoritative Edition.” Ed. Jeffrey
- Scott Mares. *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 104 (1995): 333–440.

- . *Selected Letters of Cotton Mather*. Ed. Kenneth Silvermann. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1971.
- . *The Threefold Paradise of Cotton Mather: An Edition of the "Triparadisus."* Ed. Reiner Smolinski. Athens and London: U of Georgia P, 1995.
- . *The Triumphs of the Reformed Religion in America: The Life of the Renowned John Eliot*. London, 1691.
- . *The Wonders of the Invisible World*. Boston, 1693.
- Mather, Samuel. *Figures and Types of the Old Testament, by Which Christ and the Heavenly Things of the Gospel Were Preached and Shadowed to the People of God of Old. Explain'd and Improv'd in Sundry Sermons*. Dublin, 1683.
- Patrick, Simon. *A Commentary upon the Historical Books of the Old Testament*. 2 vols. 3rd ed. London, 1727.
- Poole, Matthew. *Annotations upon the Holy Bible. Wherein the Sacred Text is Inserted, and various Readings Annex'd together with Parallel Scriptures, the more difficult Terms in each Verse are Explained, seeming Contradictions Reconciled, Questions and Doubts Resolved, and the whole Text opened. By the Late Reverend and Learned Divine Mr. Matthew Poole*. 2 vols. London, 1683–85.
- . *Synopsis Criticorum Aliorumque S. Scripturae Interpretum*. 5 vols. London, 1669–76.
- Prideaux, Humphrey. *The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews and Neighbouring Nations, from the Declension of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah to the Time of Christ*. Fourth edition. London, 1716–18. 3 vols.
- Tudor, William. "Books Relating to America: Notice of Mather's *Magnalia*." *North American Review* 6/17 (1818): 255–72.
- Upham, Charles W. *Lectures on Witchcraft*. Boston, 1832; 2nd ed. 1833.
- . *Salem Witchcraft*. Boston, 1867.
- Whitby, Daniel. *A Paraphrase and Commentary on the New Testament*. London, 1706.

Secondary Sources

- Adams, Gretchen A. *The Specter of Salem: Remembering the Witch Trials in Nineteenth-Century America*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2009.
- Aland, Kurt, ed. *Pietismus und Bibel*. Witten: Luther-Verlag, 1970.
- Arch, Stephen Carl. *Authorizing the Past: The Rhetoric of History in Seventeenth-Century New England*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois UP, 1994.
- Armory, Hugh. "Appendix 1. A Note on Statistics." *A History of the Book in America: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*. Ed. Hugh Armory and David D. Hall. New York: Cambridge UP, 2000. 504–19.
- Baker, Dorothy Z. *America's Gothic Fiction: The Legacy of *Magnalia Christi Americana**. Columbus: Ohio UP, 2007.
- Beall, Jr., Otho T., and Richard H. Shyrock. *Cotton Mather: The First Significant Figure in American Medicine*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1954.
- Benz, Ernst. "Pietist and Puritan Sources of Early Protestant World Missions (Cotton Mather and A. H. Francke)." *Church History* 20.2 (1951): 28–55.

- . “Ecumenical Relations between Boston Puritanism and German Pietism (Cotton Mather and August Hermann Francke).” *Harvard Theological Review* 54.3 (1961): 159–93.
- Bercovitch, Sacvan. “Cotton Mather.” *Major Writers of Early American Literature*. Ed. Everett Emerson. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1970. 93–149.
- , ed. *Typology and Early American Literature*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1972.
- . *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1975.
- . *The American Jeremiad*. Madison: The U of Wisconsin P, 1978.
- Breitwieser, Mitchell R. *Cotton Mather and Benjamin Franklin: The Price of Representative Personality*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984.
- Brown, Jerry Wayne. *The Rise of Biblical Criticism in America, 1800–1870*. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1969.
- Bremer, Francis J. *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards*. Rev. Ed. Hanover: UP of New England, 1995.
- Brown, Robert E. *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2002.
- Brumm, Ursula. *Die religiöse Typologie im amerikanischen Denken: Ihre Bedeutung für die amerikanische Literatur- und Geistesgeschichte*. Leiden: Brill, 1963.
- Buell, Lawrence. “Introduction: American Literary Globalism?” *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 50 (2004): 1–23. Special Issue: American Literary Globalisms. Eds. Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell.
- Butler, Jon. *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990.
- Crocco, Stephen D. “Edwards Intellectual Legacy.” *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards*. Ed. Stephen J. Stein. New York: Cambridge UP, 2007. 300–25.
- Delbanco, Andrew. *The Puritan Ordeal*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989.
- Demos, John. *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England*. Rev. ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004.
- Dimock, Wai Chee. *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2006.
- . “Introduction: Planet and America, Set and Subset.” *Shades of the Planet: American Literature As World Literature*. Ed. Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007. 1–17.
- Elliott, Emory. “New England Puritan Literature.” *The Cambridge History of American Literature*. Gen. Ed. Sacvan Bercovitch. Vol. 1: 1590–1820. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. 169–307.
- Erwin, John. *The Millennialism of Cotton Mather: An Historical and Theological Analysis*. Studies in American Religion. Vol. 45. Lewiston: Edwin Mellon P, 1990.
- Feldman, Louis H. “The Influence of Josephus on Cotton Mather’s *Biblia Americana*: A Study in Ambiguity.” *God’s Sacred Tongue: Hebrew & the American Imagination*. Ed. Shalom Goldman. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2004. 122–55.
- Felker, Christopher D. *Reinventing Cotton Mather in the American Renaissance: Magnalia Christi Americana in Hawthorne, Stowe, and Stoddard*. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1993.
- Frampton, Travis. *Spinoza and the Rise of Historical Criticism of the Bible*. New York: Clark, 2006.
- Frei, Hans W. *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Hermeneutics*. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1974.

- Gay, Peter. *A Loss of Mastery: Puritan Historians in Colonial America*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1966.
- Giltner, John H. *Moses Stuart: The Father of Biblical Science in America*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.
- Gura, Philip F. "The Study of Colonial American Literature, 1966–1987: A *Vade Mecum*." *William and Mary Quarterly*. Third Series 45.2. (1988): 305–41.
- Gutjahr, Paul C. *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777–1880*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999.
- Hall, David D. "Puritanism." *A Companion to American Thought*. Ed. Richard Wightman Fox and James T. Kloppenberg. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. 559–61.
- . "Readers and Writers in Early New England." *A History of the Book in America: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*. Ed. Hugh Armory and David D. Hall. New York: Cambridge UP, 2000. 117–52.
- . *World of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England*. New York: Knopf, 1989.
- and Russell L. Martin. "Appendix 2. A Note on Popular and Durable Authors and Titles." *A History of the Book in America: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*. Ed. Hugh Armory and David D. Hall. New York: Cambridge UP, 2000. 519–22.
- Harlan, David. "A People Blinded from Birth: American History According to Sacvan Bercovitch." *Journal of American History* 78.3 (1992): 949–71.
- Hatch, Nathan O. and Mark A. Noll. Ed. *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*. New York: Oxford UP, 1982.
- Holifield, E. Brooks. *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2003.
- Holmes, Thomas James. *Cotton Mather: A Bibliography of His Work*. 3 vols. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1940.
- Hornberger, Theodore. "Cotton Mather's Annotations on the First Chapter of Genesis." *Texas Studies in English* 18 (1938): 112–22.
- Jeffrey, David Lyle. *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.
- Jeske, Jeffrey. "Cotton Mather: Physico-Theologian." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47.4 (1986): 583–94.
- Kaufmann, Michael. "Cotton Mather." *A Companion to American Thought*. Ed. Richard Wightman Fox and James T. Kloppenberg. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. 436–38.
- Kammen, Michael. *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. New York: Vintage, 1993.
- Kraus, Hans-Joachim. *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*. 2nd. ed. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1969.
- Levin, David. *Cotton Mather: The Young Life of the Lord's Remembrancer 1663–1703*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1978.
- . "Edwards, Franklin, and Cotton Mather: A Meditation on Character and Reputation." *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience*. Ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. 34–50.
- . "The Hazing of Cotton Mather." *New England Quarterly* 36 (1963): 147–71.
- . Introduction. *Bonifacius. An Essay Upon the Good*. By Cotton Mather. 1710. Ed. David Levin. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1966. vii–xxviii
- . "Trying to Make a Monster Human." *Forms of Uncertainty: Essays in Historical-Criticism*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1992. 157–76.

- Lesser, M. X. "Edwards in 'American Culture.'" *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards*. Ed. Stephen J. Stein. New York: Cambridge UP, 2007. 280–300.
- Lovelace, Richard. *The American Pietism of Cotton Mather: Origins of American Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids: Christian UP, 1979.
- Lowance, Mason I., Jr. *The Language of Canaan: Metaphor and Symbol in New England from the Puritans to the Transcendentalists*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1980.
- Manierre II, William R. "Cotton Mather and the Biographical Parallel." *American Quarterly* 13 (1961): 153–60.
- Maddux, Harry Clark. "God's Responsibility: Narrative Choice and Providential History in Mather's *Biblia Americana* Commentary on Ezra." *Early American Literature* 42.2 (2007): 305–21.
- Marsden, George M. *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2003.
- Middlekauff, Robert. *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596–1728*. 1971. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1976.
- Miller, Perry. *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1953.
- Miller, Peter N. "The 'Antiquarianization' of Biblical Scholarship and the London Polyglot Bible (1653–57)." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62.3 (2001): 463–82.
- Muller, Richard A. "Biblical Interpretation in the 16th & 17th Centuries." *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters*. Ed. Donald K. McKim. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998. 123–52.
- Noll, Mark. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002.
- . *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2003.
- . "Science, Theology, and Society: From Cotton Mather to William Jennings Bryan." *Evangelicals and Science in Historical Perspective*. Ed. David N. Livingstone, D. G. Hart, Mark A. Noll. New York: Oxford UP, 1999. 99–120.
- Norton, Mary Beth. *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692*. New York: Knopf, 2002.
- Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Oxford UP. Web. 9 Jan. 2010.
- Parrington, Vernon L. *Main Currents in American Thought*. New York, 1927. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1930.
- Poole, William Frederick. "Cotton Mather and Witchcraft." *North American Review* 108 (Apr. 1869): 337–97.
- Preston, Thomas R. "Biblical Criticism, Literature, and the Eighteenth-Century Reader." *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*. Ed. Isabel Rivers. Leicester: Leicester UP, 1982 and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982. 97–127.
- Preus, J. Samuel. *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001.
- Reising, Russell. *The Unusable Past: Theory and the Study of American Literature*. New York: Methuen, 1986.
- Reventlow, Henning Graf von. *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*. Trans. John Bowden. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.
- . *Epochen der Bibelauslegung. Band IV: Von der Aufklärung bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*. München: Beck, 2001.
- Rivers, Cheryl. "Cotton Mather's *Biblia Americana* Psalms and the Nature of Puritan Scholarship." Diss. Columbia U, 1977.

- Rogers, Jack B. and Donald K. McKim. *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979.
- Rosenthal, Bernard. *Salem Story: Reading the Witch Trials of 1692*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995.
- Scholder, Klaus. *The Birth of Modern Critical Theology*. Transl. John Bowden London/Philadelphia: SCM Press Ltd./Trinity Press International, 1990.
- Sheehan, Jonathan. *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005.
- Sheppard, Gerald T. "Biblical Interpretation in the 18th & 19th Centuries." *Historical-Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters*. Ed. Donald K. McKim. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998. 257–80.
- Silverman, Kenneth. *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather*. New York: Harper & Row, 1984.
- Smolinski, Reiner. "Apocalypticism in Colonial North America." *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*. Vol. 3: *Apocalypticism in the Modern Period and the Contemporary Age*. Ed. Stephen J. Stein. New York: Continuum, 1998. 36–72.
- . "Authority and Interpretation: Cotton Mather's Response to the European Spinozists." *Shaping the Stuart World, 1603–1714: The Atlantic Connection*. Eds. Alan I. Macinnes and Arthur Williamson. Leyden: Brill, 2006. 175–203.
 - . "How to Go to Heaven, or How Heaven Goes? Natural Science and Interpretation in Cotton Mather's 'Biblia Americana' (1693–1728)." *New England Quarterly* 81.2 (2008): 278–329.
 - . Introduction. *The Threefold Paradise of Cotton Mather: An Edition of "Triparadisus"*. Athens and London: U of Georgia P, 1995. 3–78.
 - . "'Israel Redivivus': The Eschatological Limits of Puritan Typology in New England." *New England Quarterly* 63.3 (1990): 357–95.
- Solberg, Winton U. Introduction. *The Christian Philosopher*. By Cotton Mather. Ed. Winton U. Solberg. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1994. xic-cxxxiv.
- Stearns, Raymond Phineas. *Science in the British Colonies of America*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1970.
- Stein, Stephen J. "The Spirit and the Word: Jonathan Edwards and Scriptural Exegesis." *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience*. Ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. 118–31.
- . "Edwards as Biblical Exegete." *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards*. Ed. Stephen J. Stein: New York: Cambridge UP, 2007. 181–95.
- Stievermann, Jan. "Writing 'To Conquer All Things': Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* and the Quandary of *Copia*." *Early American Literature* 39. 2 (2004): 263–97.
- Sweeney, Douglas A. "Evangelical Tradition in America." *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards*. Ed. Stephen J. Stein: New York: Cambridge UP, 2007. 217–39.
- . "Jonathan Edwards." *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters*. Ed. Donald K. McKim. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998. 309–12.
- Van Arragon, William. "Cotton Mather in American Cultural Memory, 1728–1892." Diss. Indiana U, 2005.
- Van Cromphout, Gustaaf. "Cotton Mather as Plutarchan Biographer." *American Literature* 47 (1975): 465–81.

- . “Cotton Mather: The Puritan Historian as Renaissance Humanist.” *American Literature* 49 (1977): 327–37.
- Ward, W.R. *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History, 1670–1789*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006.
- . *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Winship, Michael P. *Seers of God: Puritan Providentialism in the Restoration and Early Enlightenment*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1996.
- Wood, Gordon S. *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin*. New York: Penguin, 2004.

[II]

BIBLIA AMERICANA.

The SACRED SCRIPTURES of the OLD and NEW Testament; Exhibited, in the *Order of Time*, wherein the several and successive Occurrences, may direct the Placing and Reading of them: Which Exhibition alone, will do the Service of a *Valuable Commentary*. With,

- I. A proper Notice taken of those Instances, wherein the most Polite and Pious Masters in *Philology*, have expressed their Wishes to see the *Common Translation* Amended and Refined.
- II. A Rich Collection of ANTIQUITIES, which the studious Researches of Inquisitive and Judicious Men in the later Ages, have recovered; for a sweet Reflection of *Light* from thence upon the Heavenly Oracles: Especially those wherein the *Idolatry*, the *Oeconomicks*, the *Politicks*, the *Agriculture*, the *Architecture*, the *Art of War*, the *Music*, the *Habits*, and the *Diets* in the former Ages, may be referr'd unto.
- III, The LAWS of the *Israelitish Nation* in these *Pandecks of Heaven*, interpreted; and the *Original* and *Intention* thereof, rescued from the Mis-interpretations, that some famous Writers have put upon them. With a particular History of the City JERUSALEM, under its wondrous Vicissitudes, from the Days of *Melchizedeck*, down to Ours; and a Relation of the

(12)

the present & wretched Condition, in which it waits, the *Time to favour the set Time to come on.*

IV. The TYPES of the Bible, accommodated with their *Antitypes*: And this Glorious Book of God, now appearing a Field, that yields a marvellous Mixture of Holy *Profit* and *Pleasure*, in those Paragraphs of it, which have sometimes appeared the least Fruitful with Instruction.

V. *Golden Treasures*, and more to be desired than such, fetch'd out of those very unpromising Heaps, the TALMUDS, and other *Jewish Writings*; not only to Illustrate the Oracles once committed unto the distinguished Nation; but also to demonstrate the Truths of *Christianity*.

VI. NATURAL PHILOSOPHY call'd in to serve *Scriptural Religion*. The fairest *Hypotheses* of those *Grand Revolutions*, the *Making*, the *Drowning*, and the *Burning* of the WORLD, offered. The *Astronomical* Affairs, the *Meteors*, the *Minerals*, the *Vegetables*, the *Animals*, the *Diseases*, the *Anatomical* Curiosities, and what relates to the *Invisible World* of Good or Evil Spirits, mention'd in these immortal Pages, represented with the *Best Thoughts* of our Times upon them. To all which there is added, *The Christian Virtuoso*, with a Commentary of the more Modern and Certain Philosophy on, *His Work which Men behold*; Embellished with the Discoveries which *our Days at Length* have made of Things wherein the Glorious GOD of Nature calls for our *Wonders* & our *Praises*.

(13)

VII. The **CHRONOLOGY** of this admirable Book, every where cleared, from all its Difficulties; and the *Clock of Time* set right, in its whole Motion, from the Beginning which *He that Inhabits Eternity* gave unto it. Besides the most Accurate *Harmony of the Gospel*, that has yet been offered among them that *know the Joyful Sound*.

VIII. The **GEOGRAPHY** of it *Survey'd*; The Scituation, especially of *Paradise*, & of *Palestine* laid out: With an Account how the *whole Earth* has been Peopled: And many Notable and Enlightning Things contributed unto this Work, by *Travellers* of unspotted Veracity, by whose *Running to and fro Knowledge* has been increased.

IX. A sort of *Twenty-ninth Chapter of the ACTS*; Or, An elaborate and entertaining History, of what has befallen the *Israelitish Nation*, in every Place, from the Birth of our great **REDEEMER** to *this very Day*: And the present Condition of that Nation, the Reliques of the *Ten*, as well as of the *Two Tribes*, (and of their Ancient *Sects*,) yet existing in the several parts of the World, where they are now dispersed, at *this Time*, when their approaching Recovery from their sad and long Dispersion is hoped for.

X. The **HISTORIES** of all Ages, brought in, to show how the *Prophecies* of this Invaluable Book, have had their most punctual Accomplishment,

(14)

plishment, and strongly established *Conjectures*, (yet made with all due Modesty,) on such as yet remain to be Accomplished: In the prosecution whereof, the Reader finds an entire *Body of Church-History*, brought into his Possession.

XI. The true Doctrine of the CHILIAD, which more opens & breaks in upon the more considerate Enquirers, as the Day approaches, brought in as a Key to very much of the Wealth, which the Church of God enjoys in this *Book of the Kingdom*. Whereto are added, the most unexceptionable Thoughts of the ablest Writers on the *Apocalypse*; defecated from the more Arbitrary and less Defensible Conceits, of overdoing Students in the Prophecies.

XII. Some Essays to Illustrate the Scriptures from EXPERIMENTAL PIETY, or the Observations of *Christian Experience*. With many of the Excellent Things, observed in and extracted from the *Holy Scriptures that make Wise unto Salvation*, especially by the *North-British Expositors*, who with a penetrating and peculiar Search after Hints for *Christian Practice*, have been found worthy to Open many Books of the Bible.

And many Thousands of curious Notes, found scattered and shining, in the Writings both of the *Ancients* and the *Moderns*, laid here together, in a grateful Amassment of them.

All done with a most Religious & Inviolable and Perpetual Regard unto the *Principles of Religion*, which are the Life of the *Reformed Churches*.