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Cotton Mather
- poems -

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Cotton Mather(12 February 1663 – 13 February 1728)

Cotton Mather, FRS was a socially and politically influential New England Puritan minister, prolific author and pamphleteer; he is often remembered for his role in the Salem witch trials. He was the son of Increase Mather, and grandson of both John Cotton and Richard Mather, all also prominent Puritan ministers.

Biography

Mather was named after his maternal grandfather, John Cotton. He attended Boston Latin School, where his name was posthumously added to its Hall of Fame, and graduated from Harvard in 1678 at age 15. After completing his post-graduate work, he joined his father as assistant pastor of Boston's original North Church. In 1685 Mather assumed full responsibilities as pastor at the Church.

Cotton Mather wrote more than 450 books and pamphlets, and his ubiquitous literary works made him one of the most influential religious leaders in America. Mather set the moral tone in the colonies, and sounded the call for second- and third-generation Puritans, whose parents had left England for the New England colonies of North America, to return to the theological roots of Puritanism.

The most important of these, Magnalia Christi Americana (1702), comprises seven distinct books, many of which depict biographical and historical narratives to which later American writers, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Elizabeth Drew Stoddard, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, would look in describing the cultural significance of New England for later generations after the American Revolution. Mather's text thus is one of the more important documents in American history, because it reflects a particular tradition of seeing and understanding the significance of place. Mather, as a Puritan thinker and social conservative, drew on the language of the Bible to speak to contemporary audiences. In particular, Mather's review of the American experiment sought to explain signs of his time and the types of individuals drawn to the colonies as predicting the success of the venture. From his religious training, Mather viewed the importance of texts for elaborating meaning and for bridging different moments of history—linking, for instance, the Biblical stories of Noah and Abraham with the arrival of such eminent leaders as John Eliot; John Winthrop; and his own father, Increase Mather.

Through his writings the intellectual and physical struggles of first- through third-generation Puritans created an elevated appraisal in the minds of Americans about its appointed place among other nations. The unease and self-deception

that characterized that period of colonial history would be revisited in many forms at political and social moments of crisis (such as the Salem witch trials, which coincided with frontier warfare and economic competition among Indians and French and other European settlers) and during lengthy periods of cultural definition (such as the American Renaissance of the late 18th- and early 19th-century literary, visual, and architectural movements, which sought to capitalize on unique American identities).

Highly influential because of his prolific writing, Mather was a force to be reckoned with in secular, as well as in spiritual, matters. After the fall of James II of England, in 1688, Mather was among the leaders of the successful revolt against James's governor of the consolidated Dominion of New England, Sir Edmund Andros.

Mather also influenced early American science. In 1716, because of observations of corn varieties, he conducted one of the first recorded experiments with plant hybridization. This observation was memorialized in a letter to a friend:

My friend planted a row of Indian corn that was colored red and blue; the rest of the field being planted with yellow, which is the most usual color. To the windward side this red and blue so infected three or four rows as to communicate the same color unto them; and part of ye fifth and some of ye sixth. But to the leeward side, no less than seven or eight rows had ye same color communicated unto them; and some small impressions were made on those that were yet further off.

Of Mather's three wives and 15 children, only his last wife and two children survived him. Mather was buried on Copp's Hill, near Old North Church.

Writing

Cotton Mather was not known for writing in a neutral, unbiased perspective. Many, if not all, of his writings had bits and pieces of his own personal life in them or were written for personal reasons. According to literary historian Sacvan Bercovitch:

<i>"Few puritans more loudly decried the bosom serpent of egotism than did Cotton Mather; none more clearly exemplified it. Explicitly or implicitly, he projects himself everywhere in his writings. In the most direct compensatory sense, he does so by using literature as a means of personal redress. He tells us that he composed his discussions of the family to bless his own, his essays on the riches of Christ to repay his benefactors, his tracts on morality to convert his

enemies, his funeral discourses to console himself for the loss of a child, wife, or friend" </i>

Boyle's influence on Mather

A huge influence throughout Mather’s career was Robert Boyle. While coming to terms with who he was, Mather read Robert Boyle’s book “The Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy.” Mather read Boyle’s work closely throughout the 1680s and his early works on science and religion borrowed greatly from it. He even uses almost identical language to Boyle.

Mather's relationship with his father and the aftereffects in Mather's Works

Cotton Mather's relationship with his well-known father, Increase Mather, was often a strained and difficult one. Increase Mather was a pastor of the Old North Church and led an accomplished life that Cotton was determined to live up to. Despite Cotton Mather's efforts, he never became quite as well known and successful in politics as his father. He did surpass his father's talents as a writer, writing over 400 books. One of the most public displays of their strained relationship appeared during the Salem Witch Trials. Despite the fact that Increase Mather did not support the trials, Cotton Mather documented them (Hovey 531-2).

Smallpox inoculation controversy

The practice of smallpox inoculation (as opposed to the later practice of vaccination) was developed possibly in 8th century India or 10th Century China. Spreading its reach in seventeenth-century Turkey, inoculation or, rather, variolation, involved infecting a person through a cut in the skin with exudate from a patient with a relatively mild case of smallpox (variola), in order to bring about a manageable and recoverable infection that will provide later immunity.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Royal Society in England was discussing the practice of inoculation, and the smallpox epidemic in 1713 spurred further interest. It was not until 1721, however, that England recorded its first case of inoculation.

Early New England

Smallpox was a serious threat in colonial America, most devastating to Native Americans, but also to Anglo-American settlers. New England suffered smallpox

epidemics in 1677, 1689–90, and 1702. It was highly contagious, and mortality could reach as high as 30 percent or more.

Boston had been plagued by smallpox outbreaks in 1690 and 1702. During this era, public authorities in Massachusetts dealt with the threat primarily by means of quarantine. Incoming ships were quarantined in Boston harbor, and any smallpox patients in town were held under guard or in a "pesthouse."

In 1706 a slave, Onesimus, explained to Cotton Mather how he had been inoculated as a child in Africa. Mather was fascinated by the idea. By July 1716, Mather had read an endorsement of inoculation by Dr. Emanuel Timonius of Constantinople in the Philosophical Transactions. Mather then declared, in a letter to Dr. John Woodward of Gresham College in London, that he planned to press Boston's doctors to adopt the practice of inoculation should smallpox reach the colony again.

By 1721, a whole generation of young Bostonians was vulnerable and memories of the last epidemic's horrors had by and large disappeared. On April 22 of that year, the HMS Seahorse arrived from the West Indies carrying smallpox on board. Despite attempts to protect the town through quarantine, eight known cases of smallpox appeared in Boston by May 27, and by mid-June, the disease was spreading at an alarming rate. As a new wave of smallpox hit the area and continued to spread, many residents fled to outlying rural settlements. The combination of exodus, quarantine, and outside traders' fears disrupted business in the capital of the Bay Colony for weeks. Guards were stationed at the House of Representatives to keep Bostonians from entering without special permission. The death toll reached 101 in September, and the Selectmen, powerless to stop it, "severely limited the length of time funeral bells could toll." As one response, legislators delegated a thousand pounds from the treasury to help the people who, under these conditions, could no longer support their families.

On June 6, 1721, Mather sent an abstract of reports on inoculation by Timonius and Jacobus Pylarinus to local physicians, urging them to consult about the matter. He received no response. Next, Mather pleaded his case to Dr. Zabdiel Boylston, who tried the procedure on his only son and two slaves—one grown and one a boy. All recovered in about a week. Boylston inoculated seven more people by mid-July.

The epidemic peaked in October 1721, with 411 deaths; by February 26, 1722, Boston was, once again, free of smallpox. The total number of cases since April 1721 came to 5,889, with 844 deaths—more than three quarters of all the deaths in Boston during 1721. Meanwhile, Dr. Boylston had inoculated 242 people, with

only six resulting in death.

Inoculation debate

Boylston and Mather's inoculation crusade "raised a horrid Clamour" amongst the people of Boston. Both Boylston and Mather were "Object[s] of their Fury; their furious Obloquies and Invectives," which Mather acknowledges in his diary. Boston's Selectmen, consulting a doctor who claimed that the practice caused many deaths and only spread the infection, forbade Boylston from performing it again.

The New-England Courant published writers who opposed the practice. The editorial stance was that the Boston populace feared that inoculation spread, rather than prevented, the disease; however, some historians, notably H. W. Brands, have argued that this position was a result of editor-in-chief James Franklin's (Benjamin Franklin's brother) contrarian positions.

Public discourse ranged in tone from organized arguments by tobacconist and medical practitioner John Williams, who posited that "several arguments proving that inoculating the smallpox is not contained in the law of Physick, either natural or divine, and therefore unlawful," to more slanderous attacks, such as those put forth in a pamphlet by Dr. William Douglass of Boston entitled The Abuses and Scandals of Some Late Pamphlets in Favour of Inoculation of the Small Pox (1721), on the qualifications of inoculation's proponents. (Douglass was exceptional at the time for holding a medical degree from Europe.) At the extreme, in November 1721, someone hurled a lighted grenade into Cotton Mather's house.

Medical opposition

Several opponents of smallpox inoculation, among them John Williams, stated that there were only two laws of physick (medicine): sympathy and antipathy. In his estimation, inoculation was neither a sympathy toward a wound or a disease, or an antipathy toward one, but the creation of one. For this reason, its practice violated the natural laws of medicine, transforming health care practitioners into those who harm rather than heal.

As with many colonists, Williams' Puritan beliefs were enmeshed in every aspect of his life, and he used the Bible to state his case. He quoted Matthew 9:12 when Jesus said: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick."

In contrast, Dr. William Douglass proposed a more secular argument against

inoculation, stressing the importance of reason over passion and urging the public to be pragmatic in their choices. In addition, he demanded that ministers leave the practice of medicine to physicians, and not meddle in areas where they lacked expertise. According to Douglass, smallpox inoculation was "a medical experiment of consequence," one not to be undertaken lightly. He believed that not all learned individuals were qualified to doctor others, and while ministers took on several roles in the early years of the colony, including that of caring for the sick, they were now expected to stay out of state and civil affairs.

Douglass also felt that inoculation caused more deaths than it prevented. The only reason Cotton Mather had success in it, he said, was because Mather had used it on children, who are naturally more resilient. Douglass vowed to always speak out against "the wickedness of spreading infection."

Speak out he did: "The battle between these two prestigious adversaries [Douglass and Mather] lasted far longer than the epidemic itself, and the literature accompanying the controversy was both vast and venomous." In the end, Douglass grew to accept inoculation, but he stood his ground on the need for professional standards.

Puritan resistance

Puritan principles were core to the religious arguments against inoculation. They believed that they were "elected" by God to establish a godly nation in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. As such, the notion of God’s will being evident in their daily life was paramount, and they strove to accept every affliction as proof of God's special interest in their affairs.

God's authority was absolute, and Williams questioned whether the smallpox "is not one of the strange works of God; and whether inoculation of it be not a fighting with the most High." He also asked his readers if the smallpox epidemic may have been given to them by God as "punishment for sin," and warned that attempting to shield themselves from God's fury (via inoculation), would only serve to "provoke him more." The Puritans found meaning in affliction, and they did not yet know why God was showing them disfavor through smallpox. Not to address their errant ways before attempting a cure could set them back in their "errand."

Many Puritans believed that creating a wound and inserting poison was doing violence and therefore was antithetical to the healing art. They grappled with adhering to the Ten Commandments, with being proper church members and good caring neighbors. The apparent contradiction between harming or

murdering a neighbor through inoculation and the Sixth Commandment--"thou shalt not kill"--seemed insoluble and hence stood as one of thee main objections against the procedure.

Williams maintained that because the subject of inoculation could not be found in the Bible, it was not the will of God, and therefore "unlawful." He also explained that inoculation violated The Golden Rule, because if one neighbor voluntarily infected another with disease, he was not doing unto others as he would have done to him. With the Bible as the Puritans' source for all decision-making, lack of scriptural evidence concerned many, and Williams vocally scorned Rev. Mather for not being able to reference an inoculation edict directly from the Bible.

Inoculation defended

With the smallpox epidemic catching speed and racking up a staggering death toll, a solution to the crisis was becoming more urgently needed by the day. The use of quarantine and various other efforts, such as balancing the body's humors, did not slow the disease's spread. As news rolled in from town to town and correspondence arrived from overseas, reports of horrific stories of suffering and loss due to smallpox stirred mass panic among the people. "By circa 1700, smallpox had become among the most devastating of epidemic diseases circulating in the Atlantic world."

Cotton Mather strongly challenged the perception that inoculation was against the will of God and argued that the procedure was not outside of Puritan principles. He wrote that "whether a Christian may not employ this Medicine (let the matter of it be what it will) and humbly give Thanks to God's good Providence in discovering of it to a miserable World; and humbly look up to His Good Providence (as we do in the use of any other Medicine) It may seem strange, that any wise Christian cannot answer it. And how strangely do Men that call themselves Physicians betray their Anatomy, and their Philosophy, as well as their Divinity in their invectives against this Practice?" The Puritan minister began to embrace the sentiment that smallpox was an inevitability for anyone, both the good and the wicked, yet God had provided them with the means to save themselves. Mather reported that, from his view, "none that have used it ever died of the Small Pox, tho at the same time, it were so malignant, that at least half the People died, that were infected With it in the Common way."

The practice of smallpox inoculation was eventually accepted by the general population due to first-hand experiences and personal relationships. Although many were initially wary of the concept, it was because people were able to witness the procedure's consistently positive results, within their own community

of ordinary citizens, that it became widely utilized and supported. One important change in the practice after 1721 was regulated quarantine of inoculees.

Inoculation visibly and directly aided man's control of the disease, the level of infection, mortality rates and the spreading of the epidemic. Planned inoculation led to better observation of the body's responses and allowed people the ability to time the onset of the pox and control the disease's intensity. For example, by inoculating in the months of milder climate, one had a better chance of fighting the infection and becoming immune instead of the alternative: natural exposure to the disease during harsher weather, when the body's defenses were already challenged.

Additionally, by the 1750s, innovations and experience with inoculation focused on better insertion of pox fluid and preparation of body to withstand the disease. By controlling the point and time of infection, bodies could be conditioned to optimal state before contracting smallpox, therefore providing a better opportunity to fight and achieve immunity. Dependent upon a person's constitution, by adhering to a specific diet or purging, one could physically handle the infection more successfully. It was also discovered that inoculation produced less scarring and physical defects than a common, naturally contracted case.

The aftermath

Although Cotton Mather and Dr. Boylston were able to demonstrate the efficacy of the practice, the debate over inoculation would continue even beyond the epidemic of 1721-22. After overcoming considerable difficulty and achieving notable success, Boylston traveled to London in 1724 where he published his results and was elected to the Royal Society in 1726.

The responses of the Boston clergymen to the reproaches put forth by the anti-inoculation camp highlighted seminal changes the Puritan church was undergoing at the time. By prescribing recent advances in medicine, the Boston ministers modified the doctrine of theological pathogenesis in an attempt to maintain the old order according to which it was the clergy’s duty and privilege to interpret illnesses and their cures. However, the contradiction of simultaneously upholding tradition and embracing innovations was impossible to resolve and, as a consequence, the clergy continued to lose influence over secular affairs in eighteenth-century New England.

In the end, lives were saved by inoculation, and the epidemic was halted. Even today, the procedure is credited with ending the devastation caused by the early epidemics, and vaccination, in many ways an updated and modernized form of

the procedure, continues to be recommended by the Centers for Disease Control for at-risk populations, such as potential victims of bioterrorism, and research scientists who work with surviving strains of the virus.

Salem witch trials of 1692, The Mather Influence

Mather's contemporary critic, Robert Calef, considered him responsible for laying the very groundwork that inspired the trials at Salem, pg. 152:

"Mr Cotton Mather was the most active and forward of any Minister in the Country in those matters [the Goodwin children and Goody Glover, taking home one of the Children, and managing such intrigues with that Child, and after printing such an account of the whole, in his Memorable Provinces [published in 1689], as conduced much to the kindling of those Flames, that in Sir Williams time [i.e. Salem Witch Trials] threatened the devouring of this Country."

The historian Charles Upham, writing in 1869 says that both Mathers "are answerable... more that almost any other... for the opinions of their time. It was indeed a superstitious age, but made much more so by their operations, influence, and writings, beginning with Increase Mather's movement at the assembly of Ministers in 1681 and ending with Cotton Mather's dealings with the Goodwin children, and the account thereof which he printed [1689] and circulated far and wide." Upham refers to the afflicted in Salem as the "imitators" of the Goodwin children.

Mather was influential in the construction of the court for the trials from the beginning. Sir William Phips, governor of the newly chartered Province of Massachusetts Bay, appointed his lieutenant governor, William Stoughton, as head of a special witchcraft tribunal and then as chief justice of the colonial courts, where he presided over the witch trials. According to Bancroft, Mather had been influential in gaining politically unpopular Stoughton his appointment as lieutenant governor under Phips by appealing to his politically powerful father, Increase Mather. “Intercession had been made by Cotton Mather for the advancement of William Stoughton, a man of cold affections, proud, self-willed and covetous of distinction." Apparently Mather saw in Stoughton an ally for church-related matters. Bancroft quotes Mather’s reaction to Stoughton's appointment as follows:

“The time for a favor is come,” exulted Cotton Mather; “Yea, the set time is come.

Mather claims he did not attend the trials in Salem (though his father attended

the trial of George Burroughs). Two contemporaries -- Thomas Brattle and Robert Calef—place him at executions (see below). Mather began to publicize and celebrate the trials well before they were put to an end: "If in the midst of the many Dissatisfaction among us, the publication of these Trials may promote such a pious Thankfulness unto God, for Justice being so far executed among us, I shall Re-joyce that God is Glorified..." - Wonders of the Invisible World. He calls himself a historian not an advocate, but writes in such a way that clearly presumes the guilt of the accused and adding insults e.g. calling Martha Carrier a rampant hag Wonders of the Invisible World.

The Use of Spectral Evidence

Mather's most fatal influence over the trials was in composing the answer to the question of whether or not to allow Spectral evidence, that is, allowing the afflicted girls to claim that some invisible ghost of the defendant was tormenting them, and for this to be considered evidence of witchcraft by the defendant, even if the defendant denied it and professed their own strongly held Christian beliefs. An opinion on the matter was sought from the most esteemed ministers of the area and Cotton Mather took credit for their response when anonymously celebrating himself years later: "drawn up at their desire, by Cotton Mather the younger, as I have been informed." (Book of The Life of Sir William Phips first published anonymously in London in 1697) And Mather then included the letter, but, for his own reasons (surely not brevity, Magnalia is huge) left out the first, second, and eight sections, which would seem most encouraging to the judges to carry-on with their work.

The original full version of the letter, called Return of the Several Ministers dated June 15, 1692, and had already been reprinted in the fall 1692 in the final two pages of Increase Mather's Cases of Conscience. It is a curious document and remains a source of confusion and argument. Calef calls it "perfectly Ambidexter, giving as great as greater Encouragement to proceed in those dark methods, then cautions against them... indeed the Advice then given, looks most like a thing of his Composing, as carrying both Fire to increase and Water to quench the Conflagration." Regarding his view on Spectral evidence, Upham concludes that "Cotton Mather never in any public writing 'denounced the admission ' of it, never advised its absolute exclusion; but on the contrary recognized it as a ground of 'presumption' ...[and once admitted] nothing could stand against it. Character, reason, common sense, were swept away." Allowing such evidence resulted in the shrieking circus that the trials became.

The S. G. [Salem Gentlemen] will by no means allow, that any are brought in guilty, and condemned, by virtue of spectre Evidence... but whether it is not

purely by virtue of these spectre evidences, that these persons are found guilty, (considering what before has been said,) I leave you, and any man of sense, to judge and determine.

— Thomas Brattle, October 8, 1692

The later rejection of Spectral evidence in the trials of January 1693 resulted in no convictions.

Bancroft notes that Mather considered witches "among the poor, and vile, and ragged beggars upon Earth," and Bancroft asserts that Mather considered the people against the witch trials to be witch advocates.

Calef places Mather at the scene of the execution of Mr. Burroughs (and four others who were killed after Mather spoke) and shows him playing a direct and influential role:

Mr. Burroughs was carried in a Cart with others, through the streets of Salem, to Execution. When he was upon the Ladder, he made a speech for the clearing of his Innocency, with such Solemn and Serious Expressions as were to the Admiration of all present; his Prayer (which he concluded by repeating the Lord’s Prayer) [as witches were not supposed to be able to recite] was so well worded, and uttered with such composedness as such fervency of spirit, as was very Affecting, and drew Tears from many, so that if seemed to some that the spectators would hinder the execution. The accusers said the black Man [Devil] stood and dictated to him. As soon as he was turned off [hung], Mr. Cotton Mather, being mounted upon a Horse, addressed himself to the People, partly to declare that he [Mr. Burroughs] was no ordained Minister, partly to possess the People of his guilt, saying that the devil often had been transformed into the Angel of Light. And this did somewhat appease the People, and the Executions went on; when he [Mr. Burroughs] was cut down, he was dragged by a Halter to a Hole, or Grave, between the Rocks, about two feet deep; his Shirt and Breeches being pulled off, and an old pair of Trousers of one Executed put on his lower parts: he was so put in, together with Willard and Carrier, that one of his Hands, and his Chin, and a Foot of one of them, was left uncovered.

—Robert Calef

Post-trial

In the years after the trials, Cotton Mather remained unrepentant for his role. Of the principal actors in the trial, whose lives are recorded after, only Cotton

Mather and his ally William Stoughton never admitted any guilt. Indeed, in the years after the trial Mather became an increasingly vehement defender of the trial. At the request of then Lt.-Gov. William Stoughton, Mather wrote Wonders of the Invisible World written during the trials and published in 1693. The book contained a few of Mather's sermons, the conditions of the colony and a description of witch trials in Europe. Mather somewhat clarified the contradictory advice he had given in Return of the Several Ministers, by defending the use of spectral evidence. Wonders of the Invisible World appeared at the same time as Increase Mather's Cases of Conscience."

The last event in Cotton Mather's involvement with witchcraft was his attempt to cure Mercy Short and Margaret Rule. Boston merchant Robert Calef began his eight-year campaign against the influential 's book was inspired by the fear that Mather would succeed in once again stirring up new witchcraft trials, and the need to bear witness to the horrible experiences of New Englanders in 1692. He quotes the public apologies of the men on the jury and one of the judges. Upon reading Calef's More Wonders of the Invisible World, Increase Mather publicly burned the book in Harvard Yard.

19th Century Revision of Cotton Mather, Poole vs. Upham

In 1869, William Frederick Poole quoted from various school textbooks of the time demonstrating they were in agreement on Cotton Mather's role in the Witch Trials:

"If anyone imagines that we are stating the case too strongly, let him try an experiment with the first bright boy he meets by asking,
'Who got up Salem Witchcraft?'...he will reply, 'Cotton Mather'. Let him try another boy...
'Who was Cotton Mather?' and the answer will come, 'The man who was on horseback, and hung witches.'"

Poole was a not a historian, but a famous librarian, and a lover of literature, including Mather's Magnalia "and other books and tracts, numbering nearly 400 [which] were never so prized by collectors as today." Poole announces his intention to redeem Mather's name, using as a springboard a harsh critique of a recently published tome by Charles Wentworth Upham called "Salem Witchcraft Volumes I and II With an Account of Salem Village and a History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Subjects." Upham's book runs to almost 1,000 pages and a quick search of the name Mather (referring to either father, son, or ancestors) shows that it occurs only 96 times; Poole's critique, in book form, runs less than 70 pages but the name "Mather" occurs many times that. Upham shows a

balanced and complicated view of Cotton Mather such as this first mention: "One of Cotton Mather's most characteristic productions is the tribute to his venerated master. It flows from a heart warm with gratitude." Upham's book refers to Robert Calef 25 times with the majority of these regarding documents compiled by Calef in the mid-1690s and stating: "Although zealously devoted to the work of exposing the enormities connected with the witchcraft prosecutions, there is no ground to dispute the veracity of Calef as to matters of fact." He goes on to say that Calef's collection of writings "gave a shock to Mather's influence, from which it never recovered." Thus, Poole's critique might better be understood as aimed at Calef, Mather's contemporary, who saw fit to ascribe to him, and his influence, the largest portion of blame.

Calef produced only the one book, he is self-effacing and apologetic for his limitations, and on the title page his is listed not as author but "collector". Poole, champion of literature, cannot accept Calef whose "faculties, as indicated by his writings appear to us to have been of an inferior order;..." and his book "in our opinon, has a reputation much beyond its merits." Poole refers to Calef as Mather's "personal enemy" and opens a line, "Without discussing the character and motives of Calef..." and he does not follow up on this suggestiveness, to discuss any motive or reason to impune Calef's character.

Upham took the bait and responded to Poole in a book running five times as long and sharing the same title (referring to Poole as "the Reviewer.") Many of Poole's arguments were easily attended to, but both authors emphasize the importance of Cotton Mather's difficult and contradictory view on spectral evidence, as copied in the final pages of Increase Mather's "Cases of Conscience" called "The Return of Several Ministers."

In 1914, the historian George Lincoln Burr sided with Upham in a note on Thomas Brattle's letter, "The strange suggestion of W. F. Poole that Brattle here means Cotton Mather himself, is adequately answered by Upham..." Burr also reprinted Calef in full and dug deep into the historical record for information on the man and concludes "...that he had else any grievance against the Mathers or their colleagues there is no reason to think." Burr finds that a comparison between Calef's work and original documents in the historical record collections "testify to the care and exactness..."

20th Century and Ongoing Revision

Poole's views have found followers and the revision of Cotton Mather continues, while Calef's book is arguably less well-known. Consider the following:

Chadwick Hansen’s Witchcraft at Salem, published in 1969, defined Mather as a positive influence on the Salem Trials. Hansen considered Mather's handling of the Goodwin Children to be sane and temperate. Hansen also noted that Mather was more concerned with helping the affected children than r treated the affected children through prayer and fasting.

Before she was executed, Mather tried to convert the Catholic Goodwife Glover, accused of practicing witchcraft on the Goodwin children. Hansen claimed Mather acted as a moderating influence in the trials by opposing the death penalty for those who confessed—or feigned confession—such as Tituba and Dorcas Good. Most interesting was Mather’s decision not to tell the community of the others whom Goodwife Clover claimed practiced witchcraft. This could be seen as either generous discretion or sly blackmail. Later, with Robert Calef's observation of Mather's dealings with Margaret Rule, it became seen as the latter, with Mather perceived as drawing information from her through leading questions, and possibly having a prurient interest-- "Smutty" in Mather's words—in his intimate dealings with afflicted young women. Hansen also claims that most negative impressions of Cotton Mather stem from his defense of the ongoing trials in Wonders of the Invisible World. After others had lamented the roles they played in the executions of nineteen and imprisonment of hundreds, Mather remained the chief defender of the trials, which diminishes the view of him as a moderate influence.

Some historians who have examined the life of Cotton Mather after Chadwick Hansen’s book also seem to yearn for a positive view of Cotton Mather. Bernard Rosenthal laments that Mather is so often portrayed as the rabid witch hunter. Rosenthal suggests that Mather might have had guilty feelings—feigned or not—for choosing not to restrain the judges during the trial, though he was in the best position to do so. Larry Gragg highlights Mather’s cloudy thinking and confusion between sympathy for the possessed, and the boundlessness of spectral evidence when Mather stated, “the devil have sometimes represented the shapes of persons not only innocent, but also the very virtuous.” And writing in the early 1980s, John Demos seemed to consider Mather a moderating influence on the trials.

Magnalia Christi Americana

Magnalia Christi Americana, considered Mather's greatest work, was published in 1702, when he was 39. The book includes several biographies of saints, and describes the process of the New England settlement.(Meyers 23-24) It is composed of seven total books, including Pietas in Patriam: the life of His Excellency Sir William Phips, originally published anonymously in London in 1697.

Despite being one of Mather's most well-known works, many have openly criticized it, labeling it as hard to follow and understand, and poorly paced and organized. However, other critics have praised Mather's works, believing it to be one of the best efforts at properly documenting the establishment of America and growth of the people (Halttunen 311).

The Biblia Americana

When Cotton Mather died, he had an abundance of unfinished writings left behind, including one entitled The Biblia Americana. Mather believed that Biblia Americana was the best thing he had ever written, believing it to be his masterwork (Hovey 533).

Biblia Americana contained Cotton Mather's thoughts and opinions on the Bible and how he interpreted it. Biblia Americana is incredibly large and Mather worked on it from 1693–1728, when he died. Mather tried to convince others that philosophy and science could work together with religion instead of against it. People did not have to choose one or the other and in Biblia Americana Mather looked at the Bible through a scientific perspective, the complete opposite of when he wrote The Christian Philosopher, in which he decided to approach science in a religious manner (Smolinski 280-281).

The Christian Philosopher

In 1721 The Christian Philosopher was published. Written by Mather, it was the first systematic book on science published in America. Mather attempted to show how Newtonian science and religion were in harmony. It was in part based on Robert Boyle's The Christian Virtuoso (1690).

Mather also took inspiration from Hayy ibn Yaqdhan, a philosophical novel by Abu Bakr Ibn Tufail (whom he refers to as "Abubekar"), a 12th-century Islamic philosopher. Despite condemning the 'Mahometans' as infidels, he viewed the protagonist of the novel, Hayy, as a model for his ideal Christian philosopher and monotheistic scientist'. Mather also viewed Hayy as a noble savage and applied this in the context of attempting to understand the Native American Indians in order to convert them to Puritan Christianity.

Pillars of Salt

The Puritan execution sermon, preached on the occasion of a public hanging, then quickly printed up in pamphlet form and sold for a few pence, was an early form of true-crime literature. Mather's first published sermon, which appeared in

1686, concerned the crime and punishment of James Morgan, a reprobate who in a drunken rage impaled a man with an iron spit. Thirteen years later, following the execution of a Boston woman named Sarah Threeneedles for killing her baby, Mather issued Pillars of Salt. This compilation of a dozen accounts (half of which, including the case of Morgan, had been previously published) stands as a landmark work, a Puritan precursor of the true-crime miscellanies that, stripped of all religious intent, would become a staple of the genre in subsequent centuries. In 2008 The Library of America reprinted the entirety of Pillars of Salt in its two-century retrospective of American True Crime.

Boston Ephemeris

The Boston Ephemeris was an almanac written by Mather in 1686. The content was similar to what is known today as the Farmer’s Almanac. This was particularly important because it shows that Cotton Mather had influence in mathematics during the time of Puritan New England. This almanac contained a significant amount of astronomy, celestial motions of the sun, planets, and stars, as did many almanacs of the time. It also included “information such as weather forecasts, farmers' planting dates, astronomical information, and tide tables, Astronomical data and various statistics, such as the times of the rising and setting of the sun and moon, eclipses, hours of full tide, stated festivals of churches, terms of courts, lists of all types, timelines, and more.” Mather had within the text of the Almanac the positions and motions of these celestial bodies, which he must have calculated by hand.

The Body Of Divinity Versifyed

A God there is, a God of boundless Might,
In Wisdom, Justice, Goodness, Infinite.
God is but One and yet in Persons Three.
The Father, Son, and Spirit, One God we see.
Our God, by His Great Name JEHOVAH known,
HE the World Made, and Keeps, and Rules Alone.
To Glorify the Glorious God, is That
For which He did all men, and me Create.
God a Just Rule doth in our Bible give,
A Rule, both what to Think, and how to Live.
Holy & Happy our First Parents came
From Gods Hand, with Gods Image in our Frame.
Tasting Forbidden Fruit our Parents fell;
This Taste has plung'd Mankind all down to Hell.
Our Blest Lord JESUS CHRIST, in our Distress,
Comes to fetch us from Hell to Blessedness.
Into his Person, the Bright Son of God,
A Virgins Son took; There He makes Abode.
Life as a Priest CHRIST will His People bring,
Light as a Prophet, & Law as a King.
For us our Surety Liv'd, for us he Dy'd,
And Rising did to Heaven in Triumph Ride.
By Faith to Christ we for Salvation go;
Faith too, as well as That must He bestow.
For Sin will the Renew'd Believer Mourn,
And from all Sin, he'l by Repentance Turn.
Sinners receiving of Gods Pardon, they
Gods Precept will, made Saints, with Love Obey.
All Homage we must yield unto the Lord;
In all directed, by His Heavenly Word.
His Works and Names, we may not use in Vain;
Nor by our Works thereon His Days Profane.
With Honours due we must our Neighbours treat;
And sweetly wish them Lives both Long & Sweet.
With Chastity we must our selves Behave;
And do no Wrong in what we Get or Save.
Truth we must utter, & abhor to Lye;
And be Content, tho' in Adversity.
Them who to be in CHRIST, thro' Grace, Consent,

God brings into His Gracious Covenant.
The Baptism of the Lord, assures that we
Both Wash'd from Sin, & Rais'd from Death, shall be.
To See the Lord, we at His Table Sitt,
And Show, that we shall in His Kingdom Eat.
Gods Children His good Promises Enjoy:
And Good comes of what Ill may them annoy.
His Angels He to them does Guardians make,
And these their Souls, at their Departure take.
To Judge the World, CHRIST will descend at Last;
A Righteous Doom shall by that Judge be past.
The Wicked shall bear bitter Pain and Shame,
With Wicked Spirits in Eternal Flame.
The Godly shall, with their Great GOD, on High,
Reap Joyes, High Joyes, to all Eternity.

Cotton Mather