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"The Perfection of Beauty": Cotton Mather's Christological Interpretation of the Shechinah Glory in the "Biblia Americana" and its Theological Contexts

> Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old. Matt. 13:52

As is well known, Cotton Mather was no stranger to angelic beings in radiant glory visiting his study, especially when long bouts of fasting and fervent prayers rendered him susceptible to such ethereal manifestations.[1] One such event, sometime in 1685, was particularly memorable. Following intense religious devotions, the young Mather saw a radiant, winged angel in the shape of a "beardless" man, "whose face shone like the noonday sun," wearing a "splendid tiara" and "white and shining" robes down to his feet. A messenger from Jesus Christ, the angel prophesied to him a future of superlative productivity, like a "*Cedar in Lebanon with fair branches*" in Christ's kingdom and "in the revolutions that are now at hand." That the angel spoke to him "in the words of the prophet Ezekiel" (Ezek. 31:3–7, 9) is perhaps not surprising (*Diary* 1: 86–87; *Paterna* 112–13).[2] After all, Ezekiel's theophanic vision of the four living creatures "in the likeness of man" (1:5) typifies for Mather a manifestation of

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1 I would like to thank Reiner Smolinski not only for access to his transcriptions of vol. 1 (Genesis) and 2 (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) of the "Biblia," but also for his helpful footnotes in those volumes, as well as a few helpful suggestions during the Tübingen conference. I would also like to thank Harry Clark Maddux for access to the transcriptions of vol. 4 (Ezra, Nehemiah, Job, Psalms), Rick Kennedy for vol. 8 (John, Historia Apostolica, Acts, Appendix to Acts), and Michael P. Clark for vol. 10 (Hebrews, James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude, Revelation, Coronis). Special thanks as well to Jason LaFountain for his suggested literature on the topic of *shining* in Mather. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Jan Stievermann for his helpful guidance both in the evolution of this paper and also within the Tübingen "Biblia"-team's shared undertaking of vol. 5 (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles [The Messiah], Isaiah, Jeremiah). All translations in this essay are my own; all Bible citations are from the 1769 Oxford edition, Benjamin Blayney's revision of the 1611 *King James Version* of the English Bible. This essay is dedicated to my Mother.

2 For the significance of Mather's angelic visions, see David Levin, "When did Cotton Mather See the Angel?" and his biography *Cotton Mather* (106–08, 200); Kenneth Silverman's review of *Paterna* and his biography *Life and Times* (127–30, 135–37, 311–12, 414). Mather also wrote about angels in his sermons *Coelestinus* and *Things for a Distress'd People*. For Increase Mather's interest in angels, see his *Angelographia* (1696).

Christ in his glorious reign. In the "Biblia Americana," this prefiguration of the glorious presence of Christ is usually referred to as the Shechinah, and it is one of the objects of Mather's insatiable curiosity throughout his commentary.

Mather's preoccupation with the ancient Jewish notion of Theophany is apparent in some of his earliest entries on Genesis. His aim is to show the presence of the second person of the Trinity in the Shechinah glory as a way to trace Christ's pre-incarnate existence in the Old Testament from the very beginning. "Entertain us, if you please, with a Jewish Curiosity, upon that Passage, *Lett there be Light*? [Gen. 1] v. 3." With this characteristic dialogue format, Mather begins to explore the issue. Dutifully answering his own request, he offers the following gloss taken from the rabbinic commentary of Isaac Abrabanel (1437–1508)[3]:

> *Abarbinel* (upon the XL of *Exodus*) takes this to be the SHECHINAH, the most excellent of all created Things, called in the Holy Scriptures, *The Glory of the Lord*; which God, saith he, sealed up in His Treasures, after the *Luminaries* were created, for to serve Him on special Occasions; (as, for instance, to lead the *Israelites* in the Wilderness, by a *Cloudy Pillar of Fire*,) when He would make Himself appear extraordinarily present. (*BA* 1: 320)

Abrabanel's explanation, however, does not fully satisfy Mather, for his interest in a Christological reading of the Old Testament governs his exegetical vision and selection criteria, one which the medieval rabbi is not prepared to supply:

> There may be Fancy enough, in this Notion; yett it is not altogether to be despised. There is a certain *Bright Cloud of Heaven*, of quite another Consistence than that which drops our ordinary Rain upon us; That *Cloud* filled with the *Light* and *Fire*, wherein the Son of God chose to lodge, as in His Covering, from the Beginning, that so He might therein exhibit Himself with an Agreeable *Majesty* unto His People: Tis the same that was called, The *Shechinah*; and it was of old seen by the People of God, on several great Occasions. The Great God ha's chosen, to dwell in this *Light, which no Man can approach unto*; and a special Remark, may be putt upon the *Goodness* of the *Light* in general, because unto the general Head of *Light* belongs that Illustrious & Cœlestial Matter, on which the God of Heaven ha's putt this peculiar Dignity. (*BA* 1: 320–21)

In Mather's understanding of the divine Shechinah as "a certain *Bright Cloud of Heaven*" where "the Son of God chose to lodge," the manifestation of God's glory simultaneously prefigures the second person of the Trinity: the yet unborn, but eternally existent Son, Christ, or the *Logos* pre-incarnate. In line with

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3 Isaac Abrabanel [also Abarbanel, Abravanel] had a noted influence on early Protestantism: Calvin criticized his commentary on Daniel, and many exegetes of the Old Protestant orthodoxy read his Bible commentaries. The reception of Abrabanel in early Protestant theology has, however, not yet been fully researched. Hans Georg von Mutius has called Isaac Abrabanel "the most important Jewish Bible exegete and philosopher of religion at the end of the Middle Ages" ["der bedeutendste jüdische Bibelexeget und Religionsphilosoph am Ende des Mittelalters"] (Mutius 302).

a long patristic tradition, stemming itself from the New Testament, e.g. St. Paul (Col. 2:16),[4] the "Biblia" here appropriates the ancient Jewish notion of Theophany into a Christological framework of interpretation: Theophanies become Christophanies. This essay will argue that, far from being a "Jewish Curiosity" of mere antiquarian interest to the Puritan intellectual, this Christianized understanding of the Shechinah is indeed a central concept for Mather's theology that, like a symbol in a Persian rug, appears throughout the "Biblia" commentary. The concept of the Shechniah helped Mather to 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 pointing to the interpretive center of the Old and New Testament.

As I will demonstrate, Mather's interpretation of the Shechinah can only be adequately understood in the context of an ongoing theological debate among early modern Christian Hebraists. After a brief look at the origins of the Hebrew neologism and its adoption into the English language, I will provide a survey of this theological debate, paying particular attention to Mather's main sources, John Stillingfleet (1630–87) and Thomas Tenison (1636–1715), as well as to the period's foremost critic of any hermeneutical approach that read Christ into the Hebrew Bible: Hugo Grotius (1583–1645). Following the analysis of Mather's contribution to the contemporary debate about the significance of Shechinahism, I will conclude with a short comparative glance at Jonathan Edwards (1703–58), his most important successor in the New England tradition.

The Biblical Background and Rabbinical Origins of the Neologism Shechinah and its Introduction into English

What exactly does the word *Shechinah* mean and where does it come from? *The Oxford English Dictionary*, with its emphasis on the etymological origins of words in English usage, is a helpful starting point. Here the word is explained as follows:

> The visible manifestation of the Divine Majesty, esp. when resting between the cherubim over the mercy-seat or in the temple of Solomon; a glory or refulgent light symbolizing the Divine Presence. ... In the Targums the word is used as a periphrasis to designate God when He is said to dwell among the cherubim, etc., so as to avoid any approach to anthropomorphic expressions. ("Shechinah")

4 Col. 2:16–17: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."

The central notion of divine manifestation or indwelling, which the *Oxford English Dictionary* rightly indentifies as underlying the word *Shechinah*, is rooted in the biblical concept of God's glory, which is rendered in the Hebrew scriptures as כבוד יהוה (*kabod YHWH*). The Septuagint translates this phrase as ἡ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ, which correlates with both *notion* as well as *brightness, radiance*, and *splendor*. The Vulgate provides *gloria Domini*, while Luther's Bible (1545) renders it as *die Herrlichkeit des HERRN* ("the glory [literally: 'lordliness'] of the Lord"); the *King James Version* (both 1611 and 1769) translates the phrase with the Latinized *the glory of the LORD*, as does the modern French (*Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible*, 1988): *la gloire du SEIGNEUR*. The Hebrew word *kabod* signifies *weightiness*. *Kabod* is however also related to the Greek δόξα (*brightness, radiance, splendor*) in that *kabod* is often associated with light, especially in Exod. 24:17 (Podella 1681).[5]

The term Shechinah itself, however, derives from another Hebrew word, this one being a verb, šāḵēn שכן, "to dwell," "remain," "inhabit" (Brown 1015). The substantive form of this verb is miskân משכן i.e., "tabernacle," "tent," or "dwelling place." In the Hebrew Bible this verb is linked with the above mentioned glory of the Lord. A famous example of this signification can be seen in Exod. 24:16: "And the glory of the LORD abode [וישכן כבוד־יהוה] upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud."[6] When early Jewish authors of the Targums, such as Onkelos or Pseudo-Jonathan, interpreted God's dwelling presence they often used the Hebraism *Shechinah* to speak of God's actual spatial presence on earth.[7] Although it was later used to avoid anthropomorphic reference to God (esp. with Moses Maimonides [1138–1204]), its earliest usage signified a specification of the way in which God was present (Goldberg 450, 535–36). The Hebrew neologism can be found in the Targums Onkelos and Pseudo-Jonathan.

As Arnold Goldberg has argued, in the early rabbinic literature Shechinah was not a *representative* of God, but the Divine Being *ad se ipsum*: "The term Shechinah must have originally identified the act of descent, the inhabitation or presence of the Godhead, and then the Godhead itself: how it is present at a

5 "And the sight of the glory of the LORD [כבוד יהוה] was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel."

6 Another passage which speaks of this dwelling of God is Exod. 25:8: "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." At this passage, as McClintock and Strong relay (9: 637–38) Onkelos has "I will make my Shechinah to dwell among them." At Ps. 74:2b, "this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt," the Targum records: "Wherein thy Shechinah hath dwelt." At Isa. 6:5c, "for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts," Jonathan has: "the glory of the Shechinah of the King of ages, the Lord of hosts." For further examples, see McClintock and Strong (9: 637–39); Schäfer (79–93); and for perhaps the most extensive list of the use of Shechinah in Rabbinic literature, see Goldberg (13–430).

7 How the term *originally* came about can only be conjectured (Goldberg 440).

particular place or reveals itself" (450).[8] He cites a passage from Targum Onkelos, at Deut. 33:16: דשכנתה בשמיא ועל משה אתגלי באסנא [whose Shechinah is in heaven, but who reveals himself to Moses in the thornbush] (440).[9] This strong account of immanence (almost suggesting a plurality) in the commentary was not left unchallenged.[10] Some rabbinical philosophers of the medieval period attempted to distance the Shechinah from God, as Peter Schäfer remarks,

> The most extreme step in distancing the Shekhinah from God was taken by the emerging Jewish philosophy of the early Middle Ages. Its representatives have been labeled "rationalistic," because one of their major concerns was to maintain – or rather restore – the integrity of the monotheistic and abstract concept of God. (103)

Schäfer shows that although some medieval Jewish philosophers, theologians, and poets – such as Saadia Gaon (892–942), Judah Ben Barzillai (c. 1035–1105), Judah Ha-Levi (before 1075–1141), and Maimonides – sought to interpret the Shechinah as created and thereby "'restore' a pure, non-anthropomorphic monotheism,"[11] in actuality the attempt was "quite alien to the much richer biblical and early postbiblical lore" (118). Rabbinical commentary and translation before this period never claimed that Shechinah was created (Schäfer 103).[12] Goldberg asserts that "it can be positively established that the Shechinah is not a middle being, and also cannot be, because the term *Shechinah* always indicates the unmediated presence of God" (535).[13] *Deus absconditus* is here revealed; Shechinah is nothing less than an explanation of the actual presence of God among us. With this background, we are now better prepared to appreciate how this new idiom entered the theological discourse of English and American scholars of the early modern period.

The birth of the Hebrew neologism Shechinah can be wonderfully illustrated by one of Cotton Mather's key study tomes. An often referenced text for many theologians and biblical scholars of the seventeenth century and later,

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8 "Der Terminus Schekhinah muß ursprünglich den Akt der Herabkunft, der Einwohnung oder Gegenwart der Gottheit bezeichnet haben und dann die Gottheit selber, wie sie an einem bestimmten Ort gegenwärtig ist oder sich offenbart."

9 "dessen Schekhinah im Himmel ist, der sich aber Moses im Dornbusch offenbart."

10 Goldberg proposes the term *emanation* as a possible explanation of Shechinah. He has serious reservations about its helpfulness, however, if the term leads to a foreign concept of God as an *Urgrund*, as in Neoplatonism, and later Kabbalah – a concept foreign to the ancient rabbis (536).

11 As Goldberg argues, only in one case of his entire investigation was Shechinah presented as the "Angel of the Lord," from a late Midrash collection and an unknown source (470).

12 Goldberg demonstrates this point from his study of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Targum Onkelos, the Babylonian and Palestinian Midrash as well as the Tosephta, the Midrash Hagadol, Midrash Rabbah, and countless other sources, collections, and commentaries (535).

13 "es kann positiv festgestellt werden, daß die Schekhinah kein Mittelwesen ist und auch nicht sein kann, weil der Terminus Schekhinah immer den unmittelbar gegenwärtigen Gott bezeichnet."

Brian Walton's *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta* (1653–57) published the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan. This Aramaic commentary records the following on Exod. 25:8: ועשו ויעברון לשמי מוקדשא ואשרי שכינתי ביניהון; the Latin translation reads, "Et facient nomini meo sanctuarium, & habitare faciam [שכינתי] divinam meam majestatem inter eos" (Walton 4: 148), which can be rendered, "And they should make unto my name a sanctuary, so that I will make שכינתי [my Shechinah / my divine majesty {or, grandeur}] to dwell with them." If the transliterated Hebraism is left standing without explication of its meaning, the passage then reads, "And they should make unto my name a sanctuary, so that I will make my *Shechinah* to dwell with them." Interestingly, the Latin translators in Walton's edition of Pseudo-Jonathan did not transliterate the term but elected to render its signification *meam majestatem*. At some point in the early English reception of these texts, however, *majestas* no longer satisfied those who employed Walton's London Polyglot, either because theologians deemed the Latin interpretation inadequate or because they preferred to leave the genius of the Hebraism *Shechinah* to stand as an unique idiom. An early example for the actual usage of the neologism within the theological discourse of the seventeenth century can be found in Matthew Poole's *Synopsis Criticorum* (1669–76), one of the key sources for the biblical humanists in Old and New England. Poole's *Synopsis* retains *Shechinah* in the Latin commentary on Ps. 17:15:

> R. Menachem ad Levit. 10. hæc habet, Nemo venire potest coram celsissimo & benedicto Rege sine Shecinah, (quod est Divina Majestas Dei in Christo;) ideóque dicitur, [nempe hoc loco,] In justitia videbo faciem tuam. (2: 637)
> [R. Menachem, at Lev. 10, has, 'no one can come into the presence of the most celestial and blessed King without Shechinah (that is the Divine Majesty of God in Christ;) therefore it is said {truly in this place,}' 'in righteousness I will see thy face.'][14]

This passage is significant because Poole's rendition already inserts the Christological emphasis in his translation of the Hebraism: "(quod est Divina Majestas Dei in Christo)", ["(that is 'the Divine Majesty of God in Christ')"]. Although many English speaking theologians would have read such passages in Latin, the first actual employment of the term in English, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, was John Stillingfleet (1631–87) – the elder brother of Edward Stillingfleet (1635–99), bishop of Worcester, Latitudinarian theologian, and critic of John Locke. This attribution seems to be correct, for his book titled *Shecinah, or, A demonstration of the divine presence in the places of religious worship* (1663) presents the term as a new-found jewel for theological reflection. Here, John Stillingfleet appropriately introduces the term in its non-Christological sense:

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14 Ps. 16:15 in the *Vulgata*: "ego autem in iustitia apparebo conspectui tuo satiabor cum apparuerit gloria tua" (Ps. 17:15 in the *KJV*).

> God is said *to dwell between the Cherubims*, Because God had promised to be Present there, and from thence to give his answer to the People. Here the *Jews* placed the SHECINAH the *Majesty* of God and his *Glory* dwelling upon the *Ark*, for this was the usual terme to expresse Gods Majesty and Presence in his Church by. And the *Hebrews* by *Shecinah* are wont to note; that visible sign of the Lords Presence, whereby he signifyed to the *Jews*, that he would dwell and stay amongst them, and what the Jews are wont to call *Shecinah*, in the Scripture we may often find set out by *Gods Glory;* And the word Δόξα is frequently used both in the LXX and New Testament, in that sense. Now, because the Ark was counted the most holy type that the Jews had, and the most Principal evidence and Pledge of Gods Presence, hence God sanctified those Places where the Ark came, because of the solemnity of manifesting of his Presence. (70)[15]

Stillingfleet takes a rather standard interpretation here, but on the following page he introduces the Christological connection by arguing that the presence of the Shechinah in the sacrificial ritual at the altar is "not so much for the Types sake as for the thing Typifyed by all these, and that was *Christ*" (71). As will be shown in the following section, this Christological account of the Shechinah served as a theological tool, enabling not only John Stillingfleet but also Thomas Tenison to connect the Old and New covenants and thus, in a certain sense, emphasize a synthetic continuity of tradition.

The Role of Shechinah in the Contemporary Theological Debates in England

As is already partly clear from the justification given in the title of Stillingfleet's trailblazing book, which is "*to promote Piety, prevent Apostacy, and to reduce grosly deluded souls*," the term *Shechinah* was employed from the beginning for apologetic and polemic purposes by English theologians. Stillingfleet sets out to present a true account of piety and Christian worship. The book actually received a heated response by William Smith (d. 1673), a Quaker, prolific defender of the free churchmen, and author of Quaker catechisms, in *A brief answer unto a book intituled SHETINAH* [*sic*], *or a demonstration* (1664). Smith claims that Stillingfleet "hath endeavored to cloud the sun on a clear day" (3) in his theological arguments against the Quakers. His short twenty-eight-page response takes the form of a point-counterpoint defense of Quaker piety and ecclesial polity against Stillingfleet's criticism. In his polemic against the

15 In the margin, Stillingfleet cites the French philologist Joannes Mercerus (Jean Mercier, * c. 1547), and his explanation of the Hebrew word: "Divinitas שכינה Gloria Divina inter homines habitans a שכן habitare. Hæbroram [*sic*] magistri vocant divinam Majestatem, Shecinah, quod suae ecclesiae habitet & adsit ubique locorum presentis [*sic*]. Merc. in Pagn." [Divinity שכינה Divine glory dwelling among mankind, from שכן to inhabit. The teachers of the Hebrews call divine majesty, Shechinah, because she {Shechinah is femine} would inhabit her assembly and be present wherever the place may be. Merc. in Pagn] (Stillingfleet 70).

Quaker doctrine of "the light within," Stillingfleet was keen to prove the necessity of public worship and to establish the correct use of the famous "light within," for as he argues at one point, the saints were "*panting after Gods presence in publick*" (from *The Contents*). Subsequently, Stillingfleet employs Shechinah as a confirmation that the presence of God is associated with orderly worship in an established format, not as a light within as the Quakers insisted. He continues to show how in the Old Testament the Temple, where the Shechinah dwelt, was a lawfully organized place of worship: "*A private Altar was not lawful to be erected but by a Prophet.* And the *Temple*, upon such accounts was a Part of the ceremonial Worship" (71). However, the Temple and its sacrifice, Stillingfleet argues, were only shadows of things to come that typified Christ:

> And they were to set their faces towards it, when they Prayed. And all this, not so much for the Types sake as for the thing Typifyed by all these, and that was *Christ*, through whom alone God accepts both of our Persons, Prayers, and all our Performances. (71)

Given Stillingfleet's anti-Quaker polemic, he carefully argues on the one hand for the importance of traditional worship and places of worship, while on the other, he maintains the fulfillment of the Old Testament-type in Christ as the New Testament-antitype, who abrogates the previous exclusivity of sacred places. He continues, "Therefore it follows that all that Legal and Ceremonial holiness of Places should quite vanish away with the Types, when Christ who is the substance, at which all there shadows Pointed is come" (71). The temple and Shechinah therein was fulfilled in Christ. It thus follows that he cannot adhere to a theology which prefers a certain holy place over another, one which would necessarily run counter to the radical message of Christ's universality. Stillingfleet justifies his interpretation as follows:

> Yet I have neither faith to beleeve, nor any reason to see, that there is in any such separated, I add, and consecrated Places for Divine Worship, any such Legal or Ceremonial kind of Holiness, which renders Duties performed there, more acceptable unto God, than if performed by the same Persons and in the like manner in any other Places. Which both in the Speculation, and in the Practice, smells too rank of down-right Popery. (71–72)

Stillingfleet walks a thin line between Catholic conceptions of holy places on the one hand and complete disregard of places of public worship on the other. We need not rehearse his argument here, but in brief, he draws upon the many passages of the Old and New Testament that speak of angels in relationship to religious gatherings as indication of a necessity for orderly worship (as St. Paul said, "because of the angels" 1 Cor. 11:10). The angels gather in particular places and aid the "heirs of salvation" – however, they are not to be worshiped. Following this excursus into angelology, Stillingfleet turns to the importance of the teaching and preaching of the word of God in the church service. He intro-

duces the Hebraism at this critical point in his argument. The Old Testament account of the Shechinah confirms that God becomes present in a certain finite place. For Stillingfleet, there is a direct analogy between the Old Testament Shechinah in the temple and the New Testament presence of God in the church. God is present in both cases, and both entail certain expectations upon the particular place and form of worship, the house of worship, and the worshipers. The Shechinah thus secures his theological argument and enables him to construct a direct continuity between the two covenants. This integrated concept of redemption history, with its religious norms, was employed by Stillingfleet against what he saw as a radicalization of the religion in the Quaker's unconventional and unregulated worship style as well as their emphasis on the doctrine of the "inner light" centered in the individual.[16]

The reception of the Shechinah terminology was varied, but it quickly gained wider publicity and became a *terminus technicus* in the English theological world. Some fifteen years later, Thomas Tenison (1636–1715) draws upon the Hebraism in a more focused and comprehensive presentation of the theme in his *Of Idolatry* (1678), which employs a variety of different sources, including other rabbinical commentaries, such as Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) and Abrabanel, and Targums, such as Onkelos, as well as reference to the Swiss Hebraist Johann Buxtorf (1564–1629).[17] Tenison received his B.A. from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and as Edward Carpenter argues, was directly influenced by the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth (1617–88) (*Thomas Tenison* 7). Some of this influence can be detected in one of Tenison's earlier works, *The Creed of Mr. Hobbes Examined in a Feigned Conference between Him and a Student of Divinity* (1670), which made him a popular figure for his critique of the materialism of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). As Carpenter records, in 1694 Tenison was chosen over Stillingfleet to become the Archbishop of Canterbury, a position he held until his death (*Cantuar* 229). In his *Of Idolatry*, Tenison charts idolatry *ab antiquo* and then doubles back to show *"the Cure of Idolatry by the* Shechinah *of God"* at every step along the way. In the margin of his text, he begins his discourse on the Shechinah as follows: "Let this difficult Argument, about the Shechinah, be read with caution; even where I have not interspersed words of Caution" (315). His warning is merited, for his work is an adventurous claim that the light of God, the Shechinah, has been shining in many cultures and in many different lands, leading all mankind to

16 "The light of reason, the *inward light* of the mind, improved with rules of morality, may make us morally honest, but it is the Word of God that teaches us how to be truly gracious" (Stillingfleet 113).

17 Although Tenison was certainly familiar with Stillingfleet's polemic *Shecinah, or, A demonstration* (1663), the parish theologian appears to have investigated some primary sources as well; he writes at the end of the book, "the Argument is a beaten one; a subject handled by Maimonides, Viretus, Vossius, Reinolds, Selden, and many others of great Learning" (392).

the light of the truth in God. His first source is by Neoplatonist philosopher Iamblichus Chalcidensis (c. 245-c. 325), who "in his book of the Egyptian Mysteries," "setteth out by light, the Power, the Simplicity, the Penetration, the Ubiquity of God" (Tenison 315–16). From St. Basil to Albin Levita, from Chaldean Oracles to Origen, from Justin Martyr, to Jerome, Augustine, and Maximus the Confessor, and from Eusebius to Philo Judaeus, Tenison charts out in a "parti-coloured" fashion how the second person of the Trinity has been seen in the divine presence of the Shechinah, a "*super-cælestial star; the fountain of all the sensible Luminaries*" (Tenison 320) from days of yore, in theological conflict and theurgia. He then turns to the Bible itself charting his course in epochs: From Adam to Noah, Noah to Moses, Moses to the Captivity – and "therein largely of the Ark and Cherubims and Urim and Thummim" (Tenison, "Introduction") – and then finally from the Captivity to the Messiah. This elucidation leads him to a discourse on the cure of idolatry by the "image of God in Christ God-man," before closing with two sections and a summary on the utility and the propriety of God's Shechinah in his theological discourse.

It is fair to argue that Tenison's account builds upon the synthetic theology of Stillingfleet. Whereas Stillingfleet employed his interpretation of the term *Shechinah* to show the binding of the covenants and, accordingly, the subsequent modified continuity of norms for public worship, with Tenison, Shechinah is a code for understanding Christ's presence among the nations, that is, how God has vouchsafed "the World towards the cure of Idolatry" (311). Tenison thus incorporates Shechinah into a more specific theological argument against a variety of different schools of thought.[18] His main emphasis centered

18 Tenison's main arguments are as follows: A) An "Anthropomorphite" who could not conceive of God in "any natural colour or figure" stands refuted, Stillingfleet states, because "God by his Logos using the ministry of inferiour creatures, hath condescended to a visible Shechinah" (379). B) Stillingfleet then turns to what seems to be the Quakers: "those people who run into the other extream, the *Spiritualist* and *abstractive Familists*," who are concerned with the "light or love in their own breasts." They "may be induced to own the distinct substance of God, and the visible person of Christ" and not to "subtilize the Deity and its Persons, and all its appearances into a meer notion ... or habit of mans spirit; or to bow down to God no otherwise than as he is the pretended light or love in their own breasts" (379). C) Next, Tenison looks across to the Continent: the theological problems of the German Anabaptist (Cloppenburg) would have never been thought of if he and his followers had read the rabbis (379–80). D) Tenison then turns his attention to the early history of Christian doctrine and against the ancient Gnostic Valentinians who, had they understood the preexistence of the Logos in the *Shechinah*, would not have fallen into error (380). E). Furthermore, Stillingfleet sees the Shechinah in a general sense as an aid to the unfolding of Scriptures, "which speak of the Præexistence of Christ before he was God-man" (380), against Laelius Socinus (1525–62) and the Socinian denial of the Trinity. F) He also perceives it as a weapon against the semi-Socinians such as Conrad Vorstius (1569–1622) and his disciples, who limit the ubiquity of the Divine, "confound the Immensity of the God-head, and the visible Glory of the Shechinah, which God hath pleased as it were to circumscribe. They will allow this King of the world no further room for his Immense substance than that which his especial Presence irradiates in his particular Palace. Which conceit though in part it be accommodable to the

on two aspects of Christology: preexistence and Logos (universality) and incarnation (particularity). With these, however, he saw in the Shechinah a key to a variety of theological problems and conflicts. Tenison ends his argument with words, which probably refer to the scholastic theology of Thomas Aquinas and the *visio beatifica*: "This Shechinah in milder, but most inexpressible luster, I suppose to be that which the Schools call the Beatifick Vision; and which the Scripture intendeth in the promise of seeing God face to face" (Tenison 378–9). That the force and "parti-coloured" nature of Tenison's argument was not universally appreciated by his critics can be seen in the works of those who resisted his expanded application of the term Shechinah. Although the Bishop of Ely Simon Patrick (1625–1707) adopted the rabbinic terminology, he does not seem to accept the Christology behind it. Significantly, Cotton Mather, who extracts much of Patrick's learned commentary, dismisses Patrick's reservation and chooses to follow Tenison's interpretation instead, one that endorses not only the orthodoxy of ancient theology but also the universality of the faith in an accelerating world of science and discovery.

Although Patrick was aware of Tenison and his Shechinah theology,[19] he carefully diverges from Tenison's Shechinah theology in explanation of the giving of the Law (Exod. 19:11):

> *For the third day the LORD will come down* ... Not from the Mount, but from Heaven upon Mount Sinai. On which the SCHECHINAH descended in a Cloud, which struck a great awe into them: For it was darker than the Pillar of the Cloud, by which they had been conducted hither; thro' which some rays, or glimpse of a glorious Majesty that was in it, broke forth upon them. (*Commentary upon the First Book of Moses* 350)

While Patrick includes Shechinah into his interpretive narrative, he does not speak of the second person of the Trinity nor Christ, nor of the Logos, as do Tenison (333–34), and, as I will demonstrate, Cotton Mather. Shechinah here is simply "a Token of God's special Presence" (Patrick, *Commentary upon the historical books* 49). This difference between Patrick and Tension (as well as Mather) should not be overemphasized. Patrick also has a Christology of preexistence. For example, in his commentary on Gen. 3:8 Patrick follows Tenison's reading of Onkelos but only insofar as to claim that the "Word of God, that is the Son of God," spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden. For Patrick,

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Shechinah; yet is it a presumptuous limitation of the great God, when it is applied to his substance which Heaven and Earth together cannot contain" (381). G) Then, Tenison addresses the "blindness of some of the modern Jews," who are against "Divine Statues and Images ... yet hope (some say) for an especial presence of God by furnishing with a Cheft and Roll of their Law, the place of their Religious Assemblies." H) Finally, Tenison examines the difficulty associated with the worship of angels, a problem that Stillingfleet also addresses.

19 Simon Patrick cites Tenison and *Of Idolatry* in his *Commentary upon the First Book of Moses* (61).

wherever there is a direct entrance to God's *speaking* the connection to the *Word* of God is made (see Gen. 1 ff., Exod. 13, 19–20, etc.). As a more reserved voice, Matthew Poole – in both his academic *Synopsis Criticorum* as well as the laymen's *Annotations* – appears to be nearly silent about the Shechinah, at least in the places where the others are vocal (see Gen. 3:8, 32:24; Exod. 3, 19–20; Josh. 5:13; Ez. 1; etc.). In the places where he interprets the Theophanies of the Hebrew Bible as manifestations of the Son, Poole does not use the Hebraism.[20]

Interestingly, Matthew Henry (1662–1714), the influential nonconformist pastor of Chester, follows Patrick's reception of Shechinah in his *Exposition of all the books of the Old and New Testament* (1708–10), a Calvinist commentary for laymen (Henry 336). Henry glosses on Num. 7:89, "Now when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim, so He spoke to him." Henry's remarks on this passage succinctly gather the vital emphasis of the Shechinah interpretation. In following Patrick at the outset, Henry goes on to introduce the specifically Christian theological language which, tellingly, Patrick leaves out:

> And here the excellent Bishop *Patrick* observes, that God's speaking to Moses thus by an audible articulate Voice, as if he had been cloth'd with a Body, might be look'd upon as an Earnest of the Incarnation of the Son of God in the Fulness of Time, when the Word should be *made Flesh*, and speak in the Language of the Sons of Men. For however God at sundry Times, and in divers Manners, spake unto the Fathers, he has in these last Days spoken unto us by his Son. And that he that now spake to *Moses*, as the *Shechinah* or Divine Majesty from between the Cherubims, was the Eternal Word, the second Person in the Trinity, was the pious Conjecture of many of the Ancients; for all God's Communion with Man is by his Son, by

20 In at least one place Poole's *Synopsis* employs the term Shechinah (2: 637), even translating it as above mentioned (*"quod est Divina Majestas Dei in Christo"*). Although he translates the term, the commentary and the term come originally from R. Menachem. However, Poole does not mention this citation, or Shechinah in his *Annotations* on the same passage (on Ps. 17:15). Poole clearly takes a Christological reading of the creation narrative, but he does not refer to the Shechinah in his commentary on Gen. 3:8, or elsewhere. Regarding the "Voice of the LORD God walking in the garden" (Gen. 3:8), Poole remains conservative: "Either God the Father, or rather God the Son, appearing in the shape of a man, as afterwards he frequently did, to give a foretaste of his incarnation" (*Annotations*, vol. 1, at Gen. 3:8). Concerning the descent of God onto Mt. Sinai (Exod. 19:18), Poole glosses, "And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." Poole emphasizes that the spectacle was intended "For further terrour to obstinate Sinners. Hence the Law is called a fiery law, Deut. 33.2" (on Exod. 19:18). At the opening verses of the Decalogue, Poole expressly sides against any interpretive wish-wash: "Or, then, to wit, when Moses was returned into the Mount. Immediately, and not by an Angel. For though an Ambassadour or Messenger may act in the name of his Master, yet it is against the use of all Ages and Places for such to call themselves by his name" (on Exod. 20:1). See also his *Synopsis Criticorum* at Gen. 3:8 and esp. at Exod. 3:2 in determining the identity of the *Angelus Dei:* "nempe, Christus" ["certainly, Christ"] (1: 326).

> whom he made the World, and rules the Church, and who is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever. (336)

Henry not only follows but also adds to Patrick's tentative modification of Tenison's interpretation, which itself builds on Stillingfleet's exegesis and the rabbinical tradition. When God spoke (interpreted as the "Word of God"), Patrick was happy to employ the Christological association as well as use the neologism as Tenison does. Poole, by contrast, does not seem to introduce the Hebraism into his commentary; he rather holds to a strict intertextual approach while simultaneously tending toward a scientific interpretation.

English Bible exegetes of Mather's period employed the interpretation of the Shechinah in different ways and with different emphases. Stillingfleet and Tenison drew upon the Shechinah in two common ways: on the one hand, they attempted to hold together the relative norms of worship in the two Testaments against Quakerism, a new non-traditional form of Christianity; on the other, they attempted to hold together the organic continuity of the Testaments against a new humanism which was calling this continuity into question.

The Humanist Critique of Christological Interpretation from the Sozzinis to Grotius

Standing against these Shechinah-interpretations and their entire Christological interpretive method is another exegetical tradition, which rejects these approaches as hermeneutically unscientific and inventive. This tradition has its nearest roots in the Reformation understanding of scripture, which itself can be traced back to Nicholas of Lyra (1270–1349). This approach finds the measure of exegesis in clear explanations of Holy Scripture: *claritus scripturae*. As Hans Frei has argued, Luther's words on Scripture

> represent his drastic alternative to the complex and long development of traditional theory of scriptural interpretation which had come to distinguish among literal, allegorical, anagogical, and tropical senses of the text. Against that multiplex view Luther's simplification meant drastic relief, affirming as it did that the literal or, as he preferred to call it, the grammatical or historical sense is the true sense. (19)[21]

Although both Luther and Calvin read the Old Testament by means of Christological typology, their emphasis on the *sensus litteralis*, at the cost of the other senses, had unexpected consequences. The Reformation and the broader movement of humanism stood at the same time both for and against one another

21 See also Frei's subsequent remarks: "Not very much of Protestant orthodoxy passed over into rationalist religious thought, but this one thing surely did: the antitraditionalism in scriptural interpretation of the one bolstered the antiauthoritarian stance in matters of religious meaning and truth of the other" (55).

(Kraus 28). Their point of contention is exemplified in Luther's conflict with Erasmus, but their shared interests are best seen in the textually honest biblical exegetes of humanism. Both Lelio Sozzini (aka. Laelius Socinus, 1525–62) and his nephew Fausto Sozzini (aka. Faustus Socinus, 1539–62) have therefore a complex but verifiable relation to Luther's bibliology. Sympathizers of the Reformation and the Sozzinis' cause have often put their theology in direct continuity with the Reformation; thus, in perpetuating the Reformation's mythic battle against the Roman Antichrist, admirers often said of their theology: *Tota ruit Babylon: tecta destruxit Lutherus, muros Calvinus, sed fundamenta Socinus.* [All of Babylon is destroyed: the roof by Luther, the walls by Calvin, but the foundations by Socinus] (Urban 600). In Socinianism, as the movement was named, the Old Testament is to be understood as a historical document. Here Ps. 2 speaks only of David, and Ps. 22 of the calamities of Israel (Kraus 41). Tenison objected to the Socinians in his *Of Idolatry*, because they challenged the preexistence of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. If Luther wrestled the Holy Scripture from the hands of the Magisterium, the Sozzinis wrestled it from the hands of the dogmaticians. As Kraus argues, "the Sozzinis attempted to loose the Holy Scripture from the bonds of dogmatic examination and to carry through the humanistic norms" (43).[22] For the first time, the Old Testament becomes "*historically* detached from the New Testament"[23] (41, emphasis in original). Kraus quotes H. E. Weber's analysis, claiming that Socinianism is a knotting point in intellectual history, for it ties lines from the middle ages with lines from the beginning of the modern age (41). Looking forward, the spirit of humanism passes from the Sozzinis through Grotius to the age of the Enlightenment (43). In this regard, Grotius's *Annotata ad Vetus Testamentum* (1644; *Annotationes* in subsequent editions) were carrying on the tradition of the Sozzinis and, at the same time, present an entirely novel development. As Kraus puts it,

> a question emerges in the Annotata which we already saw with the Sozzinis: *Grotius seeks out the profane historical background of the Old Testament testimonies, and searches, far from every aspect of salvation history, a pure historical explanation.* (Kraus 50–51, emphasis in original)[24]

Grotius's explication did not go without criticism; the Lutheran Abraham Calov claimed that his *Annotata* was "an irrational mixture of pagan scriptures"

22 "die Sozinianer bemüht, die Heilige Schrift aus den Fesseln dogmatischer Betrachtung zu lösen und die humanistischen Normen durchzusetzen" (Kraus 43).

23 "So wird das Alte Testament bei den Sozinianern zum erstenmal *historisch* vom Neuen Testament abgehoben" (Kraus 41).

24 "Außerdem tritt in den Annotata eine Fragestellung hervor, die wir bei den Sozinianern kennenlernten: *Grotius sucht den profangeschichtlichen Hintergrund der alttestamentlichen Aussagen und erstrebt, fern von jedem heilsgeschichtlichen Aspekt, eine rein historische Erklärung*" (Kraus 50–51).

(Kraus 53).[25] The conservative Lutheran theologian J.G. Carpzov, who speaks of the "profane intellect, to which nothing is beautiful except that drawn from the pools of the pagans," was even more outspoken in his criticism (Kraus 53).[26] It is in this context that Grotius emerges as a debate partner for Mather and his companions. Grotius bypasses Christological interpretations of the grand *fiat lux* (Gen. 1:3). For the great Dutch legal scholar and founder of historical criticism, there is no Christ, no *Logos*, and clearly no Shechinah in Gen. 1:3, but rather "three primal substances" (1:1).[27] Though certainly aware of them, Grotius also looks over any fanciful *pluralitatem & unitatem*-interpretations of נעשה *faciamus*, "let us make" (Gen. 1:26, so also אלהים, *Dii* "Gods" Gen. 1:1), which for other exegetes of the time provided an ideal entry point for a discussion of the Trinity.[28] Instead, these terms are for Grotius a "tradition of the Hebrews concerning God" (1: 1).[29]

Gen. 2:15 records, "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." Mather, Patrick, and Tenison interpreted this so that it was the Shechinah that took the man and put him in the garden. By way of contrast, Grotius, following Rabbi Solomon, claims that one should understand it in the sense of *suasione*: God *recommends*, *persuades*, or *urges* him to go. Concerning Gen. 3:8 ("and they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden"), Grotius offers minimally: "with a certain unusual moving of the air, which is a sign of divine presence"[30] (1: 4) while no mention is made of *vocem Domini Dei*. There is also no reference to the "thick cloud" (Exod. 19:9). The opening words of Exod. 20, *locutus quoque est Dominus*, Grotius opines, refer "*Per Angelum*" (1: 33), provoking Poole's later criticism: "Immediately, and not by an Angel" (*Annotationes* [1683–85 ed.] on Exod. 20:1). In support of his argument, Grotius points out that "It is said of Josephus, that through the angels the law is given: Hebr. 1:1, 2:2" (1: 33).[31] The two aspects (Heb. 1:1 and 2:2) are negotiated and excused by Tenison (*Of Idolatry* 333–34) and later *ad verbum* by Mather [*BA*, Acts 7:2]. Interestingly, Grotius does not address the "glory of the Lord" which "filled the tabernacle" (Exod. 40). In fact, many of the major pas-

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25 "*Ethnicorum scriptorum intempestive collatio*" (Kraus 53).

26 "*profanum ingenium, cui nihil pulchrum nisi ex gentilium lacunis haustum*" (Kraus 53).

27 "*tria prima corpora*" (Grotius 1: 1).

28 See for example, the gloss by Joannes Drusius (Johannes van den Driesche, 1550–1616) excerpted in Pearson's *Critici Sacri*: "Hic mysterium latere putant, pluralitatemque innui asserunt personarum ... Si singulariter, habetur sensus ratio, ut in, *creavit Deus*: si pluraliter, habetur ratio terminationis, ut in קדושים אלהים *Deus sanctus*." (1: col. 25).

29 "mos est Hebræis de Deo" (Grotius 1: 1).

30 "cum motu quodam aëris insolito, qui signum divinæ præsentiæ" (Grotius 1: 4).

31 "per Angelos data lex dicitur Iosepho: Hebr. I.1, II.2" (Grotius 1: 33).

sages addressing the visible presence of God in the Old Testament are either skipped over or addressed with exegetical precision.[32]

Regarding the oft-quoted Prov. 8:22 ("The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old"), Grotius makes no mention of the Logos; he addresses, instead, the Chaldean version and the interesting use of ברא, as well as the LXX's ἔκτισέ[ν], both of which, as stand-alone words, implicitly challenge the preexistence theology. Nevertheless, *dubitando ad veritatem*, Grotius contends that "the sense is not bad, if *create* we take for *fashion in order to display*" (1: 249).[33] For Grotius, as Hubert Filser argues, *dogmata Christi* is not to be equaled with *omnia dogmata Christianismi* (222–23). The author of *Via ad Pacem Ecclesiasticam* (Grotius 3: 532) rather squares with certain fundamental aspects of Christology and other central doctrines.[34] Filser argues this constitutes his *regula fidei*. As Otto Ritschl summarizes the issue, this approach "requires no exact knowledge of the doctrines of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ" (284f).[35] With Grotius, these traditional Christological entries into the Old Testament are read in a new historical way. Although Mather was well aware of these novel historical interpretations which viewed the Old Testament as a purely historical record, he carefully avoided them. He rather chose to preserve an older hermeneutical tradition in seeing Christ throughout salvation history, albeit with a newly available – and also, in another sense, historical – Rabbinic variation. Far from holding the traditional Christian position for tradition's sake, there is good reason to believe that Mather found this style of reading the Old Testament more profound and, indeed, more in accordance with the scholarly standards of divines. It is thus fully reasonable to argue that Mather's overlooking of Grotius's interpretation is linked to Mather's direct – or indirect (e.g., via Tenison, Patrick, et al.) – acquaintance with the explosion of Old Testament studies on the European continent, which began in the mid-sixteenth century at the outworking of the Reformation but blossomed in the seventeenth with the rise of the Christian Hebraists (Sebastian Münster [1489–1552], Johann Buxtorf, Samuel Bochart [1599–1667], and others).[36]

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32 Grotius's methodology is prototypical of later Biblical scholars of the modern period, such as the founder of New Testament textual criticism, Johann Bengel (1687–1752), the influential literary historian Karl Lachmann (1793–1851), and the so-called founder of the modern historical critical method, Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918). Looking back before Grotius, we can already find pulses of this tradition in the Sozzinis, in John Colet's (c. 1467–1519) turn to the plain sense, and Martin Luther's (1483–1546) exclusion of the allegorical method, which followed Nicholas of Lyra's (c. 1270 – c. 1349) emphasis on the *sensus litteralis*.

33 "sensu non malo, si *creare* sumas pro *facere ut appareat*" (Grotius 1: 249).

34 "natum e virgine Spiritus sancri opera, judicem futurum viventium ac morentium, per eundem partam nostris peccatis veniam, Ecclesiamque ejus perpetuo duraturam" (Grotius 3: 752).

35 "Dagegen bedarf es dazu keiner genaueren Kenntnis der Lehren von der Trinität und den beiden Naturen Christi" (qtd. in Filser 224).

36 Mather's engagement with the Hebrew vowel signs controversy, in his master thesis, at-

Mather's Interpretation of the Shechinah in the "Biblia Americana"

Unlike the new humanist interpreters of the Old Testament, Mather sees passages such as Exod. 24,[37] which speak of the glory of God, as historical witnesses of Christ. With Mather, the glory of God or the presence of God in the Old Testament is often understood as Christ himself, the divine essence of Christ, or the second person of the Trinity before the incarnation. Mather thus incorporates a Christological account of Theophanies in the Old Testament and calls these, like Tenison, Shechinah. Mather understands both *glory* and *Shechinah* as mediators and direct agents of God as well as the physical and identifiable, indeed, personal, presence of God in the world. Whereas in the Old Testament the mediator of God, Christ, is present in the Shechinah, in the New Testament and the "most gracious *Dispensation*," this Mediator (μεσίτης, *mesites*, 1 Tim. 2:5[38]) took on flesh and "condescends unto the *Creatures*", as Mather writes in an Appendix to Rev. 17:

> The Divine Essence is also altogether *Incorporeal*, and *Invisible*; and utterly *Incomprehensible* by any Creature. How can what is *Finite*, comprehend what is *Infinite*?
>
> Wherefore, the Great God in the Communicating of Himself to the *Eye*, and the *Love* of any Finite Understanding, makes not the Communication, in the Way of meer *Intuition*, for no Creature can arise to *That*; nor does He make it by a meer *Intellectual Apprehension*; for *That* cannot be made without an *Idæa*. But He makes it by the Means of a certain *Oeconomy*, as the Ancients call it; a Voluntary Repræsentation and Exhibition; which may be called, The Divine *Shechinah*, or, Cohabitation.
>
> The Great GOD, in this most gracious *Dispensation*, condescends unto the *Creatures*, unto whom He will communicate Himself; They cannot otherwise Dispose or Conform themselves unto His Incomprehensible Majesty.

This identification threads through Mather's account of redemption history. As mentioned earlier, Mather here expands Abrabanel's identification of the Shechinah with the "*Glory of the Lord*" (Gen. 1:3) to encompass the locus where the "Son of God chose to lodge" (*BA* 1: 321). For his initial idea, Mather seems to have drawn on Patrick's commentary, for the bishop of Ely argues,

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tests to an earlier, rather than later, interest in the European Hebraists (in this case, Ludwig Cappellus [1585–1658] and Johann Buxtorf the Younger [1599–1664]), their debates and theological orientations. On this, see Muller.

37 Exod. 24:15–18: "And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights."

38 1 Tim. 2:5 "For there is one God, and one mediator [μεσίτης] between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"

> Having spoken of the Creation of all things, now follows an account of their *Formation* out of that rude Matter which was at first *created.* And the first thing produced was *Light.* ... Abarbinel (upon the xlth of *Exodus*) takes this to be the *SHECHINAH*, the most excellent of all created things, called in Holy Scripture, *the Glory of the* Lord; which God, saith he, sealed up in his Treasures, after the *Luminaries* were created, to serve him upon special Occasions, (for instance, to lead the *Israelites* in the Wilderness, by cloudy Pillar of Fire) when he would make himself Present. ... But it seems to me most rational by this *Light* to understand those Particles of Matter, which we call *Fire*, (whose two Properties, every one knows, are *Light* and *Heat)* which the Almighty Spirit that formed all things, produced as the great Instrument, for the preparation and digestion of the rest of the Matter. (*Commentary upon the historical books* 3)

Significantly, Mather is less concerned with an atomistic or Cartesian explanation of this light (as Patrick ventures) but with a spatial identification of the Shechinah glory as the abode of Christ. Thus while Patrick's annotation reaches for a more scientific explanation of the universe- similar to Grotius's *tria prima corpora* explanation – Mather carries his high Christology forward in the creation account and synthetically encapsulates all of time and existence in Christ.[39] Here, Mather speaks of Christ's role in the creation of the world and his frequent appearances in history before the incarnation:

> Our Blessed *Mediator*, who was afterward, very frequently conversant on *Earth*, and appear'd in an *Humane Form* to the Patriarchs, & gave the *Law* in a *visible Glory*, and with an *audible Voice* on Mount *Sinai*, and guided the *Israelites* personally in a Pillar of *Fire* & *Cloud*, thro' the Wilderness, and inhabited between the *Cherubins* in the *Holy of Holies*, & took the peculiar Style, Titles, Attributes, Adoration, and Incommunicable Name of the God of *Israel*, and at last, was *Incarnate*, *Lived* a True Man among us, *Died* for us, and *Ascended* into Heaven, and still makes *Intercession* for us with the Father, and will come to *Judge the World in Righteousness* at the Last Day: That this very same Divine Person, was Actually & Visibly in an *Humane Shape*, conversant on *Earth*, and was really employ'd in this *Creation* of the World, (& particularly, in this peculiar Formation of *Man*,) so frequently ascribed unto him in the Holy Scriptures. (*BA* 1: 355)

In making this argument, Mather relies on many sources but Tenison is the primary influence. Published before Tenison became archbishop, *Of Idolatry* may very well have been a key source text for much of Mather's "Biblia Americana," which associates God's glory and many other supernatural occurrences in the Bible with the Shechinah. Mather draws from nearly every one of Tenison's epochs.

In addition to identifying God's eternal fiat "let there be light" with the Shechinah glory and Christ in his pre-incarnate existence, Mather also sees

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39 On Gen. 1, *fiat lux:* "De his verbis vide Dionysii Longini locum, quem in dictis Annotatis protulimus ... tria prima corpora, terra, aër, ignis. Plut. & illa Parmenidis principia lucidum & tenebrosum" (Grotius 1: 1).

Christ in the splendor of God's glory appearing to our "First Parents" in Eden. At the fall of mankind, another aspect of this glory is seen. For Mather, Adam and Eve were not so foolish as to entertain conversation with the serpent in the garden. This manifestation of Satan was falsely portrayed as a vile serpent, Mather recalls, because Lucifer appeared in his true form as a glorious angel. Indeed, it was the angel's glorious splendor to which our parents were attracted in the first place, because they associated the angel's splendor with the Shechinah glory of the Logos [*BA*, Num. 21:9]. In like manner, Mather sees a Christophany in God's appearance to Adam and Eve after their fall. Mather asks,

> Q. What was the *Presence of the Lord*, from whence our Fallen Parents hid themselves? v. 8.
> A. The Son of God, now appeared in the very Glorious *Clouds*, or *Flames* of the *Shechinah*, with a most amazing Brightness. Probably, The *Shechinah* or the *Divine Majesty* appeared not now in so mild a Lustre, as when they were first acquainted with Him. No, but in a more terribly burning *Light*, which look'd as if it would consume them. So we know, He appeared, at the giving of the Law, upon Mount *Sinai* [Exod. 19.18. and Deut. 4.11] (*BA* 1: 483).

In this instance as in several others Mather relies on Tenison's reading of Theophilus of Antioch (later 2nd c.), an early Christian apologists. Tenison incorporates Theophilus's expansive history of the world as well as his early comparison of the Judeo-Christian and ancient Greek accounts of creation (*Autolykus*, esp. bk. 2). Theophilus's theology is thus interpreted to associate the Shechinah of the creation account (Gen. 1:3) with the one that cursed Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:8–19) as well as with the flaming Cherubim (Gen. 3:24) that stood guard at the entrance against their return. In addition to Bishop Theophilus of Antioch, Tenison also drew on the Targum Onkelos, medieval commentators such as Maimonides, and on Stillingfleet's careful analysis in *Shecinah*. The similarity between Mather's explication and that of Tenison is all too apparent in the following passage:

> And to Adam the Logos appeared, I know not whether I should say in the shape of man or in the way of a bright cloud moving in Paradise when the wind began to rise (a [Gen. 3.8–9]), and asking with a voice of Majesty, after his rebellious subject. And that this was the Son of God is insinuated by the *Targum* of *Onkelos* in the eighth verse of the third of *Genesis*. The Text of *Moses* is thus translated, *And when they* [our first Parents] *heard the voice of the Lord God.* But this is the sense of the words of *Onkelos, And they heard the voice of the Word of the Lord God.* (Tenison 321)

Mather was clearly persuaded by Tenison's interpretative stance regarding the Shechinah glory here, even if it went against the guidance of Patrick.[40] In Math-

40 Patrick – unlike Mather and Tenison – does not specify the Shechinah as the "Son of God," or the "Logos" here (Patrick, *Commentary* [1698 ed.] 68–69).

er's interpretation, then, the Son of God appears to our fallen progenitors not in the "mild Lustre" of the Shechinah of yore, but as a terrible burning light which threatens to consume them:

> [O]ne of the *Seraphim* (in *Moses*'s Age call'd *Cherubim*,) which alwayes attended the *Shechinah*, remained for a while there, darting out Flames on every Side of him, to terrify our First Parents from all Thoughts of being Re-admitted there. (*BA* 1: 500)

In synthetic fashion, then, Mather links the later account of the fall and expulsion in Gen. 3:24 with the Shechinahism in Gen. 1:3. However, in the former case, Mather does not explicitly link Christ with the command to leave the garden of Eden. It seems that the very nature of Christ as redeemer and reconciler would not fit comfortably, because the phrase *fiery swords* (as Dr. Nichols helps Mather to see) are perhaps better translated as "*Flame of Cutting*, or, a *Dividing Flame*." At any rate, Mather's conception of the Christophany was not set in stone, but remained flexible enough to explain the ungraspable, fearful, and attractive glory of God.

With Mather, the Shechinah as an interpretative device shows up in unexpected places. For instance, in the case of Cain's mark on his forehead, Mather reaches for new explanations: "Except we shall rather say, That the *Face* of *Cain*, was Blasted with Lightning from the *Shechinah*" (*BA* 1: 516–17). The Shechinah was involved not only with Cain but also with his brother Seth, who shared similar encounters: "But *Seth* is he, whom God from the *Shechinah*, Elected & Appointed, for the Second *Patriarch*, or *Emperour* of the World; the Successor to *Adam* in the Government of the World" (*BA* 1: 528). There are many other instances where Mather encounters the operation of the *Shechinah*. Following Tenison's precedent, he argues that the tower of Babel's "impious Design" was impeded by the Shechinah [*BA*, Acts 7:2]. Much later in his commentary on Acts 7, Mather carries out what amounts to a full account of salvation history by way of the Shechinah. Here, we learn that Abraham was visited several times by the Shechinah glory, that "God by such Appearances Encouraged Religion in the Holy Land" [*BA*, Acts 7:2]. Grounding his interpretation in Tenison's account of the Church Fathers, Mather maintains that "*Enoch* was Translated in some such visible Manner, as *Elijah* was afterwards, perhaps, with a glorious Appearance of the *Shechinah*" (*BA* 1: 538). Similarly, Mather incorporates Noah's ark in an interpretative framework that typifies the light of the church. There were holes in the ark to admit light, Mather remarks in his quest for allegorical parallels: "The *Church* is likewise a Place of *Light*; and from a Glorious Christ, that *Sun of Righteousness*, it fetches all its *Light*" (*BA* 1: 622). Not to leave anything out, Mather has the preachers, prophets, and patriarchs also enjoy this special encounter: "The Son of God, in the *Shechinah*, frequently made His Descent among them. ... *Cœlestial Apparitions* were very frequent among

them. By the Inimitable *Glory* of the *Shechinah*, wherein the Son of God appeared" (*BA* 1: 561). Indeed, Mather discovers the Shechinah in places that a literal reading of the text might not necessarily permit.

Mather's reorientation of the messianic glory also helps us understand some of the specific theological nuances he introduces in his "Biblia Americana." The eponymous story of the burning bush is a notable example. Mather asks, "Is there any further, and higher Mystery, of the *Burning Bush*, to bee considered?" [*BA*, Exod. 3:2]. His answer reveals just how far he is prepared to deploy his Christological lens to detect evidence of the Shechinah in the Old Testament: "The Ancients considered, it, as a Figure of the *Messiah*, wherein the *Bush* of His *Humanity*, is possessed, & yett not consumed, by His *Divinity*, which is a *Consuming Fire*" [*BA*, Exod. 3:2]. From one major event to the next, Christ is present in the Shechinah and guides his people towards salvation at the parting of the Red Sea: "We are sure, the *Shechinah* was present; and the Divine Majesty employ'd His Angels in this Work" [*BA*, Exod. 14:21]. Whether surmounting the laws of nature or intercepting the enemies of Israel, the Shechinah is active in the history of redemption: "Probably, the *Cloudy* Part of the *Shechinah*, had been towards the *Egyptians* hitherto. It now turned the other side towards them; & the fiery Part appearing, both lett 'em see the Danger, into which they had thrown themselves, and by its amazing Brightness perfectly confounded them" [*BA*, Exod. 14:26]. This cloud was more than a natural cloud, Mather insists with the Torah commentary of the medieval Jewish philosopher Levi ben Gershom (1288–1344) at his side: "This *Cloud* was, (as R. *Levi ben Gersom* speaks,) An *Emanation* from God; and (as others of the *Jewes* express it,) a *Sign*, that God was Day & Night with them, to keep them from Evil" [*BA*, Exod. 13:21]. In such a fashion, Mather is able to reread difficult Bible passages in new ways. His annotations on Exod. 20:24 is another case in point. "In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee," Mather records the following gloss with the aid of the London Polyglot: "The *Chaldee* seems to have given us the True Intention. *In every Place where I shall make my Glory*, [that is, The SHECHINAH :] *to dwell, from thence I will bless thee*; that is, Hear thy Prayers."

This trend continues throughout the "Biblia." Apparently, the Shechinah became an essential interpretive key for Mather to unlock the hermeticism of many scriptural passages. Such is the case in a puzzling instance in Exodus where God did not strike down "the nobles of the children of Israel" even though "they saw God, and did eat and drink." Mather explains, "To sett this whole Matter, in its true *Light*, The *Shechinah*, of the *Divine Majesty*, surrounded with an Heavenly Host of *Angels*, was now seen by the *Elders* of *Israel*" [*BA*, Exod. 24:11]. Indeed, rather than casting them down as in St. Paul's case on the road to Damascus, the Shechinah "strengthened, & made [them] more Vigorous" [*BA*, Exod. 24:11]. This passage (and the events that follow) is

a critical text in the history of Israel, for it climaxes in the giving of the law. In Mather's reading the cloud that enveloped Mt. Sinai was the Shechinah shining more glorious than the sun – as he comments on Exod. 24:16. It is interesting to note that Exod. 24:15–18 receives little attention in the massive volumes of the *Critici Sacri* (1660), where Hugo Grotius's apophatic remark resounds loudly: "this cloud signifies the weakness of our intellect concerning the divine."[41] Tellingly, Mather goes in the opposite direction with his interpretive key in his elucidation of the tabernacle and the "Holy of Holies," where he speaks of the "*Dwelling* of God." Again, his thematic reference becomes apparent: "Thus the Lord is *for a Sanctuary*, [Isa. 8.14.] when a *Stone of Stumbling, a Rock of Offence to both Houses of Israel.* More particularly, The *Tabernacle* signified, the *Humane Nature* of our Saviour; in which *there dwells the Fulness of the Godhead Bodily*" [*BA*, Exod. 25:40]. In this citation, Mather evinces yet again his awareness of the early church's Christological controversies. In this passage, he discovers not only a hidden allusion to Christ in the Old Testament but, more surprisingly, an allegory to the complex theology of Christ's two natures. At the mercy seat of God, Mather reasons, "Here was a *Cloud* filled with *Bright Rayes* of the Divine Majesty; the same that the Hebrewes call, The *Shechinah.* Intimating how there *Dwells* in our Lord, *the Fulness of the Godhead Bodily*" [*BA*, Exod. 25:40].

Legion are such instances in Mather's commentary on the Old Testament. At many of the meetings between God and Israel, Christ is present in the Shechinah, dwelling in magnificence as a token and sign of the mystery of the coming incarnation. If the glory of the Lord at Sinai "had no determinate *Form*, nor could ... be described by any *Art*" [*BA*, Exod. 24:11], Christ the Lord, the incarnate second person of the Trinity, is the concrete form of the glory of God. Christ is, as Mather remarks on Ps. 50:2, the "Perfection of Beauty" coming out of Zion:

> Q. *Zion* here, why is it called, *The Perfection of Beauty*? v. 2.
> A. According to the Chaldee, it is not *Zion*, but *God*, that is here called so; Namely, our Lord-Messiah, who is God. [*BA*, Ps. 50:2]

Christ is the specific form of glory – and the specific interpretative key for looking beyond the initial reading. In fact, this Christological specification is apparent throughout Mather's commentary on the Psalms. As if implying an analogical correspondence between the invisible glory of God and its physical manifestation in the glory of creation, Mather asks, in his gloss on Ps. 8,

> Q. When was it that the Lord *sett His Glory above the Heavens*? v. 1.
> A. It was done at the *Ascension* of our Lord JESUS CHRIST. This Text is to be

41 "Nubes hic significat imbecillitatem intellectus nostri circa Divina" (*Critici* 1: 615).

understood as intending that Illustrious Matter. And in this Hint, you have a *Key* to many more. [*BA*, Ps. 8:1][42]

To be sure, the glory of God Almighty is not *in* nature, but only beheld in and through Jesus Christ. Perhaps we should not push this point too far, but it seems that Mather does not intend to introduce an aesthetic of nature and of nature's beauty as the Romantics would do decades later. For Mather, the spiritual apprehension of this beauty occurs through the inner eye of the soul, but the visible composition of nature's beauty is habitually tied to a form, the figure of Christ. Again, Mather makes this point clear in his commentary on the Psalmist: "I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15). Mather asks, "What is that *Righteousness*, with which wee are to *behold the Face of God*?" Mather's response underscores his triumphant message: "Not one Word can I say, to withdraw you, from considering the Glorious Righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, as that by the Imputation whereof wee are fitted for our Appearance before God in Glory ... without which ... no man shall see the Lord" [*BA*, Ps. 17:15]. Christ is the mediator of God's glory and the most beautiful attraction that draws the elect unto God. Annotating Ps. 110:3 "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth," Mather asks,

Q. What may be the *Beauties of Holiness*, here spoken of? v. 3.
A. Tis very sure, That the *Beauties* of the *Holy Jesus*, invite & allure His People, to become a *Willing People*; *Willing* to become *His People* [*BA*, Ps. 110:3].

The same son of God who confronted the sinful naked parents in the Garden of Eden as a terrifying burning light here shows the other side of the Shechinah glory: a magnetic beauty not to be enjoyed for its own sake but to attract the beholders with his alluring splendor "to become *His People*."

Another important moment in Mather's interpretation of the Shechinah can be found in his essay on Acts 7, which closely follows the path of Tenison's *Of Idolatry*. Acts 7 entails a long discourse on St. Stephen's beatific vision of Christ. The chapter is introduced with a description of the councilors sitting in Stephen's judgment: "And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (6:15). Stephen then relates his own salvation history, beginning with "the God of glory" that appeared to Abraham in his sojourn from Mesopotamia to Charran (Acts 7:2) and culminating

42 Mather's interpretation builds on the Psalmist's juxtaposition of the glory of God's creation and the divine charge of humanity to rule over the creation (see Gen. 1:26f.; Ps. 8:6f.): "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. ... When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Ps. 8:1, 3–4).

in "the coming of the Just One" (Acts 7:52). Finally, pointing an accusing finger at his judges, the "betrayers and murderers" of Christ (Acts 7:52), Stephen is martyred even as he is "full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55–56). Understandably, this story demanded Mather's full attention. If the glory of God appeared to the patriarchs in past epochs, this time, the Shechinah of the Lord is manifest *after* the death and resurrection of Christ. Mather's gloss on this chapter follows his source text closely as he draws a long ark from the Shechinah's first appearance in God's eternal *fiat* (Gen. 1:3) all the way to the Shechinah's presence in the celestial New Jerusalem at the end of the world. He speaks of it more specifically here:

> At this Time, The *Shechinah* will visit the World, with more Splendor than in the Ancient Generations, which is the Meaning of, *The Tabernacle of God with Men.* Christians also will no more Dy an untimely Death, but after a long Life, by a sleight Change, be translated into Everlasting Life. [*BA*, Appendix to Rev. 17][43]

For Mather, then, the Shechinah not only unifies the Old and New Testaments, but all of history and existence itself find themselves enveloped in this personalized glory of God.

A Brief Comparison of Mather's and Jonathan Edwards's Theological Aesthetics

Mather's Christological reading of the glory of God is in some ways different from the theological aesthetics of Edwards and his aesthetisized understanding of God's glory as beauty, excellency, and Christ, or the "beauty of Being itself," as Paul Ramsey calls it in his edition of Edwards's *Freedom of the Will* (Edwards 1: 51). Drawing on Poole's *Synopsis Criticorum*, Edwards occasionally employs the Christo-rabbinical interpretation of the Shechinah and clearly argues for a theology of preexistence and accounts of Christophanies.[44] For Edwards, however, Christology is not – as it is with Mather – the habitual center of his reflections on glory and beauty. If Mather personalizes and affixes glory to Christ, Edwards fastens glory to Christ *and* Plotinus's *impersonal prohodos*.[45] Edwards synthesizes these two accents and indeed emphasizes the per-

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43 See Mather's long discussion of the glory of the celestial Jerusalem and its shining occupants, in *The Threefold Paradise* (245–67).

44 As Edwards remarks, "The saints in Israel looked on this person as their Mediator, through whom they had acceptance with God in heaven and the forgiveness of their sins, and trusted in him as such. Here see what Rabbi Menachem says of coming to God through the *shechinah*, in *Synopsis*, on Psalms 17:15" (21: 386).

45 A good example for this is the following passage from Edwards's "Miscellanies": "The

sonality of Shechinah as Christ.[46] Nonetheless, there is a very subtle shift of emphasis with Edwards, one that results in a minute but important difference in the contours of their aesthetics. With Mather, it is difficult to find passages with neoplatonic inflections like the ones in the following passage from Edwards's *Concerning the End for which God Created the World*:

> But he, from his goodness, as it were enlarges himself in a more excellent and divine manner. This is by communicating and diffusing himself; and so instead of finding, making objects of his benevolence: not by taking into himself what he finds distinct from himself, and so partaking of their good, and being happy in them; but by flowing forth, and expressing himself in them, and making them to partake of him, and rejoicing in himself expressed in them, and communicated to them. (8: 461–2)[47]

Edwards appears to synthesize Neoplatonism with Christian Hebraic commentary and Reformed theology. As he remarks in one of his "Miscellanies," "The flowing forth of the ineffably bright and sweet effulgence of the *shechinah* represented the flowing out and communicating of this, as well as the manifestation of his majesty and beauty" (20: 465). In contrast, the Shechinah glory with Mather appears, paradoxically, both nearer and at the same time further away. It is nearer because he refers to the Shechinah much more often and in places where one might not expect it; it is also nearer because the glory of God is usually clarified by the Shechinah and in most cases personalized by Christ, who endows her almost tangible personhood. In fact, the mystery of the Shechinah glory is often synonymous with Christ the Lord who, in Mather's reading, is indeed closer than expected. On the other hand, the Shechinah appears much more distant, because it also appears in cases where God meets out punishment to offenders. This, perhaps more sinister manifestation, can be seen in the mark

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glory of the Lord in Scripture seems to signify the excellent brightness and fullness of God, and especially as spread abroad, diffused and as it were enlarged, or, in one word, the excellency of God flowing forth. This was represented in the *shechinah* of old. Here by "the excellency of God" I would be understood of everything in God in any respect excellent, all that is great and good in the Deity, including the excellent sweetness and blessedness that is in God, and the infinite fountain of happiness that the Deity is possessed of, that is called the fountain of life, the water of life, the river of God's pleasures, God's light, etc. The flowing forth of the ineffably bright and sweet effulgence of the *shechinah* represented the flowing out and communicating of this, as well as the manifestation of his majesty and beauty. Joy and happiness is represented in Scripture as often by light as by waters, fountains, streams, etc.; and the communication of God's happiness is represented by the flowing out of sweet light from the *shechinah*, as well as by the flowing forth [of] a stream of delights and the diffusing of the holy oil, called the fatness of God's house" (20: 465). Edwards's neoplatonic bend can be seen in his careful integration of the phrases "flowing forth," "emanation," "diffusing," "the excellency of God flowing forth," etc.

46 Edwards argues for a personal understanding of the Shechinah as Christ: "Christ, who is the essential glory of God and is that word, idea or essential character by which he is known to himself and his glory shines in his own eyes" (21: 380).

47 See also Munk's article on Edwards's interpretation of Shechinah.

of Cain that the Shechinah burns upon his countenance. In fact, Cain was actually "Blasted with Lightning from the *Shechinah*" (*BA* 1: 516). Mather's understanding of the glory of the Lord, then, is not yet infused with the aesthetization of Edwards's more generalized notion of glory. In this notion, beauty or excellency are inextricably bound together, reflecting the influence of the Cambridge Neoplatonists on Edwards. Glory with Mather, by contrast, is an extraordinary manifestation of the supernatural in the natural order, a discontinuity of unpredictable consequence. He does not understand glory as a static, passive essence of nature, or a subject of our artistic and humanistic appreciation. For Mather, it is not finally an object for human internalization, as becomes apparent in his comments on the cloud enveloping Mt. Sinai at the giving of the Law: "This Glorious Light, had no determinate *Form*, nor could ... be described by any *Art*" [*BA*, Exod. 24:11]. In Mather's view glory is also something unpredictable and even potentially dangerous. After all, its imitation enabled Satan to deceive our "First Parents" [*BA*, Num. 21:9]. Whereas Mather is thus still a far cry from what M.H. Abram's has called "natural supernaturalism" in the aesthetics of the Romantics, Edwards's theology seems to have moved a step in that direction.

Mather's Synthetic Theological Vision for Today

There are many more examples of Mather's Shechinah interpretation, as well as of his Christological theology of Glory in the "Biblia" and his other publications that deserve attention.[48] Likewise, a more thorough comparison of Mather's and Edwards's theologies of glory is clearly called for. For reasons of space, however, a brief return to Mather's *modus operandi* must suffice here. In his 1706 sermon *The Good Old Way*, he bemoans that

> The *Modern Christianity*, tis too generally, but a very *Spectre*, Scarce a *Shadow* of the *Ancient! Ah! Sinful Nation, Ah, Children that are corrupters*; What have your Hands done, to defile, and to deface, a *Jewel*, which Restored unto to its Native Lustre, would outshine the *Sun* in the Firmament! (3–4)

Perhaps there is something programmatically sentimental about Mather's theological vision; it is most certainly retrospective. Despite this obvious tendency, he does not appear to look back for the mere sake of looking back, as if the glory had departed and everything significant had happened in a distant past. Quite to the contrary! For Mather the truth of the faith is "yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). In looking back *ad fontes*, he learns from the

48 Similar themes and a comparable Christological orientation can be found in many of Mather's shorter publications as well. See, for instance his *Christianus per Ignem* (esp. 53–60); *The Heavenly Conversation*; *Reason Satisfied*; *Thoughts for the Day of Rain*.

ancients, and in so doing, Mather attempts to restore a timeless truth and beauty so that it may be properly seen in its "Native Lustre." Indeed, he endeavors to show how God's glory is found, fulfilled, even subsumed, in the beauty of the Shechinah, which is all in all in Christ, "the Perfection of Beauty." Granted, there is something sentimental in Mather's theology, something that falls, perhaps, into Nietzsche's category of *monumentalische Historie* in one sense. Yet in another, Mather's theology offers a manifold Christological synthesis, according to which the eternal *forma Christi* constitutes the center of history.

The "Biblia Americana" is a theological work written by one who looked out onto the landscape of not only Newton and Grotius, but also Münster, Buxtorf, Bochart, and others. Mather attempts to harmonize and incorporate the innovations of his age while at the same time he carefully maneuvers through the humanist literature and attempts to avoid what he sees as its harmful tendencies. In this sense, Mather is an example of a mediator who stands between the polarities of what Hans Frei has called pre- and post-critical periods – if these categories are here applicable in the first place. Mather, then, does not neatly fit in either the pre-critical or the post-critical classification. As Reiner Smolinski claims regarding Mather's engagement with the European Spinozists,

> As if maintaining a double consciousness, he could comfortably employ Newtonian Science to celebrate the perfection of Nature's Laws even as he tacitly submitted to the existence of an invisible, moral entity that accomplished its grand purpose through secondary causes. (203)

The publication of the "Biblia Americana" calls for a rediscovery of – and a new critical engagement with – Cotton Mather as an unduly neglected patriarch of America's theological tradition. The breadth of his learning, polyglotism, wit, and omnivorous mind, and above all else, his realization that theology's end is the demonstration of the wonder and sentient mystery of the faith itself, is most apparent in this grand achievement of his life. As readers will find, this great inheritance from the New England colonial period easily fulfills its goal of presenting the relics and artifacts of faith in their "Native Lustre." Mather's incorporation of a rabbinic Hebraism in his Christological interpretation of the Old Testament is one example of the fruit of this synthetic theological vision.

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