

Cotton Mather

**MAGNALIA CHRISTI  
AMERICANA;  
OR  
THE ECCLESIASTICAL  
HISTORY OF NEW-ENGLAND**

From Its First Planting, in the Year 1620,  
unto the Year of Our LORD, 1698.

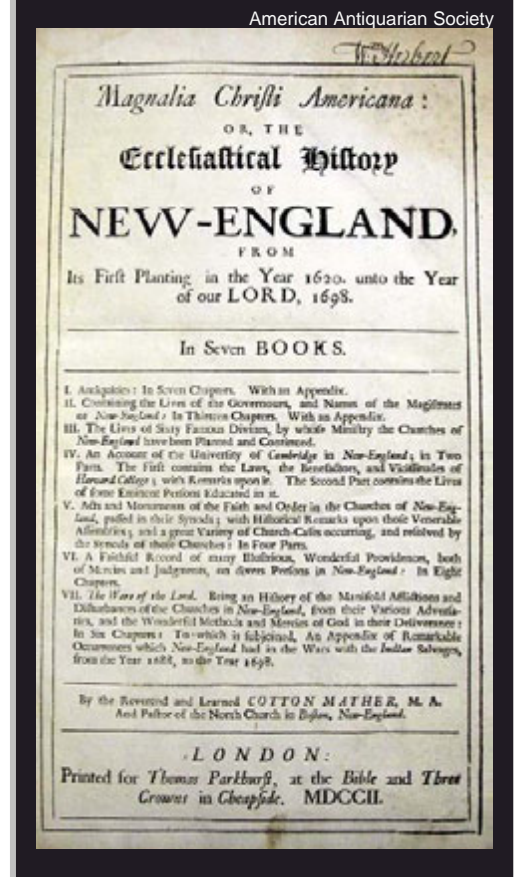
1702

Vol. I, Book I, Ch. 1, EXCERPTS

Mather uses historical and theological reasoning to argue that England will come to dominate North America due to its earliest territorial claims in the western hemisphere and, more significantly, to God's will that New England will be the "New Jerusalem" after the second coming of Christ.

**Venisti Tandem?<sup>1</sup> Or Discoveries of AMERICA;  
tending to, and ending in, Discoveries of  
NEW-ENGLAND.**

§ 3. Whatever Truth may be in that Assertion of one who writes; *If we may credit any Records besides the Scriptures, I know it might be said and proved well, that this New World was known, and partly inhabited by Britains, or by Saxons from England, Three or Four Hundred Years before the Spaniards coming thither; which Assertion is demonstrated from the Discourses between the Mexicans [Aztecs] and the Spaniards at their first Arrival; and the Popish Reliques [Roman Catholics relics], as well as British terms and words, which the Spaniards then found among the Mexicans, as well as from undoubted Passages, not only in other Authors, but even in the British Annals also: Nevertheless, Mankind generally agree to give unto Christopher Columbus, a Genoese, the Honour of being the First European that opened a way into these Parts of the World. It was in the Year 1492 that this famous Man, acted by a most vehement and wonderful Impulse, was carried into the Northern Regions of this vast Hemisphere, which might more justly therefore have receiv'd its Name from Him, than from Americus Vesputius, a Florentine, who, in the year 1497 made a further Detection [exploration] of the more Southern Regions in this Continent. . . .*



<sup>1</sup> "Hast thou come at last?"

. . . some things done since by Almighty God for the *English* in these Regions, have exceeded all that has been hitherto done for any other Nation: If this *New World* were not found out first by the *English*; yet in those regards that are of all the *greatest*, it seems to be found out more *for* them than any other [nation].

§ 4. But indeed the two *Cabots*, Father and Son,<sup>2</sup> under the Commission of our King *Henry VII*, entering upon their generous Undertakings in the year 1497, made further Discoveries of *America*, than either *Columbus* or *Vesputius*; in regard of which notable Enterprizes, the younger of them had very great Honours by the Crown [King] put upon him, till at length he died in a good Old Age, in which Old Age King *Edward VI* had allowed him a Honourable Pension. Yea, since the *Cabots*, employ'd by the King of *England*, made a Discovery of this continent in the year 1497, and it was the year 1498 before *Columbus* discovered any part of the *Continent* in the Year 1497;<sup>3</sup> and it was the Year 1498 before *Columbus* discovered any part of the *Continent*; and *Vesputius* came a considerable time after both of them; I know not why the *Spaniard* should go *unrivall'd* in the claim of this *New World*, which from the *first finding* of it is pretended unto. These Discoveries of the *Cabots* were the Foundation of all the *Adventures*, with which the *English Nation* have since followed the *Sun*, and *served* themselves into an Acquaintance on the hither side of the *Atlantick Ocean*. And now I shall *drown* my reader with my self in a tedious Digression, if I enumerate all the Attempts made by a *Willoughby*, a *Frobisher*, a *Gilbert*, and besides many others, an Incomparable *Rawleigh*, to settle *English Colonies* in the Desarts of the *Western India* [West Indies, i.e., the western hemisphere]. It will be enough if I entertain him with the History of that *English Settlement*, which may, upon a Thousand accounts, pretend unto more of *True English* than all the rest, and which alone therefore has been called *New-England*. . . .

Mather reviews the English explorations along the Atlantic coast in the 1500s as well as the theory of the Asiatic origins of North America's native inhabitants.

§ 6. . . instead of reciting the many *Adventures* of the *English* to visit these Parts of the World, I shall but repeat the Words of one Captain [George] *Weymouth*, an *Historian*, as well as an *Undertaker* [participant]



John Smith's map of New England, 1614, publ. 1624

of those *Adventures*; who Reports, *That one main End of all these Undertakings, was to plant the Gospel in these dark Regions of America*. How well the most of the *English Plantations* [colonies] have answered this *main End*, it *mainly* becomes them to consider: However, I am now to tell Mankind, that as for *One* of these *English Plantations* [i.e., Massachusetts Bay] this was not only a *main End*, but the *sole End* upon which it was erected. If they that are solicitous about the Interests of the *Gospel*, would know *what* and *where* that Plantation is; be it noted, that all the vast Country from *Florida* to *Nova-Francia* [New France/Canada], was at first

<sup>2</sup> John and Sebastian Cabot: Venetian navigators (Giovanni and Sebastiano Caboto) who sailed for England. John Cabot is the first post-Columbus explorer who (possibly) landed on the North American continent, having made landfall (perhaps) on Nova Scotia in 1497.

<sup>3</sup> Columbus's first continental landing was in 1498 in South America (present-day Venezuela). He never landed on the North American continent.

called *Virginia*; but this *Virginia* was distinguished [divided] into *North Virginia* and *South Virginia*, till that famous *Traveller* Captain *John Smith*, in the year 1614, presenting unto the Court of *England* a Draught [map] of *North Virginia*, got it called by the Name of *NEW-ENGLAND*; which Name has been ever since allowed unto my Country, as unto the most *Resembling Daughter*, to the chief Lady of the *European* World. Thus the Discoveries of the Country proceeded so far, that K[ing] *James* I did by his *Letters Patents* under the Great Seal of *England*, in the 18th Year of his Reign, give and grant unto a certain Honourable *Council* Established at *Plymouth*, in the County of *Devon*, for the Planting, Ruling, and Ordering, and Governing of *New-England* in *America*, and to their Successors and Assigns, all that part of *America*, lying and being in Breadth, from *Forty Degrees* of Northerly Latitude, from the Equinoctial Line [equator], to the *Forty-Eighth Degree* of the said Northerly Latitude Inclusively; and the *Length* of, and within all the Breadth aforesaid, throughout all the *firm Lands* from Sea to Sea. This at last is the Spot of *Earth*, which the God of Heaven *Spied out* for the Seat of such *Evangelical*, and *Ecclesiastical*, and very remarkable Transactions, as require to be made an **history**; here 'twas that our Blessed **Jesus** intended a *Resting Place*, must I say? Or only an *Hiding Place* for those *Reformed CHURCHES*, which have given him a little Accomplishment of his Eternal Father's Promise unto him; to be, we hope, yet further accomplished, *of having the utmost Parts of the Earth for his Possession?*

§ 7. The Learned *Joseph Mede*<sup>4</sup> conjectures that the *American Hemisphere* will escape the *Conflagration* of the *Earth*, which we expect at the descent of our Lord JESUS CHRIST from *Heaven*: and that the People here will not have a share in the Blessedness which the *Renovated World* shall enjoy, during the *Thousand Years* of *Holy Rest* promised unto the Church of God: and that the Inhabitants of these Regions, who were originally *Scytheans*,<sup>5</sup> and therein a notable fulfilment of the Prophecy about the *Enlargement* of *Japhet*, will be the *Gog* and *Magog* whom the *Devil* will seduce to Invade the *New-Jerusalem*,<sup>6</sup> with an Envious Hope to gain the *Angelical Circumstances* of the People there. All this is but Conjecture; and it may be 'twill [it will] appear unto some as little probable, . . . that by *Gog* and *Magog* are meant the *Devils* and the *Damned*, which he [Mede] thinks will be let loose at the end of the *Thousand Years*, to make a furious, but a fruitless Attempt on the glorified Saints of the *New-Jerusalem*. However, I am going to give unto the *Christian Reader* an *History* of some feeble Attempts made in the *American Hemisphere* to anticipate the State of the *New-Jerusalem*, as far as the unavoidable *Vanity of Humane* [human] *Affairs* and *Influence* of *Satan* upon them would allow of it; and of many *worthy Persons* whose *Posterity*, if they make a *Squadron* in the *Fleets* of *Gog* and *Magog*, will be *Apostates* deserving a Room, and a Doom with the *Legions* of the *Grand Apostate*, that will deceive the *Nations* to that *Mysterious Enterprize*. \_\_\_\_\_



<sup>4</sup> Anglican scholar and theologian.

<sup>5</sup> Mather and others considered the Indians, having come from Asia, to be descendents of the Scythians.

<sup>6</sup> Related to millennial prophecies in the Bible (Ezekiel 38-39 and Revelation 20:7-8) of an earthly city where believers will spend eternity with God after the final judgment.