The Pluralization of Scripture in Early American Protestantism: Competing Bible Translations and the Debate over Universal Salvation, ca. 1700–1780

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In an appendix to his 1743 German Bible, the Pietist printer Christopher Saur (1695–1758) reflected on the proliferation of vernacular translations that had appeared since the Reformation, giving us "at least eight translations in the German language, and at least six in England, not to speak of other countries." As Saur noted, there was "a great deal of disagreement among scholars" working on the Bible.[1] Even the canon and the textual basis for vernacular translations had become increasingly controversial. The differences between vernacular Bibles in just one language could be considerable. Saur demonstrated this to his readers by listing a sample of translations from the competing German Bibles. Though he had chosen to keep mostly to Luther's translation, Saur made it clear that this version was riddled with problems and uncertainties, also affecting major theological issues.

Saur's reflections offer a critical gloss on a central, if often tacit and unexamined, assumption among historians of religion and the Bible in British North America. With their weak or non-existing church establishments in comparison to Europe, the colonies (especially those outside New England) are acknowledged as a place of great religious diversity, where different groups constantly fought over matters of doctrine and practice. At the same time, most scholars agree that among the predominantly, and often radically, Protestant populations there was a shared culture of biblicism, a commitment, as Mark Noll has written, "to live 'by the Bible alone' (as the only guide)," which "enjoyed greater currency in the colonies than in any . . . part of Europe."[2] This shared culture is widely understood to have been grounded—apart from some early Deists—in a still unshaken trust in the supernatural authority of the

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traditional Bible as a uniform and stable entity and in a loyalty to the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. Studies on the topic, of course, routinely nod to the initially significant presence of the Geneva Bible in New England, the astounding feat (albeit of limited impact) of the so-called Indian Bible (1663), and the fact that Saur's German Bible was the first North American printing of the Holy Writ in a European language. Recently, some specialized research also began to explore the colonial origins of biblical criticism in America.[3] Generally speaking, however, none of this has been seen as indicative of any serious threat to a precritical acceptance of the Bible, or of a rivalry to the KJV. For Protestants in the United States, the Authorized Version, as Paul Gutjahr has written, remained "firmly entrenched as the monarch of American Protestant Bible versions" until well after the American Civil War.[4]

When the Revolution brought an end to the royal monopoly on importing English Bibles from the homeland, a growing number of alternative, and some uniquely American, translations and retranslations of Scripture (starting with the Aitken Bible of 1782), along with countless Bible commentaries and aids, began to crowd the burgeoning American print market. As Gutjahr and Seth Perry have convincingly argued, this proliferation of Bibles gave rise to an almost contradictory development.[5] Although society became even more saturated with biblical print products than ever before, the "Book of God" was rendered an increasingly problematic abstraction since it appeared in so many forms and translations. Learned commentaries, popular Bible aids, and even inspired glosses and prophetic extensions in the form of new "American Scriptures" abounded. With the advent of the Revised Version (1881–1885), the KJV finally "began to lose its unchallenged cultural hegemony."[6]

Saur's remarks and the realities to which they respond suggest that this process of what we call the pluralization of Scripture in America—and the weakening of the general trust in the "givenness" and perspicuity of Scripture that followed—had already begun to unfold during the colonial period. To be sure, the KJV did remain the dominant Bible among anglophone Protestant populations. However, already by the early eighteenth century, some heirs of New England Puritanism were challenging the adequacy of the KJV and pushing for improved translations of key passages, as members of the clerical intelligentsia became immersed in cutting-edge textual and historical scholarship on the Bible. By the later decades of the century, their modes of argumentation began filtering down to a more popular level. Also during the eighteenth century, distinct, non-English cultures of biblicism with their own religious print

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markets formed in the middle colonies, most importantly among the German-speaking populations.

Different diasporic communities of German Protestants brought not only the Luther Bible to America but also diverse other "heterodox" Bibles associated with radical Pietist groups. Works such as Johann Heinrich Reitz's New Testament translation (1703) and the Berleburg Bible (1726–1742) challenged the official translation in Lutheran states and made critical scholarship accessible through their commentaries. While the English and German religious communities, with their respective print markets, remained largely separate, significant crossover did occur, including —as we will show—works and debates having to do with scriptural translations. Arguably, German presence and transcultural influences did much toward eroding the primacy of the KJV in eighteenth-century America. Historians of early American Protestantism have not yet adequately recognized and studied these developments and their consequences.

This essay contends that, well before the American Revolution, the advent of Higher Criticism in American seminaries, and the first wave of English-language Bible production in the early republic, Scripture had ceased to be "some sort of static, monolithic entity."[7] As we will show, part of what makes eighteenth-century British North America such a special religious environment is that within a relatively confined space, a considerable number of alternative translations and commentary traditions in a variety of different languages came to coexist and, at some points, also interact with each other. Moreover, we argue that competing translations, even of passages speaking to core doctrines of the Christian faith, were inextricably bound up with some of the most significant controversies among colonial Protestants.

Following some prefatory observations, the essay discusses the different ways in which scriptural pluralization played out in the middle colonies and New England. While Pennsylvania, in particular, came to be a center for alternative German Bibles wielded by radical Pietists who challenged not only the teachings of Protestant Orthodoxy but also the dominant Luther translation, theologian-scholars of the Congregationalist establishment from Cotton Mather (1663–1728) to Charles Chauncy (1705–1787) as well as popular revival preachers in the Reformed tradition like Elhanan Winchester (1751–1797) were engaged in increasingly intense struggles. These revolved around some of the central tenets of their shared Puritan heritage. Proposals to revise and thereby better understand the pertinent places in the KJV drove starkly differing interpretations of core Protestant doctrines. One of the most significant

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theological and translational battles across the colonies was that over the reach of the gospel promise of salvation. In New England, the struggle over whether or not universal salvation was a scriptural doctrine contributed much to the growing schisms of Congregationalism. Emphatically answering in the affirmative, Winchester became one of the founders of an institutionalized Universalist Church in America. Likewise, their universalist readings of the Bible separated many radical Pietists "sects" from Lutheran and Reformed "church people." We will use this example of universalism to highlight the serious ramifications of scriptural pluralization, but also to demonstrate the entangled nature of these controversies between English and German-speaking colonials.[8]

Translating the Word of God in Puritanism and Pietism

The early American pluralization of Scripture grew out of three, partly intersecting, partly conflicting, post-Reformation developments in Europe and Britain. One was the impulse to bring the Word of God to the common people, linguistically by vernacular translations and commentaries, as well as physically through new and affordable Bible editions. Another development was the ongoing quest of humanist scholarship to establish a reliable canon and textual foundation on which ever more accurate interpretations could be based. Together with the third development—the massive growth of conflicting exegetical traditions grounded in different Bible translations—humanist scholarship, by the seventeenth century, had led to a heightened awareness of the problems inherent in the principle of *sola scriptura*. Theologians found it impossible to agree not only on how to elucidate the Bible but also to establish one authoritative text and translation. Even as Protestant confessional states canonized and forged certain translations into authoritative texts, the defenders of the new Protestant establishments, as Jonathan Sheehan has argued, remained wary. For the proliferation of vernacular translations in post-Reformation Europe inevitably drew attention not only to their internal differences but also "to the differences that might lurk between the original and newest versions," thereby revealing "the very human side of the biblical text that the doctrine of *sola scriptura* could never admit." "More translations meant, in short, more disagreement about God's real language."[9]

As two major Protestant renewal movements aiming to complete the Reformation, British Puritanism (as well its heirs among eighteenth-century Dissenters) and German Pietism were

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profoundly shaped by these developments.[10] Both were committed to the supernatural authority of the Holy Scriptures, and oriented their reform efforts toward the goal of creating a truly biblical Christianity. At the same time, Puritanism and Pietism (although to different extents) rubbed against canonized confessional Bible translation, in one case the KJV, in the other the Luther Bible. This, of course, had to do with their specific religious agendas. But both movements were also deeply engaged in the rapidly evolving humanist scholarship that came out of the Renaissance study of classical texts and gave birth to a new kind of philological-historical approach to the Bible, produced prodigious amounts of commentary literature, and labored to refine existing translations perceived as less than perfect. Representatives of the Protestant state churches were eager to shield their canonized translations from criticism and thus tended to be careful to hive off biblical scholarship (mostly conducted in Latin) from the larger public. By contrast, Puritans as well as Pietists saw a well-informed exegesis as an integral part of their devotional culture, and thus pioneered in making the fruits of biblical scholarship available to larger audiences. Yet these commitments always entailed the questions: "Who has the authority to translate Scripture?" and "How authoritative is the Bible in translation?"[11]

Puritans as well as Pietist migrants brought these pursuits to the colonies.[12] It is well known that early Puritan colonists came to America with competing Bible versions, and that during the early years of Plymouth and the Massachusetts Bay Colony the Geneva Bible (1560), with its Calvinist annotations, was favored by many over the new version published at the king's behest. It is assumed that, by the time of the Restoration, American Puritans had settled on the KJV (the last edition of the Geneva Bible was printed in 1644) and based their intensely bibliocentric culture on that translation. There is much truth in that assumption, also because colonial printers had no license to print English Bibles. Soon the only Bibles to be had by the common people were KJV imprints imported from England. However, one must not overlook that at least the clerical elite had access to alternative versions—both in the ancient and in other vernacular languages—and was in conversation with biblical scholarship and the burgeoning anglophone commentary literature produced in England and on the Continent. New England theologians knew very well that the KJV continued to be contested by both learned and pious scholars.

Since its first publication in 1611, the KJV had gone through multiple, minimally revised editions to correct mostly printer's errors but also minor translational issues. It was issued by the king's printer but also licensed presses at Cambridge and Oxford.[13] Well

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before the great revision of 1769 by Benjamin Blayney, however, there existed serious misgivings about the Authorized Version. Puritan reformers initially preferred the annotated Geneva Bible and also objected to the KJV's inclusion of the apocrypha, which to them were of no authority. Moreover, from the beginning, some prominent Bible scholars such as Hugh Broughton (1549–1612), James Ussher (1581–1656), and John Lightfoot (1602–1675) took serious issue with the KJV. In 1645 Lightfoot presented a sermon to the House of Commons that, pointing to numerous errors of significant consequence, called for a revised translation. The Puritan-dominated Interregnum Parliament even created a subcommittee in 1657 to take up the matter but the project never materialized. Nevertheless, the movement to revise the KJV did not die there. The lingering dissatisfaction with the received translation also reflected the fact that the cumulative labors of European humanist scholarship had made various ancient manuscript versions of the Bible available in printed editions, which offered sometimes significantly divergent alternatives to the Masoretic text and *Textus Receptus* on which the KJV had been based.

And so the calls for a new translation continued. For instance, a year before the Restoration, the rector of St. Mary Aldermary (London) and chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Gell (1595–1665) published the extensive *Essay toward the Amendment of the Last English-Translation of the Bible* (1659), focusing on the Pentateuch. Scholars across the spectrum of British Protestantism continued to produce learned works that examined a wide range of scriptural passages with the tools of philology and, on this basis, offered revised translations. In the late seventeenth century, a new type of popular Bible commentary began to conquer the religious book market. Works like *An Exposition of All the Books of the Old and New Testaments* (1708–1710) by Matthew Henry (1662–1714), comprised both paraphrases (often amounting to retranslations) and commentary reflecting the author's theology.[14]

All of these books, and many more like them, were imported to New England. There they nurtured a growing awareness that the KJV did not offer unproblematic access to the Word of God. While countless Bible editions, ancient and modern, polyglot Bibles, and specialized works of biblical scholarship filled the bookshelf of collegiate libraries and even the private collections of better-to-do clergymen, English Bible commentaries à la Henry had an even wider circulation. From early on, leading members of the New England ministry also made their own interventions in this genre. Many of the exegetical sermons and tracts that they had printed in London or Boston also contained some reflections on how to better translate the

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parts of Scripture to be examined. Such is the case already with John Cotton (1585–1652), who published, among others, expositions of Canticles (1642, 1655), Revelation (1655), and 1 John (1655). However, it was through his grandson, Cotton Mather, that Puritanism's mounting sense that the Bible needed better translation and explication found a culminating expression in one Herculean feat of intellectual labor.

That feat was the "Biblia Americana" (1693–1728), an encyclopedic commentary on all the books of the Bible excluding the apocrypha. Mather valued and used some apocryphal writings, but, true to Reformed tradition, his canon had only sixty-six books. In annotating these, Mather worked for three decades and filled more than 4,500 folio pages. He synthesized select patristic-medieval and rabbinical traditions, hundreds of modern commentators and devotional writers, biblical scholarship, and even cutting-edge works of natural philosophy. Mather's hope was to create a *synopsis criticorum* that would be up to the highest scientific standards but also fully orthodox and pious in accordance with his understanding of "primitive Christianity."[15] Pioneering a new type of deeply learned but apologetically oriented biblical criticism in America, the "Biblia" discusses at length challenging questions regarding the inspiration, authorship, composition, transmission, canonization, and historical realism of the biblical texts. Even though he, in some cases, significantly modified traditional positions on these issues, Mather ultimately always defended the authority, integrity, and infallible truth of the Bible. Moreover, as Mather highlighted in an advertisement pamphlet, the "Biblia" sought to address those "Instances, wherein the most Polite and Pious Masters in Philology, have expressed their Wishes to see the Common Translation Amended and Refined."[16] Hence, he carried forward the Puritan initiative across the Atlantic and into the eighteenth century, creating, in effect, America's first extended effort to revise the KJV.

Across the "Biblia," there are hundreds of entries in which Mather points out that a word or entire verse in the KJV appeared to be wrong, unclear, or just a little awkward. To offer corrections or improvements, Mather would compare the different ancient language versions and modern translations, but also considered the rabbinic glosses and a host of philological publications, including the works of Broughton, Lightfoot, and Gell. Most frequently, Mather offers semantic corrections of single terms or phrases to improve intelligibility or bring out certain nuances of meaning. In the characterization of the "wisdom from above" in James 3:17, to cite just one example from the New Testament, Mather considered the KJV's "easy to be intreated" as less than felicitous. He deemed the

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German translation by Luther better and "a very Instructive one, Läßt ihr sagen, or, *patiens Admonitionis*, willing to take an Admonition."[17]

Another proposal for substantial revisions concerned Job's "Confession of Faith" (19:25–27), the first verse of which the KJV had rendered: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." Although the first clause had become a familiar phrase, frequently cited in sermons and religious conversations, Mather challenged the common translation. He suggested that "According to the Original, the Words run thus: *I know that the Living One is my Redeemer, and that He who is the Last shall stand upon the Earth*."[18] This was not only philologically more accurate, Mather thought, but also highlighted God's being the first and last. Most importantly, the revised translation brought out the triune nature of God and made it clear that Job's reference to "my redeemer" here looked forward to the Messiah, "our Glorious CHRIST who is, *The Living One*," the same designation that John also used in Revelation. The second verse, Mather argued, the KJV had freely but appropriately given as "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God," although, as Mather wrote, "the Words, *Worms*, and, *Body*, are not in the Original, yett they are fitly enough supplied by our Translators. In the Hebrew tis, *Tho' after my Skin they destroy This*: i.e. *This be Destroy'd*; a very usual Hebraism." Job was clearly pointing to his broken body, which he expected to be resurrected so that he would see his redeemer in the flesh.

Mather was never able to mobilize enough subsidies and subscriptions to publish his massive "Biblia Americana" in far-away London. And so its direct influence remained limited to the author's immediate Boston circles and, through his son Samuel Mather, was brought to bear on some exegetical debates in the 1770s and 1780s. Still, the "Biblia," like no other work from colonial New England, gives us a window into the kind of translational and interpretative questions that would also continue to vex the eighteenth-century heirs of Mather in New England, including Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758).[19] Many later debates are anticipated here. To be sure, Mather's goals were generally apologetic and, more specifically, to provide an English version that would be beyond fault and able to anchor a definitive interpretation of Scripture. Still, the sprawling nature of his annotations, picking and choosing from an ever-growing body of editions, translations, and commentaries, clearly show that, by the turn of the eighteenth century, the combined forces of post-Reformation biblicism and humanism had rendered any naïve notion of turning to the authority of the naked Bible deeply problematic.

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In British North America, as in the motherland, the KJV was not challenged per se. Without the king's permission, it could not be replaced by an alternative version. Yet underneath that seemingly safe hegemony of the English Bible, Scripture was becoming increasingly pluralized. In the colonies, this process was arguably more advanced because of the growing presence of settler groups using not only English translations other than the KJV, most notably the Catholic Douay-Rheims Bible (1582, 1609–1610), but also a variety of non-English Bibles. The latter group included the Dutch *Statenbijbel* (1637), the old *Bible de Genève* (orig. 1535), and the more recent translation with commentary by the Swiss-born Calvinist theologian Giovanni Diodati *La Sainte Bible* (1644), which Huguenot immigrants brought with them. However, the most significant additions to the colonial marketplace of Bibles was made by the more than one hundred thousand German immigrants who came to settle in the mid-Atlantic region before the Revolution.

After the Reformation, Luther's *Biblia, das ist die gantze Heilige Schrift* (first complete edition 1534) had quickly become the dominant translation into German. It appeared in countless editions, often featuring smaller corrections or changes. Even Catholic vernacular Bibles were heavily dependent on Luther. Among Swiss Protestants, a minor, but still significant, competitor was the Zurich or Froschauer Bibel (1531, revised 1540 and 1667). And yet, for all its predominance, the Luther Bible was criticized from early on by humanist scholars and theologians on account of philological errors as well as numerous misunderstandings created by its programmatically free interpretations and idiomatic phrasings. In 1602–1604, the Reformed divine Johannes Piscator produced a new translation that hewed much more closely to the original languages. However, it would be the Pietist movement that, starting around the turn of the eighteenth century, created a veritable wave of new editions, commentaries, and translations that seriously challenged the supremacy of the Luther Bible.[20]

This is perhaps not readily apparent. After all, the more moderate and confessionally oriented Lutheran Pietism with its major center at Halle contributed much to an even wider distribution of what was essentially the Luther Bible. The Halle Bibles produced at the famous "Cansteinsche Bibelanstalt" contained a slightly updated version of Luther's text with prefatory notes by August Hermann Francke (1663–1727). With the commencement of mass German migration to the mid-Atlantic colonies during the middle decades of the eighteenth century, the Francke Foundation began to support and supervise the building of a Lutheran Church in America under the leadership of Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg (1711–1787)

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and sent pastors to the mission field. It also became a major player in the importation of religious books, supplying to booksellers or ministers large quantities of devotional, catechetical literature, and Halle Bibles.[21]

Halle's fidelity to Luther was also a political decision, for Francke and his associates were by no means unambiguously happy with the Luther version. Similar to what we saw with the Puritans and the KJV, Halle Pietists discussed the need for major revisions in publications like Francke's own *Observationes Biblicae* (1695), which contained numerous proposals for more accurate translations. While Lutheran Pietism shied away from actually taking steps to create a new Bible translation, more radical Pietists were not so cautious. They saw the Luther Bible as not only riddled with errors but also as the textual icon of an ossified orthodoxy that needed to be replaced by "an ecumenical German Bible unstained by devotion to party and doctrine."[22] Theologians associated with radical Pietism produced a slew of alternative translations that would correspond as accurately as possible with the inspired language of the original Scriptures. These translations and attendant commentaries were at once the product of specialized biblical scholarship absorbed by their authors and they helped to popularize the fruits of that scholarship in the vernacular.

Christopher Saur cited and discussed several of these in the appendix ("Kurtzer Begriff") to his Bible edition, attesting to the fact that they circulated among "sectarian" German immigrants: Johann Heinrich Reitz (1703) and Johann Jakob Junckherrott (died before 1733) both offered literalist—in the case of Junckherrott, even word-for-word—translations of the New Testament, based on a consolidated version of the *Textus Receptus* that incorporated numerous manuscript variants. A much looser, often "targumic," rendition was pseudonymously published by the Philadelphian and Inspirationist Johann Kayser (1680–1765). Apparently, this so-called "Philadelphium" New Testament (1733) also found its way to Pennsylvania, as did the Ebersdorf Bible (1726–1727) by Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760) und Johann Andreas Rothe (1688–1758), which provided the fledgling Moravian community with a free revision of the Luther Bible as well as introductions and summaries by Zinzendorf.[23]

Moreover, Saur employed the Marburg Bible (1712) and Berleburg Bible (1726–1742).[24] Written by the renegade Reformed theologian Heinrich Horch (1652–1729), the former combined a scholarly revision of the Luther translation with extensive annotations that highlighted mystical and especially prophetic-eschatological interpretations supporting Horch's covenantal and millennialist

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theology.[25] The eight massive volumes of the Berleburg Bible, produced by a collective of "heterodox" scholars under the leadership of Johann Friedrich Haug (1680–1753) in the famous Pietist center of Sayn-Wittgenstein-Berleburg, offered a new, literalist translation of Scripture from the originals along with extensive prefaces and commentaries to unlock each verse's manifold meanings. As is true for Mather's "Biblia," a crucial motivation behind the search for a more faithful translation of the Hebrew and Greek was to provide a surer foundation for prophetic, typological, or mystical interpretations.

The Marburg and Berleburg Bibles also defined the biblical canon in ways that significantly differed from the KJV and the Luther Bible. The Luther Bible (also in the Halle edition) included the apocryphal books, but positioned them between the Old and New Testament to signal their inferior status as texts that were not authoritative but profitable to read. This was also the pattern the KJV had followed, although it added 1 and 2 Ezdras to the apocrypha. True to Horch's more strictly Reformed convictions, the Marburg Bible, like Mather's "Biblia," left the apocrypha out entirely. By contrast, the Berleburg Bible placed the apocryphal texts after the end of the entire New Testament and incorporated not only 1 and 2 Ezdras (alternatively titled 3 and 4 Ezdras) but also a range of other writings such as 3 Maccabees, the Apocalypse of Enoch, the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, or the gospels of James and Nicodemus, which neither the Luther Bible nor the KJV included. This more expansive and flexible canon reflected the special interest that many radical German Pietists had in the apocrypha, but also their broader understanding of revelation.

Similar to Mather's, the extensive commentaries that overcrowd the printed pages of the Berleburg Bible combined historical and cultural information for the elucidation of the literal sense with figurative, and often highly speculative, readings of spiritual meanings. Reflecting the "heterodox" leanings of the Berleburg circle, these readings were synthesized from radical Pietist, Philadelphian, Quietist, and theosophical theologians, as well as historical and geographic scholarship.[26] Like the "Biblia Americana," the Berleburg Bible exhibits an encyclopedic tendency that threatens to defy their authors' purpose of making the meaning of Scripture more definitive by surrounding it with a plurality of interpretative possibilities that were not always readily reconcilable.[27]

These alternative German Bibles came to America primarily by the hands of diverse "sectarian" Pietist groups that, overall, constituted about ten percent of the German settler population. Besides the Moravians and the Schwenckfelders, most important to mention are

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the Schwarzenau Brethren (also called Dunkers) and the Ephrata community. There were also numerous unaffiliated radical Pietists, like Saur. For all of these groups, the Marburg and especially the Berleburg Bibles played an important role, even though relatively few physical copies of these very large and expensive books circulated in the colonies.[28] They were the prized possessions of community leaders such as Alexander Mack (1679–1735) and Conrad Beissel (1691–1768) and a small number of individuals who could afford to buy them from book sellers, notably the greatest importer of German Pietist literature, Christopher Saur, who sold Berleburg Bibles at his shop in Germantown.[29] However, Saur was not the only provider of alternative German Bible translations and apocrypha editions. Using its in-house printing press, the Ephrata community would undertake in 1764 an American edition of *Historia Certaminis Apostolici* ("History of the Apostolical Contest"), a major collection of New Testament apocrypha ascribed to Abdias of Babylon, as well as an edition of the Froschauer Bible in 1787.

The use of alternative Bibles, especially the Marburg and Berleburg Bible, was an important identity marker that set radical Pietists and pietistic Mennonites apart from the "church people," who predominantly relied on the Luther Bible.[30] The translations and interpretative traditions contained in these works grounded many of the "sectarians'" distinctive beliefs and practices. These ranged from various millennialist eschatologies, Philadelphian ecclesiologies, the insistence on believer's baptism by full immersion, perfectionist understandings of sanctification, and, as is discussed below, the hope for a final restitution of all things.[31]

However, printing these massive commentary Bibles in the colonies was neither technically feasible nor economically viable. When Christopher Saur in 1743 concluded that there was a large enough native market to undertake the costly and labor-intensive production of a German Bible, he—knowing that the majority of potential customers would be "church people"—pragmatically chose to make the thirty-fourth Halle edition of Luther's Bible his model.[32] Under his aegis and that of his sons, three editions issued forth from the Saur press (1743, 1763, and 1776), selling more than six thousand copies during the eighteenth century.[33] This competition frustrated the Halle pastors. But they were positively angered by the heterodox elements that Saur had implanted in his Bible, as if to signal to buyers that neither the canon nor the translation of the Luther version should be accepted uncritically, despite its familiarity and value.[34] Saur made a conspicuous addition to the apocrypha section between the Old and New Testaments, which otherwise followed the Halle-Luther edition. While the apocryphal texts from the Book of

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Judith to the Prayer of Manasseh followed the revised Luther translation, Saur added 3 and 4 Ezdras and 3 Maccabees in the version of the Berleburg Bible.[35] These texts were particularly pertinent to the eschatological speculations of radical Pietists (especially with regard to the latter-day conversion of the Jews), but their inclusion also would have served as a gesture to the public: there is a wider canon of sacred, if not equally authoritative, texts that deserve to be studied by the pious, even though church officials frowned upon such pursuits by lay people.

What is more, in his appended essay "Kurtzer Begriff" and in one paradigmatic passage (see below), Saur forcefully demonstrated to readers the potential shortcomings of the Luther Bible specifically, as well as the great philological difficulties and theological decisions involved in translating Scripture more generally. This he did by contrasting in exemplary fashion passages in Luther's version with the renditions offered by the Froschauer and Piscator Bibles and the New Testaments by Junckherrott, Kayser, Zinzendorf, as well as the Marburg and Berleburg Bibles. In so doing, the Germantown printer was making his readers see the significant interpretative alternative created by these translations, dogmatically and in terms of personal piety. Offering such parallel translations for all of the Scriptures was certainly desirable, Saur wrote in "Kurtzer Begriff," but would have expanded the size and the price of the book by at least four times. Still, readers should never forget that translations, even though they were cited by the established ministry to that effect, never gave one immediate, unproblematic access to the true meaning of God's word.

Parallel to what we saw in Mather's revisions of the KJV, many of the faults Saur found in the Luther version had to do with relatively simple lexical issues. Yet some of these also bore theological import. Luther, for example, had obscured the meaning of several passages crucial to a correct understanding of the relation between justification and sanctification. This was especially true for Gal. 5:24, which Luther rendered as: "But they that belong to Christ crucify their flesh with the lusts and desires."[36] This translation could be taken to back the forensic understanding of justification in Lutheran Orthodoxy (according to which believers are treated as righteous before God on account of their connection with Christ by faith, but do not actually partake in His righteousness), and the corresponding teaching that the subsequent pursuit of Christian holiness in the fight against the temptations of the flesh was an ongoing and always incomplete process. For traditional Lutherans, there was no perfection on this side of heaven. Saur recommended the translations by Reitz and the Berleburg Bible as more faithful to the original. They read: "But they who are of Christ have crucified the flesh together with the desires

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and lusts."[37] This wording accurately promoted an understanding that justification and sanctification were inextricably intertwined in the process of conversion and that the new birth entailed an actual renovation of the sinful person. Truly regenerate Christians did not merely belong to Christ but were "of Christ," a unity that inevitably implied that they had crucified the old Adam and his fleshly nature. Hence, Scripture supported the belief that, for the regenerate, perfect holiness was possible even in this world. As Saur's samplings illustrated to his readers, it made a real theological difference to not simply put their trust in the Luther version but, like the wrongfully decried "sectarians," also study alternative Bibles.

If, for pragmatic reasons, the Saur Bible nevertheless followed the Halle Bible, it did so with one notable exception. At Job 19:25–27, Saur found the Luther version as unacceptable as had Mather the KJV. Saur chose this passage as a paradigmatic "awareness raiser" in the main body of the edition for the many more translational shortcomings to be found across the whole Bible. The Saur Bible situated the Berleburg translation as the primary text and offered the Luther translation for comparative purposes below.[38] It was one of the places where the great Reformer had interpreted the Hebrew original not only loosely but, by more recent philological standards, in large parts incorrectly. Verses 25–26 read: "But I know that my redeemer lives; and he will afterwards raise me from the dust; and I will afterwards be wrapped up in this my skin and will see God in my flesh." The Berleburg translation revised this to "Yes I know that my redeemer lives; and he will be the last to rise above the dust; and after I will wake up, these things will be put aside and I will see God in my flesh."[39] Compared to these stark discrepancies, the differences in the translation of verse 27 were rather minor. We can only speculate why Saur chose exactly this passage for his demonstration. But it certainly provided a striking illustration for how contested the common translation had become among pious exegetes. More specifically, Saur might have found the Berleburg version more suggestive of the belief in the total eschatological victory of Christ rising above this fallen world, and perhaps also of the hope for a universal salvation.

Before zeroing in on our case study, we can summarily say, therefore, that by the time of the Revolution, German Pietists had contributed much to the internal diversification of early American Protestantism's biblicist culture. In the middle colonies, even more so than in New England, educated people now inhabited a religious public sphere in which the shape of the canon had become contested across multiple editions and rival translations in different languages vied with each other, which could be cited to support conflicting

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theological positions. None of this was done with the intention to undermine the authority of Scripture. On the contrary, the debates over canons and translations grew out of the desire to strengthen that authority and provide a more reliable foundation for interpretation. Yet, in effect, these controversies made it painfully clear that invoking the authority of the Bible on any given issue was never a way of closing an argument but always of opening a new one, given that it was so conspicuously hard even for the most learned to determine with certainty what the Scriptures actually said. Perhaps no debate showcases this dynamic as much as that over universal salvation. In attending to the importance of translational issues in the debates over universalism, we will also demonstrate that the relations between German Pietist and Anglo-American universalists was much more entangled and consequential than hitherto acknowledged.

Scriptural Pluralization and the Rise of Universalism

Scholars tend to frame the rise of Anglo-American universalism as an outgrowth of internal conflicts within the Congregationalist and Baptist traditions. From this perspective, universalism appears as a confluence of the same rationalistic, protoliberal tendencies within certain parts of the New England Congregationalist elite that also led to Unitarianism—a parallel development paradigmatically embodied by Charles Chauncy—with a radical stream in popular Reformed revivalism, most prominently represented by John Murray (1741–1815) and Elhanan Winchester. For both sides, the development of the belief that everyone will be saved is primarily understood as an extension of the inherent moral and philosophical logic of an older Arminian theology emphasizing the goodness of God and the human freedom to choose salvation.[40] Arguments over Scripture are, for the most part, regarded as secondary, in the sense that each side inevitably would have cited the proof-texts that best fit their stance.[41] Studies treating the development of universalism in America routinely acknowledge that some of Pennsylvania's "sectarians" (notably the Schwenckfelders, Dunkers, and Ephrata Brethren) also believed in the *apokatastasis panton* (restitution of all things) and that some of the Anglo-American pioneers, such as Winchester, were influenced early on by the 1753 translation of Georg Paul Siegvolck's *The Everlasting Gospel*.[42] Overall, however, Anglo-American and German Pietist universalism have been represented as largely separate affairs.[43]

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In the following, it will be argued that contesting the correct translation and understanding of several key passages in the common versions of the Bible was absolutely central to the formation of a coherent universalist position, just as its opponents most vehemently defended their resistance on exegetical grounds, offering improved readings of the same passages. The battle over universalism was, essentially, a battle over Bible translations and interpretations, with both sides wrestling over small but momentous differences in meaning. The rise of universalism in early America was contingent on the pluralization of Scripture that played out across New England and the middle colonies and between its different ethnoreligious groups. At the same time, the controversy and countless print publications generated by the appearance of universalism further fed this pluralizing dynamic, making a wider public aware of how ambiguous the scriptural evidence was on even this most urgent question of who could hope for salvation.

During the tumultuous Civil War period in England (1642–1652), a renewed Christian universalism had appeared on the radical fringes of British Protestantism, but was rigorously suppressed after the Restoration. By the turn of the eighteenth century, amid a much-changed and more tolerant religious climate, New England theologians began to notice inklings of a universalist revival on both sides of the Atlantic. It was fed by both "heterodox" Dissenters like Jeremiah White (his *The Restoration of All Things* was published posthumously in 1712) and Latitudiniarian Anglicans like Archbishop John Tillotson,[44] as well as the nascent Philadelphian movement, whose sympathy with the ancient notion of *apokatastasis panton* was forcefully expressed in Jane Leade's *A Revelation of the Everlasting Gospel Message* (1697).[45]

In what almost seems like a preemptory strike against this creeping danger, Cotton Mather attempted to demonstrate in his "Biblia Americana" that universalism had no warrant in Scripture, even if some infelicitous translation of the KJV might be mistaken to condone it. Thus, Mather glossed the universalist *locus classicus* of Acts 3:21 and attacked the received translation ("as until the times of restitution of all things") as misleading. With Hugo Grotius, he argued that the verb from which ἀποκαταστάσεως was derived (ἀποκαθίστημι) in some cases also "Signifies, To Show," and thus rendered the verse unsuspiciously: "Until the Times of his Exhibition of all things, which God hath spoken by the Mouths of all His Holy Prophets."[46] Similarly, Mather felt the need to defuse the dangerous potential of how the KJV rendered Rom. 11:32 ("For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all"), by offering this paraphrastic retranslation from John Locke,

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> God hath *putt up* together in a State of Revolt from their Allegiance to Him, as it were in *One Fold*, all Men, both *Jewes* and *Gentiles*; that thro' His Mercy they might all, both *Jewes* and *Gentiles*, come to be His People. He hath suffered both *Jewes* and *Gentiles* in their Turns, not to be His People, that He might bring the whole Body, both of *Jewes* and *Gentiles*, to be His People.[47]

In this way the locus was made to clearly speak of the extension of God's promise of salvation from Jews to Gentiles, not the actual salvation of all.

Another related case where Mather proposed to amend the Authorized Version was Eph. 1:10, "The Gathering together in One all things in Christ." This verse, in the traditional rendering of the KJV, was another key reference in universalist writings. Mather thought that the different semantic facets of "Ανακεφαλαιωσις" might better be captured by the English word "recapitulation." The term, on the one hand, alluded to "a *political Uniting* of several Nations or Peoples under one Prince, becoming an *Head* unto them." On the other hand, "Ανακεφαλαιωσασθαι" overlapped with "Ανανεωσαθαι," signifying "*Renovation*, *Restoration*, *Restitution*." Hence the recapitulation spoken of here promised that, under the headship of Christ, the faithful of God would be brought "into a most marvellous and intimate *Union* with Himself to all Eternity." Looking forward to the New Heaven and New Earth, it also promised to the regenerate a restoration of humanity's original, sinless nature. But this recapitulation, as Mather emphasized, applied only to the elect, for "*All Things*" are "all *Rational Creatures*, that come under the Election of God." Neither Col. 1:20 nor Eph. 1:10 implied salvation for those not united with Christ by faith, or a rescue of "the Damned in *Hell*, . . . out of their evil Circumstances."[48]

For Mather, there was no question that the punishment of the wicked in hell would be eternal. This was the consensual teaching of Protestant orthodoxy. He acknowledged, however, that the Greek word αἰών (*aion*) and its derivatives, which were used in the central New Testament passages that spoke to the duration of the sinner's torment, could have different meanings. On 1 Cor. 10:11, for instance, he gleaned another observation from John Locke on how "in translating, τα τελη των αιωνων, *The End of the World*" the KJV had fallen short. It was better translated as "*The Ends of the Ages*," and one ought to consider "whether, Αιων, in the New Testament signify not ordinarily; *A considerable Length of Time, passing under some one Remarkable Dispensation*."[49] But in the decisive verses, such as Matt. 25:41 or 2 Thess. 1:9, eternal or endless duration was indeed intended.

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In the second half of the eighteenth century, universalism on both sides of the Atlantic was nurtured by two trends. One was the further development of a "rational biblicism," as Nathan Hatch has termed it, among Protestant theologians, who critically and systematically examined the biblical witnesses for Christian doctrines with the tools of modern scholarship, even if this led them to challenge the orthodox teachings of their confessional traditions.[50] The other trend was the growing interest in Christian esotericism, specifically Böhmism, which in England led people like William Law to embrace a theosophic version of the restitution of all things.[51] Both trends came together in the biblical exegesis of radical German Pietists, who then not only entrenched universalism in early America through their own migrant communities but also helped to spread scriptural arguments for universal salvation among Anglo-American Protestants.

The first in the radical, theosophically inflected Pietist tradition to systematically build a case for the biblical nature of universalism were Johann Wilhelm (1649–1727) and Johanna Eleonora Petersen (1644–1724), for whom the belief in an *apokatastis panton* (restoration of all things) was intimately connected with their millennialist eschatology.[52] In his three-volume compendium *Mystērion Apokatastaseōs Pantōn* (1700–1703), Johann Wilhelm Petersen offered a virtual library of texts examining all the relevant biblical testimonies alongside reinterpretations of the key passages from the original languages. Volume One concluded with a 150-page-long work attributed to a Georg-Paul Siegvolck titled *Das von Jesu Christo dem Richter der Lebendigen und der Todten, aller Creatur zu predigen befohlene Ewige Evangelium*. Petersen chose to include this text as a summary account of the scriptural arguments more fully unfolded in *Mystērion* as a whole. Siegvolck was the pseudonym of the Halle-trained Lutheran minister of Friesdorf and Rammelburg (Mansfeld) Georg Klein-Nicolai (1671–1734). An acquaintance and correspondent of the Petersens, Klein-Nicholai was associated with radical circles and removed from office in 1705, the year a stand-alone edition of the *Ewige Evangelium* appeared. Over the course of the eighteenth century, at least four more editions were printed in Germany. Together with the work of the Petersens, it exerted a powerful stimulus for the spread of universalism among radical German Pietists, also by serving as a source for their alternative Bible translations and commentaries, most importantly the Berleburg Bible.[53]

In America, an English translation of Klein-Nicolai's work appeared by the agency of the Huguenot exile scholar and physician turned radical Pietist George de Benneville (1703–1793), who had

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already been involved with the production of the Berleburg Bible during his time in Germany. After his emigration to Pennsylvania in 1741, de Benneville determined to spread the universalist message in the colonies and arranged to have the Siegvolck tract printed under the title *The Everlasting Gospel* (1753) by Christopher Saur, whose son also undertook two further German imprints (1768 and 1769).[54] Scholars have acknowledged that the reception of *The Everlasting Gospel* exerted a transformative effect on the New Light Baptist Winchester personally,[55] and that it more generally influenced that strand of American universalism going forward from Winchester.[56] After he became pastor to the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia, where he developed a friendship with de Benneville, Winchester, in 1781, publicly announced his conversion to universalism. In 1792, he published an expanded version of Klein-Nicholai's tract in London that also circulated in America. Winchester's own works, notably *The Universal Restoration* (first edition London, 1788), also quote extensively from *The Everlasting Gospel*.[57] What has not been adequately understood, however, is that *The Everlasting Gospel* made accessible to a wider German- and English-speaking public alternative interpretations of Scripture, which otherwise would have remained confined to relatively small communities using works such as the Berleburg Bible. Chapter 12 of *The Everlasting Gospel* gives reinterpretations of key biblical passages pertaining to universalism.[58] In the German original, the revisions of Luther and the attendant interpretations are often extremely close to what can be found in the Berleburg Bible, with many verbatim echoes.[59] The English translator of *The Everlasting Gospel* chose to basically cite the language of the KJV but freely interspersed it with parenthetical modifications and Klein-Nicholai's explications.

Although direct dependency is hard to prove, because Siegvolck/Klein-Nicholai is never cited by name, it seems very likely that Charles Chauncy, too, read and was deeply impressed by *The Everlasting Gospel* as he studied the scriptural testimonies on salvation with renewed intensity in the 1750s. Probably finished by the end of the decade, the resulting manuscript evinces a great deal of similarity with the radical Pietist tradition of universalism channeled by Klein-Nicholai, both in its overarching scheme of interpretation but also in its treatment of translational issues that take up a great deal of space. Only after 1784 did Chauncy allow for an anonymous publication of this massive work of biblicist theology under the title *The Mystery Hid from Ages and Generations, Made Manifest by the Gospel-Revelation*.[60]

However, Chauncy entered the public debate two years earlier with a shorter work, *Salvation for All Men, Illustrated and Vindicated as a*

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Scripture Doctrine, which he co-authored with his pastoral colleague John Clarke, that put issues of translation center stage. While they only cite English authors by name, Chauncy and Clarke likely also had *The Everlasting Gospel* at their elbow when writing *Salvation for All Men* but maybe wished to conceal that influence, since a connection with German "mystics" would have weakened their case.[61] *Salvation for All Men* was as much a refutation of traditional Reformed teaching on limited atonement and predestination as it was a response to the activities of itinerant preacher John Murray in New England, who taught a more Calvinist version of universalism that extended election and final perseverance to all. By their unity with Christ, who suffered and atoned for the sins of all humanity on the cross, everyone would be saved, according to Murray, even though the unconverted, in the interval between death and the day of judgment, would have to suffer punitive torment.[62] Against this new "antinomianism," which, as he thought, was bound to encourage immorality, Chauncy, like Winchester and the Pietists, argued that the Bible, rightly understood, did offer hope for universal salvation but also threatened them with corrective punishment, albeit not with unending punitive torment, if the offer was rejected. Chauncy's intervention caused much outrage and a veritable pamphlet war, in which Calvinist apologists took aim at the perceived errors in the biblical exegesis presented in *Salvation for All Men*.

For the Petersens, Klein-Nicholai, and the Pietist group that produced the Berleburg Bible, as well as for Winchester and Chauncy, the Scriptures taught that God was essentially love and had created all things to be good, even as He allowed humanity the freedom to deviate from its nature and purpose. In His infinite mercy, God would finally restore the entire creation from its corruption and disorder (introduced by the forces of sin and death) to this original state of goodness through the agency of His Son, Jesus Christ. This message of hope was, in their view, supported by clear evidence from numerous New Testament passages, whose true meaning, however, had been obscured by poor translations or misinterpretations. Besides 1 Cor. 15:24ff., 1 Tim. 2:4–6 was a main piece of evidence for this argument. The Luther Bible had diminished God's purpose by translating verse 4 as "who wills that all men should be helped and come to the knowledge of the truth."[63] Similar to Reitz's New Testament translation, the Berleburg Bible corrected this to "who wills that all men should be saved (*errettet*) and come to an inward (*innerlicher*) knowledge of the truth." However, the bigger problem was the willful obfuscation of Paul's intended meaning on the part of the so-called orthodox theologians,

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as the Berleburg commentators bitterly noted. "All men" was "artificially interpreted, even distorted" to "all sorts of people" (*allerley*) by these misinterpreters' "dark and malicious reasoning," while Scripture clearly spoke of God "as granting salvation to everyone, without exception."[64]

Even though the KJV rightly offered "will have all men to be saved," English theologians had not done much better than their Lutheran colleagues. Both had taken the verb "wills" (for Greek Θέλει) in the weaker sense of "desires, wishes, or prefers to," rather than in the stronger sense of "determines or decrees to." But these verses, as Klein-Nicholai maintained, were an unambiguous declaration "that His divine will must needs be finally accomplished in respect to all . . . whom he will have to be saved, and which he will make new."[65] Charles Chauncy consented: "The letter of the text is full and express: . . . [i]t is not said God *would* have all to be saved by his *good will*," Chauncy wrote, "but that he *authoritatively wills it: wills* it as a being of supreme, uncontroulable power."[66] 1 Tim. 4:10 ("The living God, who is the savior of all men, especially of them that believe") must not be misread as a qualification of God's will, Chauncy emphasized. Here the question was "what this μάλιστα imports," which the KJV had translated as "especially" and Luther as "*sonderlich*." The Greek, according to Chauncy, should not be taken as indicative of a limited atonement but interpreted to mean "*chiefly* of them that believe," in the sense that those who converted to a true faith in Christ during this life "have the advantage of the rest of men," by receiving special rewards from God, but are not saved exclusive of the rest of humanity.[67] On this Klein-Nicholai, the Berleburg commentators, and also Winchester agreed with Chauncy, as they did on their understanding of salvation as an ontological renewal, in the sense of a literal restoration or restitution of humanity's original being, free from sin. Winchester paraphrased 1 Tim. 2:3, 4 in his *The Universal Restoration*: "God is our Savior, (or *Soteros*, Restorer) who will have all men to be saved (*sothenai*, restored) and come unto the knowledge of truth. This is the will and counsel of that GOD," whom nothing can oppose or thwart.[68]

That the Bible understood salvation as a restitution could be observed in many other places as well, if one faithfully followed the original words. For instance, Luther had rendered the famous promise of Acts 3:21 rather obscurely, as speaking of Christ being received into the heavens "until the time when everything will be brought back that God had spoken of through the mouths of His holy prophets."[69] Building directly on Reitz's more literal translation, the Berleburg Bible gave it, not unlike the KJV, "until the times of restitution of all things, of which God has spoken by the mouth of all

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his holy prophets."[70] Against the representatives of both Lutheran and Reformed orthodoxy, the Berleburg commentary explained at length that this "restitution of all things" was to be understood literally and eschatologically, so as to mean "nothing less than a new creation, a new heaven and a new earth, a new Jerusalem and a paradisical state." The Apostle Peter here articulated the core of the Christian faith that had already been foreshadowed by the ancient Hebrew prophets: At the consummation of time, sin and death would be entirely overcome, and "in the end everyone would be delivered from the yoke of our mortal nature to the glorious freedom of the children of God."[71]

While Luther and the KJV accurately captured the literal sense of Rom. 11:32 ("For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all"), the schoolmen had sinfully diminished its meaning. "All those who have the audacity to exclude one fallen human from the infinite mercy of God," the Berleburg gloss exclaimed, "do not yet stand on the right foundation of love and humility and do not know what this verse truly contains. As far as the consequences of sin reach, just as wide stretches the gate of His mercy, which, however, is not bound to this period of time." Some sinners would only walk through this gate in a distant future long after their mortal life. "God's mercy," however, "will not have a limit set to it."[72] "If it [i.e., salvation] be not done in the present time," said Siegvolck via Winchester in *The Everlasting Gospel*, "as indeed it is not but to the smallest number of the corrupt creatures, it must necessarily be done in the age to come."[73]

Another striking example is Eph. 1:8–10. The Luther translation seemed to understand verse 10 in a preterist fashion of Christ's incarnation and ministry: "in order for it [i.e., the mystery of God's will] to be executed [the Halle revision even offered "preached" here], as the time was fulfilled, so that all things might be gathered together in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; in himself."[74] The KJV spoke of "the dispensation of the fulness of times, [when] he might gather together in one all things in Christ" and thus left the temporal aspect ambiguous. Following the lead of Reitz and Horch, the Berleburg translation, by contrast, strongly foregrounded the futurist dimension of Christ's redemptive work as a process of restoration to be completed in the eschaton: "In order to gather all things together again under one head in Christ in the dispensation of the fulness of times, both the things that are in heaven, and the things on earth; even in him." As the Berleburg commentators explained, at the end of times "the dispersed members would be gathered together again under one head and all that which deviated from its purpose be restituted to its original

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good estate."[75] Similarly, Klein-Nicholai and Winchester read Eph. 1:8–10 as one of the key eschatological prophecies concerning God's "glorious purpose," as Winchester subtly modified the KJV, "finally to rehead all things in Christ."[76]

Chauncy offered a combined reinterpretation of Eph. 1:10 and Col. 1:20. The words the KJV had rendered in the former verse as "to gather together in one, signify in the original, to rally or rehead routed or scattered forces or members, to reduce them to the place or rank where they were before." Similarly, "the word which is rendered to reconcile signifies to change a thing from a state of enmity to harmony; to make it another thing from what it was." The true prophetic import of the two verses Chauncy summarized in a fashion that is strongly reminiscent of the German Pietist tradition, even if the immediate source was White: "[A]ll things were originally made by Christ, stood in him," wrote Chauncy, "were headed under him, comported dutifully with their relation to him," before the fall brought sin, disunion, and chaos. However, Christ's redemptive work "has reconciled the world unto God, lain the enmity between them, and made provision for an Universal restoration to favour." And when it was said that all things were to be reheaded in Christ, "it is manifest nothing is excepted. There is nothing either in heaven or earth which shall not finally be reconciled to God, and be reduced to a proper state of subjection."[77]

For the German radical Pietists, as much as for Winchester and Chauncy, the promise of a final restoration of all things was closely connected not only with the belief in a purgatorial afterlife, but also with a millennialist eschatology. During the final age, those truly regenerate souls who had come to a saving faith during their lifetime and thereby escaped punishment in the hereafter (the "first born") would receive their special reward in the first resurrection. Unregenerate sinners, by contrast, would undergo punishment of varying degrees and lengths after their death, as would the fallen angels who would have to endure the fiery pit during the millennium.[78] Eventually, however, there would come "that period when Christ after all things, shall be subdued to him . . . , that is restored to that true order, in which they were created by him in the beginning," as Klein-Nicholai put it, "shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, even the whole restored creation; to the end that the most Holy God, who cannot unite himself with any thing that is impure, may be all in all, and fill all with his glory." In his *The Mystery Hid*, Chauncy worked out in great detail a scheme of purgatorial refinement and millennialist perfection working toward the creation's progressive restoration.[79]

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Because of God's love for his creation, divine punishment, besides serving the purpose of justice, always aimed at correction, understood as a purification from sin, and the eventual renewal of being. From this Petersen, Klein-Nicholai, the Berleburg commentators, and Winchester and Chauncy concluded that no punishment, however severe, could be eternal in the sense of endless. They all backed up this claim by nuancing the translation of the Hebrew and Greek words commonly translated as "eternity" or "eternal" in both the Luther Bible and the KJV. As Klein-Nicholai put it, the "Words *Eternal* or *Eternity*, expressed in the *Hebrew* Language by *Nezach*, *Tamme*, *Ad*, *Al*, *Olam*; and in the Greek by *aiòn*, *aiònios*, *aei*, *aénnaos*, *diapantós*, &c. have not always the same but different Significations in the holy Scriptures, as is well known to the Learned."[80] Carefully studying these different significations in those places where the Bible seemed to speak of eternal punishment or damnation was imperative.

Universalist exegetes focused most attention on the Greek terms *aion(ios)*. The precise meaning of these terms and the temporal duration they implied very much depended on the context, they argued, and had to be understood by the subject matter of which a verse spoke. To distinguish the different passages in the New Testament, Petersen and Klein-Nicholai established a tripartite classification system for the proper interpretation of *aion(ios)*, which was then taken over by Winchester and Chauncy.[81] If the things treated were of a finite nature, *aion(ios)* merely meant a long but limited duration. In many such cases, Luther and the KJV translators had realized that rendering *aion* as "eternity" was not fitting and had resorted to "Welt" or "world," as in Jesus's famous saying in Matt. 28:20, implying the age or period that this present world will last. If the passage pertained to life hereafter, salvation, or other eschatological promises, the Greek terms implied a period with a beginning but of limitless duration. Here the German "Ewigkeit/ewiglich" or the English "eternity/eternal," were not wrong, per se, but lacked nuance. Only in verses that spoke of God and the divine, did *aion(ios)* suggest an eternity in the fullest sense of "without beginning and end."

In those few passages, where the New Testament used *aion(ios)* in threats of divine punishment, damnation, or hellfire, the term's meaning and implied temporal duration was neither to be understood in the third or second sense. These threats crucially differed from the opposed promises of eternal life, which was from and of God, but had to be understood in accordance with the finite nature of evil and sin. Just as these would eventually be subdued and purged from creation, the punishments they brought unto men

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would have an end. This the common translations had fatally obscured by also speaking of "ewigliche" or "everlasting" punishments of God. "For the word *everlasting* is of a quite different extent when it is used to express the duration of the being of God, than when it is attributed to those creatures that have their being from God, and to the good which is derived from him," Winchester asserted in his edition of *The Everlasting Gospel*, "and again, it is still different when it is applied to sin, and the evil of punishment depending thereon, as coming from the creature alone without God."[82]

Like the other universalist exegetes before him, Winchester had his sights set especially on Matt. 25:41 and 46, and 2 Thess. 1:9, "'These shall go away into '*aionian* punishment,'" and "'Who shall be punished with an *aionian* destruction, &c.'"[83] Here the Scriptures clearly intended a long but not limitless age, Winchester argued, so that "these [verses] are fully sufficient to convince any unprejudiced mind, that nothing can be concluded in favour of *endless punishment*, from the word *aionian* being used to set forth the duration of it."[84] This was exactly what Petersen, Klein-Nicholai, and the Berleburg Bible said about these verses as well. Luther's *ewiges Feuer*, *ewige Pein*, and *ewige Verderben* were misleading, for *aionion* should be interpreted according to his "second sense" to mean something akin to "as long as is necessary." "As soon as the Evil, or Sin, is severed from the Creatures, the Punishment thereof also ceases . . . as a Fire must go out as soon as it wants Combustibles."[85] On Matt. 25:41 and 46, the Berleburg commentators noted that here only a limited kind of eternity could be intended, for eventually all souls "after their obdurate nature has been melted away and dissipated, would flow into God completely pure and supple, as nothing can keep this spirit (having been restored to the purity of its creation) from returning to its creator." 2 Thess. 1:9 envisioned terrible devastations "for an indescribable length," but not forever.[86] Chauncy came to much the same conclusion, citing the additional authority of the English dissenting exegete Joseph Nicol Scott (1703?–1769), who "examined *all* the passages of scripture, that relate to the *future punishment*," but he had "not been able to find *one single text*, in which this article of *an eternal or endless misery* is either *expressly affirmed*, or *necessarily implied*." Whenever Scripture spoke of damnation or punishment in the afterlife, "[t]he original words, both in the Hebrew and Greek," he argued, "signify nothing more than an *age*, and in the plural *ages*, either *longer* or *shorter*, *definite* or *indefinite*."[87]

Universalist exegetes thus attacked the representatives of Lutheran and Calvinist orthodoxy at their most sensitive point, by contending that in limiting salvation and teaching eternal damnation and torment of the reprobate they violated the divine authority of

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Scripture. Especially for New England Congregationalist ministers, who prided themselves like perhaps no other Protestant church on the purely scriptural nature of their religion, it was deeply troubling to have their interpretation of Christianity's redemptive promise challenged on the grounds that it was based on mistranslations of the original, divinely inspired, texts. Such a charge being made not just by radical sectarians or self-educated itinerants like Winchester or Murray but by highly respected and educated members of the theological elite such as Charles Chauncy made matters even worse. Small wonder then that *Salvation for All Men* caused multiple rejoinders, including Joseph Eckley's *Divine Glory Brought to View in the Condemnation of the Ungodly* (1782), Samuel Mather's *All Men Will Not Be Saved Forever* (1782), William Gordon's *The Doctrine of Final Universal Salvation* (1783), Peter Thatcher's *That the Punishment of the Finally Impenitent Shall Be Eternal* (1783), and Samuel Hopkins's *Inquiry Concerning the Future State of Those Who Die in Their Sins* (1783).[88] Chauncy's outraged fellow ministers mustered many different theological arguments and frequently warned about the erosive effect of universalism on public morality. However, the chief concern was to win back for orthodox Congregationalism the prerogative of defining what the Scriptures actually said in plain English. This concern was vigorously addressed by Samuel Mather, who took it upon himself to demonstrate that "Salvation of all men is not a scriptural doctrine" and that Chauncy (and his sources) had "mistaken and misinterpreted the meaning of those scriptural testimonies" they cited. *All Men Will Not Be Saved Forever* promised to "produce much superior and more established authorities than his that he has not given the right sense and meaning of them."[89] Although not mentioned by name, one such authority enlisted was his own father, Cotton Mather, whose "Biblia Americana" commentaries were wielded as a weapon in the fight for American Congregationalism four decades after its author's death.

On 1 Tim. 2:3–6, Samuel Mather accused Chauncy of "rack [ing] out a meaning for the apostle, that does not belong to the text," when suggesting that these verses, rightly translated, promised that the reconciliation achieved by Christ "shall finally operate upon all." To bring out Paul's "genuine intent and meaning of it," Samuel then drew on his father's annotations. God's will to have all men saved expressed the universality of the gospel promise, which, however, only the elect could take hold of, according to God's eternal decree. Yes, verse 6 asserted that Christ "has given a sufficient ransom and propitiation for all; and he will not cast out abroad any, who penitently come to him as he requires, to gain and enjoy the benefit of it." But this must not be indiscriminately applied to the

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"reprobated as well as elect," for only the latter were able to penitently come to Christ and truly believe in him, while the hearts of the former would forever remain hardened by sin. Also, the subclause "to be testified in due time" did by no means speak of an eschatological restitution of all things but ought to be understood in a preterist fashion: "For these words refer to what went before, . . . they signify, that CHRIST gave himself to death as a ransom in the proper season."[90] Again drawing on the "Biblia Americana," Samuel Mather also contested Chauncy's reinterpretation of Eph. 1:10 and Col. 1:20. Chauncy and his interlocutors were "putting a strange force on the words to make them signify the restoration of the wicked and impenitent to the divine favour and everlasting happiness." Paul never meant "to convey any such wrong apprehension," but "the plain and natural sense of the words" was "that it is the divine design and intention, under the dispensation of the gospel, here called in the Greek, the dispensation of the filling up of the seasons, to recapitulate" the true children of God in Christ, that is, "to bring them by a penitent faith to a reconciliation with God" and "thus to a union . . . among themselves."[91] There was nothing in the text to suggest that the impenitent and unregenerate were to be comprehended in this union.

The greatest part of *All Men Will Not Be Saved Forever*, however, was dedicated to the correct translation of the Greek terms *aion(ios)*. As his father had done, Samuel Mather conceded that "the word *Aione*, as well as the *Hebrew* word *Gnolam*, in the Old Testament, is frequently used for an *age* or a limited time." This was not always reflected in the KJV, for "our translators have again and again, and very strangely mistaken in giving the sense of this word very variously and unaccountably." This should be amended. Samuel Mather actually agreed with Chauncy and his interlocutors that the correct translation of the noun *aion* depended on the context. He even followed their basic threefold division, but included divine punishment and damnation in the second category, emphatically asserting that "even in the singular sometimes," the word *aion* "is used to signify an *interminable duration* of punishment and misery," as in Matt. 12:32, which said that a sin against the Holy Ghost could never be forgiven, "*either in this age neither in the age to come*," not in this *world* or the next, as the KJV had inexactly rendered it.[92] Discussing multiple cases, Mather furthermore concluded that, contrary to Chauncy's claim, "the Greek adjective *aionios*, in whatever case it is put uniformly signifies eternal," either in the fullest sense (without beginning or end) or in the sense of something "that *had a beginning and will never know a period*." The fullest sense was reserved for the "Divine Being," but "the terms *eternal*, or

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everlasting, as *adjectives*" in the second sense should be applied "not only to *angels*" but "to the *souls of men*, and to the *heavens* and earth with regard to their substance."[93] It was a foolish and false hope that only the life in heaven with God promised to the faithful would be everlasting. Because their substance was eternal, the fallen angels and the souls of wicked men could and would literally undergo endless punishment in the undying fires of hell, as Matt. 25:46 or 2 Thess. 1:9 said they would. This unceasing punishment would by no means progressively purge them of their sinfulness. Instead, it would ever increase their enmity to God who had rightfully condemned them.

Conclusion

Neither Mather's tract nor the many others that followed could settle the matter, of course, even as the immediate storm caused by Chauncy's publication calmed down. If anything, in the following decades, American Protestant theologians and lay exegetes would fight each other more furiously over the correct translation and explication of Scripture, not just on the reach of divine salvation, the nature of God, and the Trinity, but on multiple other issues of Christian belief and practice. In some cases, the divisions became institutionalized, as was the case in New England with the forming of the American Unitarian Association (1825) and the Universalists Church of America (1833), both of which would continue to reprint and hold in high regard the works of Klein-Nicolai writing as Siegvolck, Chauncy, and Winchester. While questions concerning the correct interpretation of Scripture were never the sole reason for such divisions, they mattered a great deal. The pluralization of Scripture directly played into America's rapidly growing Protestant diversity.

The combatants in these conflicts routinely bemoaned, as Samuel Mather had done, the "ignorance and foolishness" of their opponents, who, whenever they have "embraced any particular notion and mere whimsy in religion, they soon . . . apply as many passages of scripture as they can, and put them to the rack and torture, to make them confess their favorite opinion."[94] Alas, the opposing party always felt the same way and thought of itself as the champions of the Word of God, rightly understood and rendered into English. One did not need to be a skeptical Deist or seminarian immersed in biblical criticism to feel that the meaning of Scripture on even the most essential points appeared like the proverbial nose of wax, to be turned this or that way. As they watched how exegetes tried and failed to settle central questions of religious and political life (Who could hope to be saved? Who was Jesus? Can a revolt

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against the king be biblically justified?), American Protestants would have felt keenly that the sacred principles of their religion—*sola scriptura*, the perspicuity and self-interpreting nature of the Scriptures—had a troubling tendency to defeat themselves in practice. Although the KJV remained the most popular version well into the nineteenth century, already by the time of the Revolution it existed alongside diverse translations and commentaries. As a result, early American Protestants were being forced, more and more, to square their belief in "the Bible" with the undeniable reality of many "bibles."

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Notes

[1]Christopher Saur, "Kurtzer Begriff. Von den Heiligen Schrifften und deren Uebersetzungen. Mit etlichen Anmerckungen," in *Biblia, Das ist: Die Heilige Schrift Altes und Neues Testaments, Nach der Deutschen Uebersetzung D. Martin Luthers* (Germantown: Saur, 1743), no pagination.

[2]Mark Noll, *In the Beginning Was the Word: The Bible in American Public Life, 1492–1783* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3.

[3]For a general introduction to the history and historiography of biblical interpretation in colonial America, see Robert E. Brown, "The Bible in the Seventeenth Century" and Jan Stievermann, "Biblical Interpretation in Eighteenth-Century America," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in America*, ed. Paul C. Gutjahr (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 79–95, 96–114. On the "Indian Bible," see Linford D. Fisher, "America's First Bibles: Native Uses, Abuses, and Reuses of the Indian Bibles of 1663," in *The Bible in American Life*, eds. Peter Thuesen, Philip Goff, and Arthur Farnsley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 35–48.

[4]Paul Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777–1880* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 91. Similarly, Charles L. Cohen asserts the more or less unchallenged "primacy of the KJV" in his "Religion, Print Culture, and the Bible before 1876," in *Religion and the Culture of Print in Modern America*, eds. Charles L. Cohen and Paul S. Boyer (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 7.

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[5]Seth Perry, *Bible Culture and Authority in the Early United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

[6]Peter Thuesen, *In Discordance with the Scriptures: American Protestant Battles Over Translating the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 42.

[7]Gutjahr, *An American Bible*, xxiii.

[8]It should be emphasized, however, that discussions over other, equally important, doctrines—notably that of the Trinity but also predestination—were likewise connected to debates over Bible translations.

[9]Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 3–4, 16.

[10]The precise definition and periodization of "Pietism" are still highly contested among scholars. In the most general terms, "classical" German Pietism can be understood as a Protestant renewal movement that flourished among German-speaking Lutheran and Reformed populations between the second half of the seventeenth and the late eighteenth century. However, the movement also exerted cultural influences that extended far beyond German lands to northern and eastern Europe and across the Atlantic Ocean to North America in this period. While groups associated with Pietism are characterized by a great deal of theological, regional, and demographic diversity, they shared the basic goal of completing the Reformation by renewing religious life through a deepened *praxis pietatis* and devotion to the Bible, morally reforming society, and by bringing as many people as possible to an authentic, inwardly held faith in Christ through revivals and missions. Pietists were generally animated by millennialist eschatologies (although of very different stripes) and they shared certain practices, such as conventicles and personal Bible studies. This article follows a basic distinction made by most scholars between "churchly" or "confessional" and "radical" Pietists." While the former, like the Lutheran Pietists of Halle, were committed to reforming their churches from within (also by actively involving lay people), the latter believed that the confessional churches were beyond redemption and that true believers must separate themselves or come out of their Babylonian captivity. Yet these radical Pietists differed widely in their views of the true church and how it could be realized on earth. Some, like the Schwarzenau Brethren, sought to organize "come-outers" in a new institutional body based on more scriptural principles; others attempted to bind together committed Christians from different churches in interconfessional, "Philadelphian" networks; and yet others, like Christopher Saur, insisted on remaining independent spiritual

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seekers. On the definitional debates and for recent surveys of the relevant literature, see Douglas H. Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 1–11; Douglas H. Shantz, "Introduction," in *A Companion to German Pietism, 1660–1800*, ed. Douglas H. Shantz (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1–13; and Wolfgang Breul, "Pietismusforschung seit 1970," *Pietismus Handbuch*, ed. Wolfgang Breul and Thomas Hahn-Bruckart (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 26–42.

[11]Thuesen, *In Discordance with the Scriptures*, 4.

[12]On the history of English Bible translations in the early modern period, see the chapters in Part 1 of *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England, c. 1530–1700*, eds. Kevin Killeen, Helen Smith, and Rachel Willie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[13]On the discussion over the KJV in the seventeenth century, see Gordon Campbell, *Bible: The Story of the King James Version, 1611–2011* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 108–28.

[14]Isabell Rivers, "Biblical Aids, Editions, Translations, and Commentaries by Dissenters, Methodists, and Church of England Evangelicals in Eighteenth-Century England," in *The Bible in Early Transatlantic Pietism and Evangelicalism*, eds. Ryan P. Hoselton, Jan Stievermann, Douglas A. Sweeney, and Michael A. G. Haykin (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022), 36–55.

[15]Cotton Mather, *Biblia Americana: America's First Bible Commentary. A Synoptic Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, eds. Reiner Smolinski and Jan Stievermann et al., 10 vols. (Tübingen/Grand Rapids, MI: Mohr Siebeck/Baker Academic, 2010–). Mather's *Biblia* is examined from diverse angels in Reiner Smolinski and Jan Stievermann, eds. *Cotton Mather and* Biblia Americana—*America's First Bible Commentary: Essays in Reappraisal* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010). See also Jan Stievermann, *Prophecy, Piety, and the Problem of Historicity: Interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures in Cotton Mather's* Biblia Americana (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

[16]Cotton Mather, *A New Offer to the Lovers of Religion and Learning* (Boston: 1714), 11.

[17]Mather, *Biblia Americana*, vol. 10 (2022), ed. Jan Stievermann, 321. Mather cites Luther's translation. In his 1546 edition of the *Deutsche Bibel*, Luther had replaced his antiquated translation from 1522 "[die Weisheit ist] gelencke" with the phrase "lesst jr sagen" (*WA DB* 7:394–95).

[18]Mather, *Biblia Americana*, vol. 4 (2014), ed. Harry Clark Maddux, 233–34, drawing on James Knight, *Eight Sermons Preached at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, In Defence of the Divinity of Our Lord*

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Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit; at the Lecture Founded by the Honoured Lady Moyer (London: 1721), 234–35.

[19]See Douglas A. Sweeney and David P. Barshinger, eds., *Jonathan Edwards and Scripture: Biblical Exegesis in British North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[20]The following draws on Douglas Shantz, "Bible Editions, Translations, and Commentaries in German Pietism," in *The Bible in Early Transatlantic Pietism and Evangelicalism*, 17–36; Thomas Hahn-Bruckart, "Bibelausgaben," in *Pietismus Handbuch*, ed. Breul and Hahn-Bruckart, 422–25; Beate Köster, "'Mit tiefem Respekt, mit Furcht und Zittern': Bibelübersetzungen im Pietismus," *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 24 (1998): 95–115; Hans-Jürgen Schrader, "red=arten u [nd] worte behalten/die der Heil[ige] Geist gebrauchet": Pietistische Bemühungen um die Bibelverdeutschung nach und neben Luther," *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 40 (2014): 10–48; and Martin Brecht, "Die Bedeutung der Bibel im deutschen Pietismus," in *Geschichte des Pietismus, Band 4: Glaubenswelt und Lebenswelten*, herausgegeben von Hartmut Lehmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2004), 102–10.

[21]For the book lists, see Hermann Wellenreuther, *Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg und die deutschen Lutheraner in Nordamerika, 1742–1787: Wissenstransfer und Wandel eines atlantischen zu einem amerikanischen Netzwerk* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2013), 535–74. On the German book market, see A. Gregg Roeber, "German and Dutch Books and Printing," in *A History of the Book in America: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, eds. Hugh Armory and David D. Hall (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 298–313; Heinz G. F. Wilsdorf, *Early German-American Imprints* (New York: Lang, 1999); Karl Arndt, et al., *The First Century of German Language Printing in the United States of America*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Niedersächs. Staats- u. Univ.-Bibliothek, 1989); Robert Cazden, *A Social History of the German Book Trade in America to the Civil War* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1984).

[22]Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, 20.

[23]The "Philadelphians" refers to a movement of early modern English and German Protestants, represented most prominently within radical separatist groups, who, among other things, believed the true church did not consist of any existing confession or denomination. Philadelphians sought to gather sincere believers from within different confessional churches in "trans-denominational fellowship," anticipating the full realization of Christ's true church during the millennium. Peter Vogt, "Zinzendorf's 'Philadelphian' Ecumenism in Pennsylvania, 1742: An Example of Cross-Cultural Dynamics in Eighteenth Century Pietism," *Covenant Quarterly* 62

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(2004): 13, 13–27. For an overview of the German Philadelphian movement, see Hans Schneider, *German Radical Pietism* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2007), 67–74. See note 45 for more information on the connections between the English and German Philadelphians.

[24]The original German titles are *Mystische und Profetische Bibel, Das ist Die gantze Heil. Schrifft, Altes und Neues Testaments, Aufs neue nach dem Grund verbessert, Sampt Erklärung Der fürnemsten Sinnbilder und Weissagungen, Sonderlich Des H. Lieds Salomons Und der Offenbarung J.C.* (Marburg: Joh. Kürßner, 1712), and *Die Heilige Schrift Altes und Neues Testaments: Nach dem Grund-Text aufs neue übersehen und übersetzet: Nebst Einiger Erklärung des buchstäblichen Sinnes* . . . , 8 vols., (Berleburg: Haug, 1726–1742).

[25]Douglas H. Shantz, "The Millennial Study Bible of Heinrich Horch," in *The Practical Calvinist: An Introduction to the Presbyterian and Reformed Heritage*, ed. Peter Lillback (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 398–400.

[26]On the Berleburg Bible and its sources, see Martin Brecht, "Die Berleburger Bibel: Hinweise zu ihrem Verständnis," *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 8 (1982), 162–200; and Martin Hoffmann, *Theologie und Exegese der Berleburger Bibel (1726–1742)* (Gütersloh: Verlag C. Bertelsmann, 1937), esp. 9–29.

[27]See Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, 73–84.

[28]Cazden, *A Social History of the German Book Trade*, 4–5, 23.

[29]Wilsdorf, *Early German-American Imprints*, 118–19; Stephen Longenecker, *The Christopher Sauers: Courageous Printers Who Defended Religious Freedom in Early America* (Elgin, IL: Brethren, 1981), 52.

[30]Although the Berleburg Bible was never reprinted in America, as Kenneth A. Strand has pointed out, "it gained considerable popularity among the German Brethren, Mennonites, and various other 'sectarians.'" Strand, "Some Significant Americana: The Saur German Bible," *Andrews University Studies* 32, no. 1–2 (Spring/Summer 1994): 57–106, 59.

[31]Jeff Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves: The Sacred World of Ephrata* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 25; Stephen O'Malley, *Early German-American Evangelicalism: Pietist Sources on Discipleship and Sanctification* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1995), 273, 271–99; E. G. Alderfer, *The Ephrata Commune: An Early American Counterculture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 25; Carter Lindberg, "Biblical Interpretation in Continental American Pietism," in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, eds. Alan Hauser and Duane Watson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 3:327; Marcus Meier, *The Origins of the Schwarzenau Brethren* (Philadelphia: Brethren Encyclopedia, 2008), 139.

[32]In his foreword, Saur explained that he had chosen to keep with the Luther translation because of demand and familiarity and because the Halle edition offered many useful parallel references. Saur, *Vorrede*, unpaginated.

[33]Wilsdorf, *Early German-American Imprints*, 52, 60. The 1763 and 1776 editions dropped the Appendix ("Kurtzer Begriff").

[34]Longenecker, *The Christopher Sauers*, 54; Strand, "Saur German Bibles," 67.

[35]In the advertisements of the Bible printed in his newspapers, Saur offered customers the option to purchase Bibles bound without these three apocryphal books and the appendix, but apparently few chose to do so. Julius Friedrich Sachse, *The German Sectarians of Pennsylvania*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Printed for the Author, 1899–1900), 2:31–32.

[36]*Biblia, Das ist: Die Heilige Schrift*, 206: "Welche aber Christum angehören, die creuzigen ihr fleisch samt den lüsten und begierden."

[37]*Die Heilige Schrift Altes und Neues Testaments*, 6:608: "Die jenigen aber, welche Christi sind, die haben das Fleisch gecreutzet samt den Lüsten und Begirden." Reitz minimally differs: "Die dann Christi sind, die haben das Fleisch gecreutziget samt den Lüsten und Begirden. " See, *Das Neue Testament Unsers Herren Jesu Christi Auffs neue aus dem Grund verteutschet* (Offenbach: Launoy, 1703), 365. Saur, "Kurtzer Begriff," unpaginated.

[38]*Biblia, Das ist: Die Heilige Schrift*, 473. It is worth noting that the subsequent 1763 and 1776 editions of the Saur Bible, maybe in response to customer criticism, inverted the presentation of the two translations, so that Luther's text was placed first, with the Berleburg text immediately following and in smaller type.

[39]Luther: "Aber Ich weiß, daß mein erlöser lebet: und er wird mich hernach aus der erden auferwecken. Und werde danach mit dieser meiner Haut umgeben werden, und werde in meinem Fleisch Gott sehen." Berleburg: "Ja, ich weiß, daß mein Erlöser lebet; / und er wird der letzte über den staub sich aufmachen; / Und nachdem ich werde erwachen / so werden diese Dinge ableget seyn / und ich werde in meinem Fleische Gott schaun." The Berleburg commentators also acknowledged the possibility of a starkly different translation for verse 26: "Und ob schon noch oder neben meiner Haut / die durch viel Geschwüre und Eyterbeulen aufs übelste zugerichtet / verzehret und verschrumpffen ist." *Die Heilige Schrift Altes und Neues Testaments*, 3:72.

[40]This view is offered by two of the standard histories, Conrad Wright, *The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America* (Boston: Beacon, 1955) and David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (London: Greenwood, 1985). Ann Bressler acknowledges the

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"Arminian tendencies" of early figures like Winchester, especially with regard to universalist schemes of punishment for sin, but she places the emergence of full-blown Arminianism within the Universalism movement in the nineteenth century. Ann Lee Bressler, *The Universalist Movement in America, 1770–1880* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 16.

[41]An exception is E. Brooks Holifield's brief but insightful treatment of the origins of universalism in America, which acknowledges the central importance of exegetical debates for the early movement. See his *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 218–33.

[42]The most extensive but now dated treatment of the German roots of American universalism is in Richard Eddy, *Universalism in America. A History*, 2 vols. (Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1884), 1:13–93. For theological studies that also give some attention to the German connection of early American universalism, see Michael McClymond, *The Devil's Redemption: A New History and Interpretation of Christian Universalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 1:573–80, 1:605, 2:1069; John A. Buehren, *Universalists and Unitarians in America: A People's History* (Boston: Skinner House, 2011); Clinton Lee Scott, *The Universalist Church in America: A Short History* (Boston: Universalist Historical Society, 1957). McClymond asserts that "official historical narratives of the Universalist Church . . . have generally slighted the early development of universalism among German-speaking colonists in America" in favor of English-focused narratives. McClymond, *The Devil's Redemption*, 1:573.

[43]Bressler argues that universalism "seems to have appeared more or less independently among a number of eighteenth-century churches and sects, including . . . German pietist congregations." The origins of English and German universalism, she asserts, should be portrayed as detached phenomena because "none of these groups made the doctrine central to their creed," and thus "should not be considered part of the Universalist movement" in America. Bressler, *The Universalist Movement in America*, 14.

[44]See, for instance, the sermon preached by Tillotson in 1694, reprinted in *The Works of Dr John Tillotson* (London: 1820), 3:84.

[45]Jane Leade, John Pordage (1607–1681), and Thomas Bromley (1629–1691), under the aegis of *The Philadelphian Society*, forged connections with like-minded German thinkers such as Johann Wilhelm and Johanna Eleonora Petersen on the Continent. The doctrine of universal restoration formulated by Leade and the Petersens became a meaningful pillar of the mystical-Philadelphian

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tradition that would come to envelope radical German Pietism on both sides of the Atlantic. On the Petersen's connection to the English and German Pietist Philadelphians, see Schneider, *German Radical Pietism*, 67–74.

[46]*Biblia Americana*, vol. 8, ed. Rick Kennedy and Harry Clark Maddux (Forthcoming). Mather draws on Hugo Grotius, *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* (Paris, 1646), 2:18.

[47]*Biblia Americana*, vol. 9 (2018), ed. Robert E. Brown, 150. Mather draws on John Locke, *Paraphrase on the Epistles of St. Paul,* ed. Arthur W. Wainright ([1705–1707] Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 2:579–80.

[48]*Biblia Americana*, 9:458, 462, and 552.

[49]*Biblia Americana*, 9:242. Mather again draws on Locke's *Paraphrase on the Epistles of St. Paul*, 1:215.

[50]Nathan O. Hatch, "Sola Scriptura and Novus Ordo Seclorum," *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 59–79, esp. 61–63.

[51]See, for instance, William Law, *An Humble, Earnest and Affectionate Address to the Clergy* (London: 1761).

[52]On the Petersens, see Markus Matthias, *Johann Wilhelm und Johanna Eleonora Petersen: Eine Biographie bis zur Amtsenthebung Petersens im Jahre 1692* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1993); and Ruth Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen: Theologische Schriftstellerin des frühen Pietismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2005), esp. 233–300. Their universalism is treated by Kurt Lüthi, "Die Erörterung der Allversöhnungslehre durch das pietistische Ehepaar Johann Wilhelm und Johanna Eleonora Petersen," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 12, no. 3 (1956): 362–77; and in Elisa Belucci, *Johann Wilhelm and Johanna Eleonora Petersen's Eschatology in Context* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2022), esp. 60–94 and 226–64.

[53]Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism*, 223–27; O'Malley, *Early German-American Evangelicalism*, 275. On Petersen's connection to Siegvolck and the English and German Pietist Philadelphians, see Schneider, *German Radical Pietism*, 71, 67–74.

[54]Arndt, *The First Century of German Language Printing*, 1:164, 1:169; Albert Dehner Bell, *The Life and Times of Dr. George de Benneville, 1703–1793* (Boston: Dept. of Publications of the Universalist Church of America, 1953), 42–43.

[55]See, for instance, Robinson, *Unitarians and the Universalists*, 246–47; John S. Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries: Transformation and Tradition in the Religious and Political Thought of Charles Chauncy and Jonathan Mayhew* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2017), 99. Apparently,

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Winchester first encountered *The Everlasting Gospel* in 1778. Re-reading it sometime later together with James Stonehouse's *Universal Restitution: A Scripture Doctrine* (1761), according to Winchester's own testimony, greatly influenced his conversion to universalism.

[56]Holifield, *Theology in America*, 221.

[57]The fullest recent account (plus an English summary of Siegvolck) of that influence is offered by chapters 5 and 6 of Robin A. Parry (with Ilaria L. E. Ramelli), *A Larger Hope? Volume 2: Universal Salvation from the Reformation to the Nineteenth Century* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2019).

[58]Klein-Nicholai, *Ewige Evangelium* (1768), 111–15; Klein-Nicholai, *The Everlasting Gospel*, 96–121.

[59]It could be that Klein-Nicolai and the Berleburg scholars relied on the same sources. But it seems more likely that *Das Ewige Evangelium* (1705) was itself an inspiration for the Berleburg commentators.

[60]*The Mystery Hid* is in large parts focused on discussing the biblical evidence for universalism, including extended versions of all the issues discussed in *Salvation for All Men*. In his *Benevolence of the Deity* (1784) and the *Five Dissertations* (1785), Chauncy's focus is more on moral, theological, and philosophical arguments. For studies on the development of Chauncy's universalism, see Wright, *The Beginnings of Unitarianism*, 185–99; Edward M. Griffin, *Old Brick: Charles Chauncy of Boston, 1705–1787* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 171–76; Charles H. Lippy, *Seasonable Revolutionary: The Mind of Charles Chauncy* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981), 110–12; Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 90–109.

[61]If Chauncy did not study *The Everlasting Gospel* or the Petersens directly, their arguments were accessible to him through Jeremiah White's *The Restoration of All Things* (1712), which Chauncy does acknowledge as one of his key interlocutors in *Salvation for All Men*. In his unpaginated preface, White points to *Mystērion Apokatastaseōs Pantōn*, "written in the High-German by the Learned Dr. Jo. W. Petersen, sometimes Superintendent of Luneburgh," as one of his major sources, in which Petersen, "has strenuously defended this Point [of universalism], and collected and adopted into his Work the Writings of several others upon this Subject in lesser Tracts."

[62]Murray was much more influenced by a high-Calvinistic strand of English universalism represented, most importantly, by James Relly (1721/22–1778) in works such as *Union, or A Treatise on the Consanguinity and Affinity between Christ and His Church* (1759). While Murray made successful preaching tours in America and founded the first universalist church, in the long run, as McClymond

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has observed, "the origins of American universalism lay in German-American Böhmism," and we may add, Pietistim, "rather than in the well-known and better-documented 'high Calvinist' universalism" of Murray. McClymond, *The Devil's Redemption*, 1:564.

[63]*Biblia, Das ist: Die Heilige Schrift*, 225: "Welcher will, daß allen menschen geholfen werde, und zur erkentniß der wahrheit kommen."

[64]See Reitz, *Das Neue Testament*, 399; *Die Heilige Schrift Altes und Neues Testaments*, 6:748.

[65]See also Klein-Nicholai, *Das Ewige Evangelium*, 9–10; Klein-Nicholai, *The Everlasting Gospel*, 10.

[66]Chauncy, *Salvation for All Men*, 4. Compare Chauncy, *The Mystery Hid*, 21, 163–70.

[67]Chauncy, *Salvation for All Men*, 8. Compare Chauncy, *The Mystery Hid*, 227.

[68]Elhanan Winchester, *The Universal Restoration, Exhibited In Four Dialogues Between A Minister And His Friend, Comprehending The substance of several real Conversations which the Author had with various Persons, both in America and Europe, On That Interesting Subject, Chiefly Designed Fully to state, and fairly to answer the most common Objections that are brought against it from The Scriptures*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: T. Dobson, 1792), 106; see also Elhanan Winchester, *An Attempt to Collect the Scripture Passages in Favor of the Universal Restoration* (Providence, RI: B. Wheeler, 1786), 11.

[69]*Biblia, Das ist: Die Heilige Schrift*, 130: "bis auf die zeit, da herwiedergebracht werde alles, was Gott geredet hat durch den Mund aller seiner heiligen Propheten."

[70]*Die Heilige Schrift Altes und Neues Testaments*, 6:21–22: "bis zu den Zeiten der Wiederherstellung aller Dinge, von welchen Gott geredet hat durch den Mund aller seiner heiligen Propheten." Compare Reitz, *Das Neue Testament*, 22.

[71]*Die Heilige Schrift Altes und Neues Testaments*, 6:22.

[72]*Die Heilige Schrift Altes und Neues Testaments*, 6:312. For Klein-Nicholai's almost identical reading of Rom. 11:32, see *Das Ewige Evangelium*, 23, and *The Everlasting Gospel*, 21.

[73]Klein-Nicholai, *The Everlasting Gospel* (1792), 10. Winchester slightly altered Siegvolck's language here—further highlighting the significance of different translations—by inserting the words "time" and "age" where Siegvolck had "World" in both cases. The quote, as it appeared in the 1753 English translation, read: "If it be not done in the present World, as indeed it is not but to the smallest Number of the corrupt Creatures, it must necessarily once be done in the World to come." Klein-Nicholai, *The Everlasting Gospel* (1753), 9.

[74]*Biblia, Das ist: Die Heilige Schrift*, 207: "Daß es gepredigt [ausgeführt] würde, da die zeit erfüllet war, auf daß alle dinge

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zusammen (unter ein haupt) verfasset würden in Christo, beyde das im himmel und auf erden ist, durch ihn selbst."

[75]*Die Heilige Schrift Altes und Neues Testaments*, 6:618: "Um in der Haushaltung der Fülle der Zeiten aller Dinge wieder unter einem Haupt zusammenzufassen in Christo, beydes die in dem Himmel und die auf Erden sind." Compare Reitz, *Das Neue Testament*, 367, and Horch, *Mystische und Profetische Bibel*, unpaginated at Eph. 1:8–10.

[76]Winchester, *The Universal Restoration*, 165. See also Klein-Nicholai, *Das Ewige Evangelium*, 114–15; Klein-Nicholai, *The Everlasting Gospel*, 109–10.

[77]Chauncy, *The Salvation of All Men*, 12–13. Compare *The Mystery Hid*, 39, 123–26, 142–63.

[78]Compare, for instance, the Berleburg gloss on 1 Cor. 15:22ff.: The first-born are those "who are of Christ and worthy to inherit that world and partake in the first resurrection . . . before the onset of thousand years after the destruction of Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:8), when Christ will erect a glorious kingdom on earth with his faithful." After the end of the millennium all evil will have been blotted out and the souls of all men, as part of the fully "restored creation" will go over into "the eternity of eternities" with God. *Die Heilige Schrift Altes und Neues Testaments*, 6:460.

[79]Chauncy, *The Mystery Hid*, 10–11, 369–406, passim. For Winchester's millennialism, see esp. his *A Course of Lectures, on the Prophecies that Remain to be Fulfilled*, 2 vols. (Norwich, CT: 1794–1795) and *Two Lectures on the Prophecies* (Norwich, CT: 1789).

[80]Klein-Nicholai, *The Everlasting Gospel* (1753), 45–46; compare Klein-Nicholai, *Das Ewige Evangelium*, 49.

[81]Klein-Nicholai, *Das Ewige Evangelium*, 49–57; Klein-Nicholai, *The Everlasting Gospel*, 45–54.

[82]Klein-Nicholai, *The Everlasting Gospel*, 47. See also Winchester, *The Universal Restoration*, vii; Klein-Nicholai, *Das Ewige Evangelium*, 52.

[83]Winchester, *An Attempt to Collect the Scripture Passages*, 37.

[84]Winchester, *The Universal Restoration*, 19.

[85]Klein-Nicholai, *The Everlasting Gospel*, 52; Klein-Nicholai, *Das Ewige Evangelium*, 57.

[86]*Die Heilige Schrift Altes und Neues Testaments*, 5:279 and 6:732.

[87]Chauncy, *Salvation for All Men*, 19. Compare also Chauncy, *The Mystery Hid*, 259–328.

[88]John Clarke also responded with *A Letter to Doctor Mather* (Boston: 1782).

[89]Samuel Mather, *All men will not be saved forever: or, An attempt to prove, that this is a Scriptural doctrine* (Boston: 1782), 12.

[90]Mather, *All men will not be saved forever*, 14.

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[91]Mather, *All men will not be saved forever*, 16.
[92]Mather, *All men will not be saved forever*, 20–21.
[93]Mather, *All men will not be saved forever*, 21.
[94]Mather, *All men will not be saved forever*, 19.

ABSRACT *This article addresses a pervasive historiographic assumption about the supremacy of the King James Bible in British North America by proposing that a process we call the "pluralization of Scriptures" forced colonial Protestants to square their belief in "the Bible" with the undeniable reality of many "bibles." While the KJV remained dominant among anglophone Protestant populations, by the early eighteenth century some heirs of New England Puritanism were challenging its adequacy and pushing for improved translations of key passages, as members of the clerical intelligentsia became immersed in cutting-edge textual and historical scholarship. Also, during the eighteenth century, non-English cultures of biblicism with their own religious print markets formed in the middle colonies, most importantly among diasporic communities of German Protestants, who brought the Luther Bible to America, and diverse "heterodox" Bibles associated with radical Pietist groups. This essay contends that, well before the American Revolution, the advent of Higher Criticism in American seminaries, and the first wave of English-language Bible production in the early republic, Scripture had ceased to be a static, monolithic entity. A considerable number of alternative translations and commentary traditions in a variety of different languages came to co-exist and, at some points, also interact with each other. Moreover, we argue that competing translations, even of passages speaking to core Christian doctrines, were inextricably bound up with some of the most significant controversies among colonial Protestants, such as the debate over the doctrine of universal salvation, our main case study.*

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