

Ireland) while simultaneously remaining truly binational in focus. Occasionally this reader would have liked to have seen further qualification about the pervasiveness of the ‘public opinion’ evinced in these varied publications – perhaps comparable to the popular voices seen in recent works on early modern Venice and Paris – to round off the discussion; however, this would have moved beyond the established remit of Helmers’s work (pp. 5–6). Indeed, the fact that this work invites so much more research into these intersections and interactions further testifies to its quality, and its relevance to anyone interested in the early modern period.

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*The first American Evangelical. A short life of Cotton Mather.* By Rick Kennedy. (Library of Religious Biography.) Pp. xiv + 162 incl. frontispiece, 3 maps and 10 ills. Michigan–Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2015. £11.99 (paper). 978 0 8028 7211 1  
*JEH* (67) 2016; doi:10.1017/S0022046916001044

While the image of Cotton Mather remains the preferred punching bag for those who wish to heap scorn on the Puritan colonists of early New England, serious scholarship has been constructing a picture of Mather that is more complex and that makes the case for his importance in American intellectual and religious history. Rick Kennedy has been one of the architects of this reevaluation, in part through his contributions to the multi-volume edition of Mather’s *Biblia Americana* and now in this short introduction to Mather.

In *The first American Evangelical* Kennedy makes the case for Mather’s importance as a preacher, a pastor, a scientist, a civic leader, a husband and father, and an author of works of history, theology, medicine and philosophy. In the process he demolishes numerous myths about the clergyman, most importantly in this regard in his assessment of Mather’s role in the Salem witchcraft episode. Kennedy effectively places Mather in the context of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Boston, but also locates him in the broader Atlantic world of ideas.

A brief guide to sites in Boston that were central to Mather’s life will be useful for those who visit the city and wish to understand what it was like in the colonial period. This book is the best available introduction to Mather’s life and ideas, and offers excellent suggestions for further study. While Reiner Smolinski’s anticipated biography will likely be the definitive scholarly study of Mather, Kennedy’s *Short life* offers a readable introduction that is easily accessible to the general reader.

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*Spinoza & Dutch Cartesianism. Philosophy and theology.* By Alexander X. Douglas. Pp. vii + 184. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. £30. 978 0 19 873250 1  
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In this short book Alexander Douglas argues in favour of interpreting Spinoza’s philosophy in the light of the ongoing conflict between Dutch Cartesians and Protestant Scholastics, the latter rooted in Calvinism and Neo-Aristotelianism. At