

A Glimpse of the American Mind: the Diaries of Increase and Cotton Mather

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Abstract

This paper attempts to describe the relation that the soul establishes with the temporal and spatial setting of Puritan New England in the diaries of Increase Mather, "the foremost American Puritan", and Cotton Mather, an authentic herald of God in his community. Ceaseless introspection resulted from the conviction that all spiritual progress was centered on the individual, places the diaries in a perpetual state of becoming. The manifold process that the soul undergoes - struggles, backslidings, transformation, improvement, rapture, longing – does not express the sequence of a life time journey; the Puritan could experience daily contradictory, paradoxical, consuming states going from utter despair to bliss and back. And all is lived with the hope of a future establishment of a new order, a City of God after the end of Parusia, the end of history.