

Benjamin R. Foster

From New Haven to Nineveh and Beyond

Three Centuries of Near Eastern Learning at Yale



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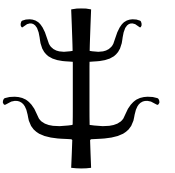
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Acknowledgments

This is the book that I often wished one of my predecessors had written, but fell to my task as the longest-serving proponent of the languages of the Near East at Yale still extant. It had its beginnings in memoranda I prepared in my years of university service to explain to committees and administrators the several disciplines we then represented, in the preparation of which I soon came to appreciate both the exceptional and the typical in Yale's engagement with this fascinating region. Although at the time of this writing there is a lively interest in the history of the study of the Near East in Europe and the United States, I could find no model to imitate for a diachronic but micro-historical survey such as this, focused on the lives and careers of a restricted group of people within a much larger institution, brought together by certain common interests, research techniques, values, and approaches to humanist scholarship.[1] A. Bartlett Giamatti once described academic departments as "the bane as well as the prop of academic existence." Whichever one chooses, and I prefer the second, that must be the frame of reference for much of this study.

I have preferred a documentary to a summary or analytic mode of presentation, lest the limitations of my own knowledge and understanding filter out something that may prove helpful in the future to someone following a particular agenda. In this spirit, it has seemed to me worthwhile to arrange for posterity a century's worth of visions and proposals for the growth, maintenance, and diversification of a small but vital scholarly enterprise against the background of what was happening elsewhere in the American academy at the time. At the very least, they represent a genre of closely defined, utopian academic output, such as reposes throughout the archives of American universities. That virtually none of them achieved their desired result scarcely diminishes the outlook they offer on the central concerns of the American Orientalist project of the mid- to late twentieth century in particular. Judging from the lack of acknowledgments or responses in the files, a goodly proportion of these may never have been read by the addressees, especially after the generations of deans, provosts, and presidents had passed away who paid prompt attention to mail they received from faculty. One might even say that, by the writer's time, planning for the future had become a rather forlorn rite, regularly requested and dutifully performed before a silent audience, but the resulting

1. Such an approach was recommended, in principle, by the historian Thomas Bender, *Intellect and Public Life: Essays on the Social History of Academic Intellectuals in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 14: "Writing intellectual history from a local standpoint becomes an exciting possibility. Here the full intellectual matrix of intellectual life can be studied in sufficient detail to grasp the way in which specific ideas or ways of thinking develop, gain hegemony or lose significance, and are used in particular settings."

documents can be a boon to the historian and I am grateful for the effort that went into them.

I see this project as more of a sequence of overheard conversations than a sweeping historical study. It is, furthermore, not intended to take a view of the university as a whole, for which I am not qualified, but offers, so to speak, a limited perspective on a teeming urban life seen from but one apartment window or experienced by traversing one or two side streets.

For the half century immediately preceding the time of writing, memory, with all its attendant gaps, reinterpretations, and fictionalizations, plays a key role, so long as the key archival resources are closed to research, or, with the onset of the age of electronics, may not even exist a few years hence. To remember some things, we perforce forget others, so I sometimes present what I cannot check or confirm. Over the years, I sought to get beyond the striking lack of interest in institutional memory characteristic of Yale, as well as the ever-expanding blanket of confidentiality and secrecy of modern institutions in general, by drawing on recollections of others willing to share them. I owe much, therefore, to reminiscences, responses to queries, and specific information and documents provided to me by department faculty and staff past and present, including John Darnell, Maureen Draicchio, Ayala Dvoretzky†, Jonas Elbousty, Karen Polinger Foster, Eckart Frahm, Bassam Frangieh, Shiri Goren, Beatrice Gruendler, Dimitri Gutas, William W. Hallo†, Ulla Kasten, Bentley Layton, Miguel Perez-Cabello, Marvin Pope†, Franz Rosenthal†, William Kelly Simpson†, Mark Smith, and Robert Wilson. For those who are deceased, I have often wished I had asked them for more; to those still living, my thanks for your patience and good will. You bear no responsibility for the outcome. T. E. Lawrence once wrote that the "prejudices of historians are generally the richest part of their narratives." Whether or not that is true, I have made no effort to conceal my own and do not apologize for them.

I am under special obligation to Charles Long and Lloyd Suttle for their advice, perspective, and information on administrative matters based on their profound knowledge of Yale University management, remaining, of course, fully within the parameters of the discretion any university has the right to expect of her key administrators. They have borne with my numerous inquiries graciously and have been most generous and informative in their responses to the extent their professional responsibilities have allowed. I thank Joseph Gordon, Howard Lamar†, Richard Levin, Linda Lorimer, John Meeske, Ellen Ryerson, and Barbara Shailor for help, correction, and information on various past matters, as well as Tamar Gendler for granting me an interview on more recent events. Penelope Laurans generously shared with me her research on the complex history of Yale's foreign language requirement and bracing comment on other matters. Frank Griffel, Marcia Inhorn, and Kishwar Rizvi provided me with information and perspectives on the development of programs in the modern Middle East under the auspices of the Yale Council on Middle Eastern Studies, in which I was only tangentially involved. For memories of staff work in the Babylonian Collection half a century ago, I thank Sandra Walker Perko and Martha Rennie. Nelleke Van Deusen-Scholl kindly gave me access to historical files in the Yale Center for Language Study.

I have enjoyed the assistance of other informants on administrative matters in particular who prefer to remain anonymous. Since recollections may overlap, contradict each other, or be inaccurate, nothing in this book should be attributed to any member of the Yale community, past or present, unless that person is specifically acknowledged as a source. It is a pleasure to say, in the context of a university society, that very few people ignored my inquiries or declined to provide comment or information.

My work on the careers and lives of department graduates was greatly assisted by an employee of the previous century who gave me free access to the Alumni and Development Office files for department alumni prior to 1955, archived at 149 York Street. I would also especially acknowledge the hard work and correspondence of the anonymous staff in the Yale secretary's office, who maintained the Yale obituary record up to 1952; this preserved an enormous amount of information from oblivion. I have taken the printed *Historical Registers of Yale University*, 1701–1968, as authoritative, and note with regret that the electronic historical register is, at the time of writing, long out of date and inaccurate, leaving a gap for the future that I anticipate will never be filled to the same high standard as the printed volumes. This, together with the decision to stop producing the undergraduate and graduate *Programs of Study* in printed form, makes it nearly impossible for a researcher to be precise in certain recent matters.

Of the many written historical perspectives on Yale, I would single out those of Josephine Broude, Timothy Dwight, Edgar Furniss, Edmund Morgan, George Pierson, and the annual presidential reports of Arthur Twining Hadley as particularly valuable for this inquiry.

For other information, assistance, answers to questions, helpful comment, documents, photographs, reminiscences, and access to sources used here, I further thank Thomas Appelquist, David Apter†, Candace Bryce†, Jon Butler, James Campbell, Jerrold Cooper, Israel Dvoretzky, Kirk Freudenburg, Nancy Torrey Frueh†, Carol Gourley, Edward Greenstein, Ralph Hallo, Edward Kamens, Jacob Lassner, Tremper Longman, Peter Machinist, Harald Maier-Metz, James Muhly, Dean Plummer, Thomas Pollard, Yelena Rakic, Johannes Renger†, Cara Sargent, Pamela Schirmeister, Glenn Schwartz, Martha Smalley, Daniel C. Snell, Fran Spadacenta, Gil Stein, Richard Steiner, Klaus Wagensonner, and Laurence Zuckerman. Rosanne Rocher kindly sent me a copy of her unpublished history of the American Oriental Society and allowed me to make use of it. The staff of Yale Manuscripts & Archives were invariably helpful to me over the decades of my research in their workrooms. Vincent Spiars has been my resourceful and generous consultant on the several generations of electronics that have gone by on this project.

For permission to incorporate previously published material in revised form, I thank Abbas Amanat and Magnus Berhardsson, editors, *U.S.-Middle East, Historical Encounters: A Critical Survey* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2007), chapter 1: "On the Formal Study of Near Eastern Languages in America, 1770–1930"; Billie Jean Collins, publisher, Lockwood Press, *Beyond Hatti: A Tribute to Gary Beckman* (Atlanta, 2019), chapter 6, "Albert T. Clay and His Babylonian Collection,"; and Piotr Michalowski, editor, "*Journal of Cuneiform Studies,* The Early Years," *Journal*

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I am under the greatest obligation to Karen Polinger Foster, whose accurate memory and excellent files made up for the deficiencies of my own, who read and greatly improved various versions of this study, and who shared most of this experience.

Benjamin R. Foster

Preface

This book is about Yale's engagement over the course of three centuries with the languages and civilizations of the Near East. Focusing on Yale allows us to understand more fully not only how and why this particular institution approached these subjects, but also how and why American Orientalism developed in the same time span, often under the impetus and aegis of Yale scholars. As we shall see, Yale's faculty starred such figures as Ezra Stiles, Josiah Gibbs, Edward Salisbury, William Rainey Harper, Charles C. Torrey, Albert T. Clay, Albrecht Goetze, Millar Burrows, Franz Rosenthal, and William Kelly Simpson, whose careers and writings mark milestones in the evolution of American Orientalist scholarship, and whose lived experience as members of the Yale community tells a significant story of its own.

Although their biographies would make a useful chronological framework for this inquiry, two other perspectives have equal claims on our consideration. First are the historical specifics of the languages until recently combined in Eurocentric thinking under the rubric Oriental Studies. In the case of Yale, these included Hebrew and other biblical languages; Arabic, Persian and Turkish; the languages of ancient Mesopotamia, now subsumed under Assyriology; and the languages of ancient Egypt, now subsumed under Egyptology. On the one hand, such different areas of endeavor justify a discipline-centered approach to their past, on the grounds that practitioners of small academic fields may have more in common with their fellows than with their colleagues in other fields with whom they have been associated for organizational purposes. I would argue, however, that their common values and shared interests in the Near East amply justify treating them as a community.

Second are the constraints that institutional contexts and priorities placed on Near Eastern learning. At Yale, and elsewhere, these disparate linguistic fields were grouped into single faculties, then formalized into university academic departments. Accordingly, this study examines major shifts at Yale from the eighteenth to the early twenty-first centuries, taking up deployment of financial resources, student constituencies, research opportunities, collection and library building, expeditions, and related topics. The intangibles of intrainstitutional social capital and prestige also play an important role.

We begin with the earnest efforts of a small band of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scholars to cultivate in the New World a reading knowledge of Biblical Hebrew and to maintain it as a subject of study at Yale and the other colleges of early America. The migration of Hebrew from colleges to divinity schools during the nineteenth century, and its subsequent redefinition as a historical and philological academic discipline in graduate schools, took place against the backdrop of American religious revivalism and the desire, particularly in New England, to uphold a vigorous, scripturally and historically based Protestant faith as a defining element of an educated American elite.

It was at Yale in 1841 that the first American professional Orientalist was appointed, with other American graduate schools eventually following suit. Thereafter, Near Eastern learning at Yale inspired endeavors in several leading American universities to create programs in biblical and Semitic studies, Assyriology, Egyptology, and Arabic. Yale became a leader in the American urge to collect: Arabic manuscripts, cuneiform tablets, coins, ancient Egyptian grave goods, and other spoils of the East. Yale was also a leader in building a first-rate Orientalist research library and in founding and sustaining America's first learned society devoted to Oriental studies and its first Orientalist periodical. Faculty in Yale's Department of Semitic Languages and Literatures, inaugurated in 1886, established the first American research institutes in Palestine and Iraq and laid plans for archaeological expeditions to Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and Arabia.

During the 1930s, though, when the Ford Foundation in particular was promoting the teaching of modern foreign languages that were not hitherto part of American university curricula, Yale developed language programs for sundry regions, but not the Middle East. We explore the reasons for this and the consequences. In the Cold War era, when strategic concerns and financial incentives stimulated area studies nationwide, as well as the concepts of critical languages and centers of strategic and political expertise and excellence, we will see that during this burst of American interest in the modern Near East, Yale stood aside and let others take the initiative.

Despite repeated and concerted efforts by Near East faculty, the Yale administration steadfastly refused their requests for additional positions in favor of professorships in other departments, which approached the modern Middle East from strategic, religious, economic, and socio-political standpoints, rather than language, literature, science, material culture, art, and civilization, which the Near East faculty considered necessary points of departure for any authentic understanding of the region.

The department's belief in the primacy of linguistic competence was strengthened by the advent of Orientalists fleeing Nazism. In the 1930s, its ranks had been decimated by retirement and unexpected deaths. Yale's appointment of three scholars with rigorous European training in Assyriology, Arabic, and Semitics offers a brilliant perspective on a turning point in the history of Near Eastern learning in America.

The *richesse et misère* of the Near East as the birthplace of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam bequeathed a legacy of contested space that remained unresolved and often tense for much of Yale's history. Where should Christian Scripture fit in the curriculum? By 1920, the uneasy solution was to center Christian doctrine in the Divinity School; the English Bible as history and literature in the College; the languages of the Bible in the Near Eastern (Semitic) Department in the Graduate School; and religion as a phenomenon in a new Department of Religion. Since Jewish learning emphasized language and texts, it entered Yale as an adjunct of the Near Eastern graduate program, gaining momentum with the appointment of Jewish faculty. After Religion became Religious Studies, some of its faculty saw the Near East Department as subsidiary to their own.

From 1891 to 1976, Near Eastern languages at Yale were first and foremost a graduate subject, so this story charts the development of what Wilbur Cross called "the invisible Graduate School," including the successes, failures, and subsequent careers of its student constituency, as well as the evolution of institutional attitudes and assumptions about the department's programs and how they affected its mission. In due season, graduate students became more outspoken about their expectations from graduate study and their professors; this too finds a place in our story.

For much of its history since 1950, the educational strategies of the Department of Near Eastern Languages became increasingly out of step with the Graduate School's frequently changing policies and visions of what graduate education was supposed to be. The reality was that nearly all Near East students required a longer apprenticeship than in other humanistic disciplines because very few had acquired the linguistic competence necessary for professional graduate study. The Near East Department remains the only one at Yale to require three full years of coursework prior to the comprehensive exam and dissertation stage.

This affected every aspect of student life: progress toward the degree; the timing of the comprehensive examination; withdrawal from the program; the beginning of independent work; how teaching requirements could be met; possibilities for study abroad; and eligibility for final-dissertation-year fellowships. The department faculty vigorously resisted, time and again, administrative calls to reduce the amount of coursework and to oblige department students to meet newly devised requirements on the same schedule as other graduate students.

With the provision of full support for all graduate students after 2000, the department faculty became concerned that they were developing unrealistic expectations of academic life, owing to their receiving such generous funding. The department was concerned as well that the concomitant reduction in admissions was sapping the vitality of its graduate programs, since there was little overlap of student cohorts in the coursework of its subfields, with entering classes of at most one each. Financial anxieties of previous student generations were replaced by worries over the lack of codified statements on procedure. In the department faculty's contrasting view, the very flexibility of its program was one of its distinguishing strengths. They also felt that self-motivation and independent discovery were critical factors in the formation of a future Orientalist, as borne out by the department's very high production of successful scholars over its long history.

With the establishment of the undergraduate major in 1976, the department faced a precipitous rise in undergraduate interest, especially in Arabic and Hebrew. Denied expansion, its small faculty found themselves expected to meet simultaneously the needs of a long-established, first-rate graduate program and a burgeoning undergraduate one. This essentially unworkable situation unfolded in the context of much debate over the place of foreign languages, ancient and modern, in the College curriculum. Yale's solution was to rely on a growing underclass of nonladder or "instructional" faculty to sustain the undergraduate programs in languages. As we shall see, this led to its own set of issues for the languages of the modern Middle East. Yale also created a Center for Language Study, which sought

to set uniform pedagogical standards at the College level and to regularize and oversee the appointment process for language-teaching faculty.

Visibility on the Yale and community stage posed a challenge for a primarily philological department. Early on, Albert T. Clay agitated for a museum for displaying treasures from the Babylonian Collection and related materials, but he was turned down. Ferris Stephens mounted some exhibits of Babylonian Collection artifacts in the library and he and his successor, William W. Hallo, were assiduous in publicizing its activities through Yale news bulletins and articles in Yale publications. Beginning in 2002, annual thematic exhibits in the library's public ground floor progressively raised the profile of one of Yale's most extraordinary collections.

From the 1970s on, several Department faculty organized large-scale international conferences at Yale, including Assyriological, Aegeanist, and American Oriental Society meetings, as well as smaller symposia in Arabic-Islamic studies and Egyptology. The crises and destruction of September 11 and the American-led invasion of Iraq inspired an unprecedented series of public teach-ins and interdisciplinary panels that were in effect the first time the Near East Department as a whole engaged with current events in the region. Individual faculty, such as Clay and Millar Burrows, were outspoken on such issues as Jewish settlement in Palestine in the 1920s and the treatment of Palestinians after 1948. Despite all this public outreach and cooperative ventures across the university, the department was frequently reproached by administrators for its alleged isolation in the Yale community.

The transformation of archaeology into a scientific discipline finds reflection in the department's field initiatives, beginning with Charles C. Torrey's work at Sidon in 1900. In the early twentieth century, multiple proposals were ambitious and well-intentioned, but showed scant grasp of even the logistics and methodology of the day. This situation a faculty appointment in archaeology might have rectified. The 1930s saw excavation at Gerasa and Dura Europos, primarily by Classics faculty; the 1942 appointment of a Near Eastern archaeologist, Harald Ingholt, did not change the classical emphasis. Exemplary work in Egypt and Nubia began in the Aswan High Dam salvage era under William Kelly Simpson, with other projects at Abydos and Giza, and continues to the present under John Darnell at prehistoric, pharaonic, and Christian sites. Yale returned to Syria with the Tell Leilan project, directed by Harvey Weiss, likewise a model of multidisciplinary archaeological research.

The growth of Yale's administration and management and how this affected Near Eastern learning runs like a sometimes discordant *leit motif* through this book. The initial moves in the 1920s to deprive the professoriate of any significant role in institutional governance or apportionment of resources, followed by the development of the postwar federal grant university, built Yale, by the end of our story, into one of the largest and most expensive managerial hierarchies per student of any American university. While the Near East Department often felt itself a singular victim of the near ritualized administrative laments over shortages of funds and the necessity for reductions in faculty and academic programs, university-

wide protests over the restructuring of 1991 led to the abrupt serial resignations of the Yale president, provost, and dean of the college. As we shall see, however, what befell the department in 2013–2015 was a perfect storm of particular events.

For this writer, whose lived experience as a graduate student, junior then senior faculty member, and Babylonian Collection curator, spans over half a century of this narrative, the most important parts about Near Eastern learning at Yale are left unsaid. These are the individual personal satisfactions of research, teaching, friendship, collegiality, and common endeavor that Yale academic life at its best has afforded. They remain among the private joys of the initiate.

List of Plates

1.1. Ebenezer Grant Marsh, "An Hebrew Oration delivered at the public Commencement in Yale College Sep. 9th A.D. 1795." Yale University Manuscripts & Archives.
1.2. Ezra Stiles, "Linguarum Orientalium Specimen Quadrilinguale," 1774: Arabic, Hebrew, Imperial Aramaic, Syriac. Beinecke Library, Yale University.
1.3. Earliest example of the Yale seal, diploma of Ezra Stiles, 1746. Beinecke Library, Yale University.
2.1. Moses Stuart, *Hebrew Grammar without the Points* (1813), marked "Rabbi Moses" by one of his students. Private Collection.
2.2. Portrait of Josiah Gibbs, Yale Divinity School. Photograph Karen Polinger Foster.
2.3. Portrait of Edward Salisbury, American Oriental Society. Photograph Karen Polinger Foster.
2.4. Arabic and Sanskrit books and manuscripts. Photograph Amanda Patrick, Yale University Library, courtesy Robin Dougherty.
2.5. Salisbury House, New Haven, 1934. Courtesy New Haven Colony Historical Society.
2.6. William Dwight Whitney. Private Collection.
3.1. William Rainey Harper, Hebrew Correspondence School, Lesson 1. Private Collection.
3.2. Charles C. Torrey, Strassburg, 1889. Private Collection.
3.3. New Grand Hotel, Jerusalem, ca. 1900. Torrey's rooms and the first office of the American School were in the Annex to the left across the street, with a bridge to the hotel. British Mandate Jerusalemites Photo Library (online resource).
3.4. Mr. Harthorn supervising raising of an anthropoid sarcophagus, Sidon, 1900. *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 1 (1926): 7 fig. 5.
4.1. Charles C. Torrey, Yale professor. Pastel by William Sergeant Kendall. Yale University Art Gallery 1946.131.
4.2. Bookplate, Kohut Collection of Judaica, Yale University Library.
4.3. Yale Babylonian Collection, Osborn Laboratory. Yale Babylonian Collection.
4.4. Profiting from the Past. Frank S. DeHass, *Buried Cities Rediscovered* (1884), 505.
5.1. *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, vol. 1 no. 1.
5.2. The ruins of Ur. Photograph Underwood & Underwood.
5.3. Embossing stamp for the planned ASOR library, Baghdad. Private Collection.
5.4. Raymond P. Dougherty. Yale Babylonian Collection.
5.5. Planning for the Babylonian Collection, 1926. Yale Babylonian Collection.
5.6. Main entrance, Sterling Memorial Library. Photograph Carl Kaufman.
5.7. Julian Obermann. Yale Babylonian Collection.

5.8. Ludlow Bull. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 135 (1954): 2.
6.1. Albrecht Goetze and Ferris Stephens, 1961. Photograph Yale News Bureau. Yale Babylonian Collection.
6.2. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, vol. 1.
7.1. Marvin H. Pope, ca. 1960. Yale Divinity School, courtesy Martha Smalley.
7.2a. Entry card for high holiday dinner, Franz Rosenthal, Berlin, 1936. Jüdisches Museum, Berlin, online collections 2010/44/3.
7.2b. Dinner invitation, inaugural K. W. and E. K. Rosenthal Lecture, 2000. Private Collection.
7.3. William Kelly Simpson, 1985. Peter Der Manuelian, ed., *Studies in Honor of William Kelly Simpson* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1996), frontispiece.
7.4. William W. Hallo. Private Collection.
7.5. Briggs Buchanan. Photograph Robert Marsland. Yale Babylonian Collection.
7.6. *Yale Shelanu*, 1996. Private Collection.
8.1. Bassam Frangieh and Arabic students 2004. Photograph Robert Marsland, courtesy Office of Public Affairs and Communications, Yale University.
8.2. Poster for 9/11 teach-in, 2001. Poster by Peter Johnson. Private Collection.
8.3. Poster for Future of the Global Past, 2007. Poster by Yale Graphic Design. Private Collection.
8.4. Poster for Iraq beyond the Headlines IV, 2008. Poster by Peter Johnson. Private Collection.
8.5. Tell Leilan Team, 1979. Front row, left to right: Margot Stout, Harvey Weiss, Benjamin R. Foster, Constance T. Foster, Karen Polinger Foster. Second row: Marhaf Halaf, Arlene Miller, Ilene Nicholas, Glenn Schwartz; Third row: Vaughn Crawford, Jean Svendsen, Marc Van De Mieroop, Lorraine Ferguson, William N. Goetzmann. Photograph Harvey Weiss.
8.6. Acropolis northeast temple, Tell Leilan. Photograph Harvey Weiss.
8.7. John Coleman Darnell. Photograph Yale Expedition to Egypt.
8.8. Gary Beckman. Photograph Robert Marsland. Yale Babylonian Collection.
8.9. Poster for centennial of the Babylonian Collection, 2009. Poster by Colleen Manassa. Private Collection.
8.10. Babylonian Collection Exhibit, UN Global Colloquium on Global Heritage, 2016. Photograph Karen Polinger Foster.
8.11. Egyptology graduate student pride lapel pin, 2001. Private Collection.
9.1. First department website, 1999. Website design by Karen Polinger Foster.
9.2. First department color brochure, 1999. Design by Karen Polinger Foster. Private Collection.
10.1. Poster for Graeco-Arabica conference, 2014. Poster by Dimitri Gutas and Yale Printing and Publishing. Private Collection.

Abbreviations

AASOR	*Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
AB	Anchor (Yale) Bible
ACLS	American Council of Learned Societies
AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
AISC	American Institute of Sacred Literature
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
AS	Assyriological Studies
AJSL	*American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOS	American Oriental Series
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BIN	Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of J. B. Nies
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BM	Bibliotheca Mesopotamica
BO	*Bibliotheca Orientalis*
BR	*Bible Review*
BRM	Babylonian Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BzA	*Beiträge zur Assyriologie*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CT	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IF	*Indogermanische Forschungen*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
MLC	Yale Morgan Library tablets
NEA	*Near Eastern Archaeology*
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications

OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OLZ	*Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*
Or	*Orientalia* NS
PIHANS	Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul
PLO	Porta linguarum orientalium
pl(s).	plate(s)
RA	*Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*
RSO	*Rivista degli Studi Orientali*
SANER	Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization
TAPS	Transactions of the American Philosophical Society
TRu	*Theologische Rundschau*
UBL	Ugaritisch-Biblische Literatur
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WZKM	*Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*
YBC	Yale Babylonian Collection
YBT	Yale Babylonian Texts
YCS	Yale Classical Studies
YES	Yale Egyptological Studies
YJS	Yale Judaica Series
YNER	Yale Near Eastern Researches
YOS	Yale Oriental Series
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*

Chapter 1. Oriental Learning in Early New England, 1620–1800

> The knowledge of eastern learning, possessed by the fathers of New England, was doubtless, in some instances, curious and ill-digested, possibly superficial, rather than profound or practical.
> —Bela B. Edwards, 1838

1.1. Prelude: "I must begine at the very roote & rise"

William Bradford, as he looked back on his long life, had a rich store of memories: the rigid religious conformism of his Yorkshire family, his flight to Holland with other English Protestants to avoid persecution, his journey to the New World on the *Mayflower* in 1620, and the struggles of the Pilgrim Colony at Plymouth, Massachusetts, where he was elected governor thirty times between 1622 and 1656. During the "great sickness" that killed half of the first group to reach the colony, he saw the deaths of thirteen out of the twenty-four heads of families, all but four of their wives, and all but six of the unmarried men. His own wife drowned shortly after their arrival. In the New World, he was plagued by troublemakers and malcontents, while the investors, comfortable in London, harbored unrealistic expectations of returns from a group that could barely stay alive. All this he regarded as the will of God. In his last years, however, Bradford voiced by one regret:

> Though I am growne aged, yet I have had a longing desire, to see with my own eyes, something of that most ancient language, and holy tongue, in which the Law, and oracles of God were write; and in which God, and angels, spake to the holy patriarcks, of old time; and what names were given to things, from the creation. And though I cannot attaine to much herein, yet I am refreshed, to have seen some glimpse hereof; (as Moses saw the Land of canan afarr off) my aime and desire is, to see how the words, and phrases lye in the holy texte; and to discerne somewhat of the same for my owne contente.[1]

1. *Bradford's History "Of Plimouth Plantation," from the Original Manuscript* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1899), viii. There were in fact various handbooks available offering a word-by-word analysis and commentary that would have allowed Bradford to read the Hebrew text with very little formal study of the language, such as Edward Leigh, *Critica Sacra* (1639); Alexander Rowley, *The Scholar's Companion* (1648); and Victorinus Bythner, *Lyra Prophetica Davidis Regis* (1650). Henry Ainsworth, whom Bradford may have met in Holland, produced handbooks popular among fellow Puritans, such as *Annotations on the Pentateuch* (1607) and *The Book of Psalms* (1612). Such works appeared regularly in the seventeenth century; a late example was Thomas Gataker's *Critica Opera* (1698). They lasted much longer in the New World. A century later, Americans could "read Hebrew" with the help of books such as James Robertson's laborious *Clavis Pentateuchi* (1770), which patiently parsed each Hebrew word of the Pentateuch in sequence.

More than 250 years later, Charles C. Torrey, graduate of Andover Theological Seminary (founded for the express purpose of teaching ministers the biblical tongues), who was destined to become, in the early twentieth century, America's most distinguished scholar of Semitic languages, recalling William Rainey Harper's Biblical Hebrew revival at Yale, had a quite different reaction to reading the Bible in that language:

> In the fall of 1888 I happened to run across, in Boston, an old friend and baseball enemy of mine, Shailer Matthews … for many years dean of the Divinity School of Chicago University.… I said, "Hi, Shailer, what have YOU been doing this summer?" and expected to hear him say that he had been fishing, or playing on some vacation ball team. He said, "I have been reading the Old Testament THROUGH in Hebrew." I fell over backwards (metaphorically), and … I asked him, WHAT did you do THAT for?[2]

Why Bradford wanted to read the Bible in Hebrew, though he knew little of the language, but Torrey, who knew the language well, expected the dean of a Protestant Divinity School to be playing baseball—Bradford and Torrey were both religious men—is a long story with many episodes. It begins with the spiritual enrichment and scholarly capital associated with a knowledge of Biblical Hebrew among educated Protestant Christians in the eighteenth-century American colonies and the new nation. It is important to bear in mind that there is no story to tell for that period, as there will be for later, because there was no scholarly vocation as such. Rather, a scattering of Protestant Christian men, mostly in New England, devoted their spare time to the study of biblical languages, including Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac, and several tried their hands at Arabic.[3] These men were curious, fascinated, and industrious in their work, but only as a private personal quest. The main elements of the scholarly career of the next century—formal training, text or problem-based research and publication, and the education of graduate students—were simply not part of their lives. Some taught the fixed curricula of New England's small private colleges; most were ordained Protestant ministers. They were more the lonely heirs of seventeenth-century biblical study in England than forerunners of the enterprise to come. We begin *in medias res*, in 1795, as a vantage point for a backward and forward look over the terrain to be traversed.

1.2. The Last Puritan

On September 8, 1795, during the first part of the Yale commencement opening the academic year, held in the college chapel, Timothy Dwight was inaugurated as president of Yale College. The ceremony opened with a prayer, then Dwight "exhibited his consent to the Confession of Faith and Rules of Ecclesiastical discipline

2. Torrey, "Two Great Teachers" (unpublished manuscript), see ch. 3 n. 1.

3. For an early definition of the scope of Orientalism, see Gary and Patricia Leiser, "Antoine Galland's Declaration of Orientalism in 1697," *Journal of Oriental and African Studies* 17 (2008): 27–62; see also Daniel Stolzenberg, "Les 'langues orientales' et les racines de l'orientalisme académique: une enquête préliminaire," *Dix septième siècle* 2015: 409–26.

agreed upon by the Churches of this State, A.D. 1708." After a Latin oration by the presiding fellow, and the constitution of Dwight, the new president "addressed the Audience in an elegant Latin oration, and after an Anthem, sung by the students, closed the Solemnity with a blessing."[4] But there was more to come.

The next day, the public commencement opened with a prayer, a eulogy on the late Ezra Stiles, a Latin salutatory oration, a dissertation on the benefits of theatrical establishments, and then a solemn, ascetic young man named Ebenezer Grant Marsh came forward to give "An Hebrew Oration on the Connection between learned Men and the great" (pl. 1.1). He began:

> *Harpoos yafe michlol yofee lo sar veen haggareem bati moogah shiv'arthayim yaynee mishshmey 'ivrim...*[5]

In comparison to modern commencement oratory, Marsh's remarks were mercifully brief, the more so, as one can be quite certain that no one in the audience had any idea what he was saying. In the unlikely event anyone from New Haven's small Jewish community was present, they probably would not have recognized the speech as being in Hebrew at all. When I showed my teacher, Franz Rosenthal, Sterling Professor of Arabic, the text, he drily pronounced it "a new Semitic language." Less charitable comments from various informants erudite in Hebrew I have consulted over the years include "gibberish," "simply awful," and "Elamite is surely easier." Although mindful of the Hebrew proverb that no wise man gets himself into a situation that it takes a clever man to extricate himself from, I hazard an English rendition of the opening sentences, on the rash assumption that someone like me, with only a smattering of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, could perhaps make sense of the discourse in a way no reader truly accomplished in those tongues might; I admit, though, that much of it is incomprehensible to me (pl. 1.1). I add a few notes suggesting possible allusions Marsh may have had in mind.

> *Be still, O distinguished and most distinguished,*[a] *let this not pass from you, O guests! I have come hither sevenfold ebriated,*[b] *my wine being from the sublimities of the Hebrews. O tidings of nations! What be our youth next those deeds and acts? But (this) the vision: arise* [=graduate?] *with righteous gain! O processions of authority and learning, O soul of men! Repent ye, each one, from unjust gain and defect of stature! Seize the cakes*[c]*! Show favor to young and old and proclaim 'What are old men but the doubling of young men?' It is proclaimed of (but) a twain of dwellers*[d] *that they cause authorities*[e] *and kingdoms to pass away, for of the years, three being*

4. *Connecticut Journal,* September 16, 1795.

5. "An Hebrew Oration delivered at the public Commencement in Yale College Sep. 9th A.D. 1795 By Ebenezer Grant Marsh," Yale Manuscripts & Archives, Yen A 19 1795:

הַרְפּוּס יָפֶה מִכְלוֹל יוֹפִי לֹא סָר בֵּין הַגֶּ־זָרִים
בָּאתִי מוּגָה שִׁבְעָתַיִם יֵינִי מִשְּׁמֵי־עִבְרִים
שָׁמוּעַת לְאֻמִּים מָה נַעֲרְכוּ לְאֹלֶךְ מַעֲשָׂתִים וְמַעֲבָרִים וּרְאֵיָה קוּמוּ אֵת־צֶדֶק מִקֶּנָּה: תַּהֲלֻכוֹת מִעָצָר וּתְרָה נֶפֶשׁ מְאֻדָּם שׁוּבוּ
אֵת־אִישׁ מִבֻּצַע וּמוֹט בְּמַעֲמָדָם: אָחֲזוּ אֵת־עוּגָתוֹת גְּמוֹל מְעִלָּמָה וּזְקֻנָה וּצְפֹר כָּאֲשֶׁר־מָה זְקֵנִים כִּי־שָׁנִית נְעוּרִים יִתְצַפֵּר מַצֶּמֶד
.שֶׁכְּנֵי מַעֲתִיקִים עֶצְרִים וּמְלוּכוֹת כִּי־מַשְׁנוֹת שְׁלִישִׁי בְעֲתִיקִים שָׁנַת: כָּכָה מִפְרְשֶׁגֶן בָּחֵן הָזְנוּ מָקוֹמֵנוּ נִפְרָה בְחוּרִים

among those passed away, is (yet) a year[f]*. According to Scripture in grace we have sustained our habitations and the young have been fruitful.*[6]

a. I take this to be a Hebraicized Neo-Latin salutation, such as "*clari clarissimique*," meaning the guests, students, and faculty.
b. Acts 2:13, referring to the apostles speaking in tongues, "Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine."
c. Perhaps thinking of Num 11:8 (of manna and the hungry Hebrews), "and the people made cakes of it."
d. Perhaps a mistake for the "two swords" of Luke 22:38 (שכן vs. סכן). In Protestant commentary this was normally understood as a reference to spiritual strength, in Catholic commentary to the spiritual and temporal powers of the church.
e. Perhaps referring to Judg 18:7, where this root is used, "and there was no magistrate in the land."
f. This, if I understand it correctly, addresses the senior class, urging them to make the best possible use of their final year at Yale.

Marsh had composed his oration in what one might charitably call Yankee Hebrew, stringing together words from the Hebrew and Aramaic Bible, not without mistakes. When he had finished, Jeremiah Day, destined to succeed Dwight as president of Yale in 1817, gave an oration in English on "Female Education," followed by a "forensic disputation" on the question: Is virtue its own reward? Next came a three-way "Dialogue Exhibiting the Pernicious Effects of Gaming," and the morning closed with an English oration on agriculture. The afternoon opened with two more orations, one on penal laws, the other on commerce, after which the degrees were awarded. Such was the varied and ambitious program of the Yale opening exercises.

When Timothy Dwight (1752–1817) was called to Yale as its new president, he made creation of a chair in Hebrew one of his main priorities for the college, and he had his candidate in mind, our orator in Yankee Hebrew. A scholarly prodigy at a tender age, Dwight had entered Yale as a first-year student at the age of thirteen and was said to rise at 3:30 AM to read Homer by candlelight.[7] After graduation, he was engaged as a tutor, but he had driven himself so hard that in 1774 he had to retire for reasons of health. He served honorably in the Revolution, then returned to his home in Northampton, Massachusetts, to run two large farms to support his mother and twelve siblings. At the same time, he taught school and served

6. My particular thanks go to Richard Steiner and Edward Greenstein for providing me with tentative translations and suggestions for the opening lines, but they bear no responsibility for the version offered here. For a brief study of the genre, see Shalom Goldman, "Hebrew at Early Colleges: Orations at Harvard, Dartmouth, and Columbia," *American Jewish Archives* 42 (1990): 23–26, suggesting that the Christian orators' knowledge was rather spotty. On the other hand, a near contemporaneous oration written by a Jewish scholar at Columbia is far more readily understandable today, though of course the audience probably had no idea what he was saying; Isidore S. Meyer, "The Hebrew Oration of Sampson Simon, 1800," *Publications of the Jewish Historical Society* 46 (1956): 51–58. Yale Commencement disputations of the period will be found in Yale Manuscripts & Archives, RG 47G.

7. For Dwight, see Charles E. Cuningham, *Timothy Dwight, 1752–1817* (New York: Macmillan, 1942); William Dowling, *American National Biography* 7:192–94. For a depiction of student life at Yale in that era, see Ralph Henry Gabriel, *Religion and Learning at Yale: The Church of Christ in College and University, 1757–1957* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 54–92.

as a minister to two churches. In 1783 he was called to a parish near Fairfield, Connecticut, where he soon gained a reputation as a powerful preacher of "New Light" Calvinism. He founded a school, Greenfield Academy, which rapidly gained a reputation for his unorthodox but successful methods, including the education of girls and avoidance of bodily punishment of students. The academy was, in fact, so successful that Yale students began to transfer there. Dwight was also a prolific published author, including a five-volume work on theology, a book of travels in New England and New York, an attack on Hume and Voltaire (*The Triumph of Infidelity,* 1788), and a long poem celebrating Connecticut village life ("Greenfield Hill," 1794). He intended to build a Yale modeled on the English universities.

Marsh, Dwight's choice for the professorship in Hebrew, was a native of Wethersfield, Connecticut, born in 1777. His father, John Marsh, was a clergyman who had graduated from Harvard in 1768. Marsh manifested scholarly proclivities as a boy and enrolled in Yale College at the age of fifteen, perhaps the youngest member of his class. There he received the usual course of Greek, Latin, mathematics, and philosophical subjects. He graduated near the top of his class and competed successfully for the Berkeley prize. This was created in 1733 from the income of a farm willed to the college, providing support for superior students to carry on graduate study in New Haven. Although in principle it was awarded on the basis of competitive exams in Greek and Latin, and the candidates were chosen "without favor or affection," in practice the top scholar in each class who competed for the award was the winner.[8] In 1798, Marsh was appointed instructor in Hebrew at Yale and offered classes in that language, though it is likely very few students enrolled. The commencement address was undoubtedly a proud moment for him and, at the same time, an important public statement of the new Yale president's plans to transform what he called a "ruined college" into a modern institution of learning, in which a professorship in Oriental languages was a key appointment.

Dwight faced a practical problem: Yale did not have enough money to pay for another professor, though there was a small fund for Hebrew. In May 1781, the Reverend Richard Salter, pastor of the First Church in Mansfield, Connecticut, had donated to Yale College two hundred acres of land in Mansfield "for the particular use and purpose of Cultivating, encouraging and promoting the Study of the Hebrew Language, and other Oriental languages in said college." Salter had graduated from Harvard in 1739 and served as a trustee of Yale College during the presidencies of Naphtali Daggett and Ezra Stiles, 1771–1780. Salter himself had studied Hebrew, no doubt knew of the efforts of Thomas Clapp, president of Yale from 1740 to 1766, toward having the language taught there, and was impressed by Stiles's efforts to make Hebrew part of the curriculum (below, ch. 1.8). Upon Salter's death in 1787, the property was transferred to Yale but the annual rent (£22) was insufficient to provide a salary so was used for a prize for the best Hebrew declamation in the academic year. None of these survives, but they were probably a long step below

8. For the Berkeley scholarship, see Ebenezer Baldwin, *History of Yale College, 1790–1837* (New Haven: Noyes, 1841), 45–48.

Marsh's. In 1792 the farm had been leased on a capitalized lease for 999 years with the hope of creating a professorship, but the funds were still insufficient.[9]

The immediate solution was to make Marsh a college tutor in 1799, so he held the positions of tutor and instructor concurrently until 1802, when Dwight nominated him for a professorship of languages and ecclesiastical history, at such time as sufficient funds became available. Licensed to preach by the New Haven East Association in 1801, Marsh could supplement his meager income that way. His Yale career was therefore parallel to those of two other men Dwight chose as potential Yale professors: Benjamin Silliman, a Connecticut lawyer whom Dwight appointed as a college tutor in 1799 in expectation that he would become a professor in chemistry and mineralogy, neither of which he knew anything about, and Jeremiah Day, a clergyman, whom Dwight appointed college tutor in 1798 in preparation for a professorship in mathematics and natural philosophy, duly created in 1801.[10]

Dwight's strategy was, clearly, to expand and diversify the Yale faculty by creating new chairs, using a *fait accompli* approach, in areas that he saw as crucial for an American institution of higher learning at the beginning of the nineteenth century, one of these areas being Oriental languages. At this period, and for decades thereafter, the custom, going back to the Renaissance, was to identify the right man for the post, then expect him to learn what he needed for the task, the opposite of modern doctrines of expertise. Thus, for example, Silliman set out to learn what he could about chemistry and mineralogy and to create a chemistry laboratory at Yale. Marsh was different from both Silliman and Day in that he had already made a specialty of the subject he was supposed to teach. A professorship, however attractive to a young scholar, was no road to wealth. At the time, Yale salaries were so low that it was generally understood that a faculty member without personal resources should marry someone with money so he could serve as a professor, but Marsh, to the surprise of his friends, had showed no signs of taking a wife from among the eligible young women of New Haven or Wethersfield.[11]

Indeed, Marsh's studious habits led him to a sedentary life of intense reading and excerpting. Books being scarce and expensive, he had perforce to copy out passages of interest to him, filling some two hundred quarto volumes, for a total of over three thousand pages, with longhand excerpts from scholarly works. His Hebrew study seems to have been restricted to the Bible; he made no allusion to rabbinics or the other works of Jewish scholarship that had fascinated some Chris-

9. Treasurer's Records, Yale Manuscripts & Archives, RU 151, YRG 5A, series IV box 370, 226–27. Salter, who retired from the corporation in 1781 and died in 1787, recognized that the income, £22 a year, would not be sufficient for a salary, so wrote: "either by supporting a Professor, or other Instructor in the Hebrew and other Oriental Languages, or otherwise, for the present, to and among the students of said College for the cultivation of said Languages, as to the President and Fellows shall appear best." See further Edmund S. Morgan, *Gentle Puritan: A Life of Ezra Stiles* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), 399, 405. Clarence Deming, *Yale Yesterday* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1915), 232, suggests that the Salter bequest was the beginning of elective courses at Yale.

10. For Marsh's place in Timothy Dwight's plans for a Yale University, see Chandos M. Brown, *Benjamin Silliman, A Life in the Young Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 126 and 83.

11. Silliman Papers, Yale Manuscripts & Archives, MS 450, series 1 box 18, Jeremiah Day to Benjamin Silliman, September 30, 1805.

tian Hebraists of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Marsh's reading and note taking were of course in addition to his instructional obligations as tutor, which obliged him at short notice to teach any class in any subject in the College in case of the unexpected absence of the professor and to enforce student discipline. As a licensed minister, he was expected to compose his own sermons regularly.

Yet with all this, he read in Hebrew daily and both he and his patron likely saw him as taking Stiles's place as America's leading Hebraist.[12] The scope and focus of his reading are revealed by a pair of elaborate essays he delivered as Phi Beta Kappa and commencement orations, subsequently revised for publication.[13] The importance of Hebrew to Marsh did not lie in merely ornamental linguistic attainment. As he saw it, the English Bible contained passages translated literally (not necessarily incorrectly), which a different rendering might make clearer and more harmonious with the whole. He shared the belief common in the English-speaking world that the Authorized Version did not contain mistakes in translation, nor would books have been available to him by which such mistakes could be identified. Even Moses Stuart, the great teacher of Hebrew in nineteenth-century America (ch. 2.4), did not refer to outright mistakes in the King James Version, but was content with the rational argument that the Hebrew must be better than any translation, so that alone justified engaging with the original. The most Marsh would concede was that insignificant errors might "cast a shade over the beauty and force of the original."[14] Collection and study of difficult passages, blemishes as it were on the glory of the King James Bible, were the duty of a competent "Hebraician," reinforcing religious truth and enriching the literary attainments of the young nation. Protestant Americans like Marsh were thus unwittingly reliving, in their own world, the centuries-long debate in European Christendom over the reliability of a translation over the original Hebrew Bible, but had no such entity as the Roman Catholic Church and the Council of Trent to resolve their difficulties.

12. Biographical data are drawn from F. W. B. Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College* (New York: Holt, 1911), 5:153–55; Timothy Dwight, *A Sermon on the Death of Mr. Ebenezer Grant Marsh* (Hartford: Hudson & Goodwin, 1804); James Dana, *A Sermon on the Much Lamented Death of Mr. Ebenezer Grant Marsh* (Hartford: Hudson & Goodwin, 1803); Bancroft Fowler, *An Oration on the Death of Mr. Ebenezer Grant Marsh, Senior Tutor, Hebrew Instruction, and Professor Elect of Language and Ecclesiastical History in Yale College* (Hartford: Hudson & Goodwin, 1804).

13. Ebenezer Marsh, *An Oration, Delivered before the ΦBK Society, at Their Anniversary Meeting in New-Haven, on the Fifth of December, A.D. 1797* (Hartford: Hudson & Goodwin, 1798); Marsh, *An Oration, on the Truth of the Mosaic History of the Creation; Delivered at New-Haven, on the Public Commencement, September, A. D. 1798* (Hartford: Hudson & Goodwin, 1798).

14. A good statement of the conservative Protestant position, that the 1611 version was only a translation, but did not have outright mistakes, was given by Moses Stuart, who wrote "What men could do, in their age and with their means, our English translators did accomplish. Their work remains, to the present hour, one of the noblest in its kind which has yet been accomplished. But all the divine features of the original, no translator has ever conveyed.... I aver, that there are some passages in the English version of the Scriptures, which are dark; nay, some absolutely without meaning, to a mere English reader. For example; what will such a reader understand by this expression, 'For this cause ought a woman to have power on her head, because of the angels' 1.Cor. 11:10?"; Stuart, "Letter on the Study of the Classics," *Quarterly Journal of the American Education Society* 5 (1828): 83–99, here 93.

Marsh's argumentation for elucidation of such passages was seldom philological in emphasis; in fact, he was building on the work of the Jacobean scholars, rather than breaking new ground. As to whether or not the vowel points were original, for example, one of the most contentious issues in eighteenth-century American biblical scholarship, Marsh was satisfied with the medieval argument that God would not have provided an incomplete writing system to the Hebrews, so the points must be original. Since, from the perspective of what a few decades would bring, only rudimentary dictionaries and grammars were available to Marsh, he did not visualize a world in which knowledge of Hebrew grammar could be refined or improved: his arguments were from previously established authority. Marsh had heard of, but had never studied, cognate languages, such as Syriac and Arabic. The tools available to him to read Hebrew were not significantly better than those available to the translators of the King James or 1611 English Bible, so he saw himself as clarifying details in a body of well-established knowledge. Though Marsh knew of the most significant new work of the period for understanding Hebrew literature, the lectures of Robert Lowth, they were apparently of little interest to him.[15]

The truth that unfolded before young Marsh in his lonely study was of a harmony and integrity sufficient to absorb the clutter of Oriental and European lore into a unified grand scheme. Insofar as false religions were not destitute of resemblance to their original, that is, divine revelation as known from the Hebrew Bible, they could offer valuable additions to the fund of proof by which revelation was established, and, at the same time, false faiths argued for the necessity of revelation to combat error. In this respect, Marsh was open to the charge that, like many of the earlier Puritans, he read the Bible as if it were a kind of hermeneutic treatise on divine revelation written for a contemporaneous readership, with little sense of its history, cultural background, or literary content. Already Lowth or the English antiquary John Selden, both of whom saw the Hebrew Bible as a book anchored in time and place, could have taught Marsh a different perspective, but this simply shows how narrow and isolated his horizon was, even compared to that of his predecessor, Stiles.[16]

Marsh was satisfied with the antique notion, mostly abandoned in Europe by the end of the seventeenth century, that Hebrew was the original language of the human race, simple and expressive, with a high correlation between words and objects, "possessed of a conciseness and rotundity, which, I presume, do not exist in any other dialect." Other candidates for the original language, including Syriac, Arabic, and Aramaic, he dismissed on the grounds of their greater complexity. As he saw it, Hebrew was simpler, therefore older. It maintained its purity in the

15. Robert Lowth (1710–1787), a literary and biblical scholar, was best known in America for his *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews,* trans. George Gregory (London: Johnson, 1787), often reprinted. In this work he argued a literary approach to Hebrew poetry, laying particular emphasis on parallelism.

16. John Selden (1584–1654) was a jurist and classicist, famous in his time as the most learned man in England; Jason P. Rosenblatt, *Renaissance England's Chief Rabbi: John Selden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Gerald J. Toomer, *John Selden: A Life in Scholarship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

generations between Adam and Noah, and, through the line of Seth, to Abraham, since pastoralists were less likely than civilized people to make improvements to their way of life and therewith to bring about change in their language. The temporary servitude of the Hebrews while constructing the tower of Babel did not affect the purity of their language overmuch. With Hebrew as the common parent, the Semitic languages and the false faiths they documented fell into place as later and altered forms. Even the newly discovered "nervous and copious Sanskrite" was impregnated with Hebrew idioms and its writing system was "Chaldee" in origin, this on the authority of Nathaniel Halhed's *Code of Gentoo Laws*, which had appeared in London in 1776. The Celtic, Gothic, and Slavic languages were dialects of Hebrew, as was the "astonishingly exuberant" Greek, which could be traced to three hundred "radical words" that were combined in "endless ways." "Old British" has two hundred words "obviously the same as Hebrew," a notion championed by Noah Webster (ch. 2.6). As for other ancient Near Eastern languages, they "offer nothing authentic, which is anterior to the Mosaic account of the creation." Manetho was jealous of the Hebrews "on behalf of his own nation," but could produce nothing better than a list of outlandish names of dynasts and such absurdities as the Nile overflowing with honey, a "speaking lamb," and seven kings "who reigned successively as many days." Recent talk of geological sediments and strata, suggesting greater antiquity of the earth than hitherto thought, was ridiculous and shell layers were obviously traces of the flood. Thereby arranging language and religion, together with history, from Archbishop Ussher's date of the creation of the world in 4004 BCE to the present, Marsh detected a satisfying unity of sources for divine revelation and the centrality of the Hebrew scriptures, properly understood.[17]

Marsh was well behind the times: these and his other notions, including that Homer's epics were originally in Hebrew, had been current in the sixteenth century in Europe, but scarcely later. The greatest source of his inspiration was, unfortunately, the indefatigable Bishop Warburton, whose vigorous argumentation and ready pen were no less fluent for his ignorance of Hebrew, not the best model for a young Orientalist, as few biblical scholars outside of Warburton's circle took his prolix discourses seriously.[18] Marsh's reliance on Warburton and other English divines puts him in the afterglow of an archaic era in American scholarship, as English scholarship was soon to yield place to developments in Germany in the second and third decades of the new century. Even Lowth seems to have had little impact on the New England scholarly scene, though he was recognized in Germany as a pioneer.[19]

His theses were nonetheless impressive for a Connecticut Yankee in his midtwenties, sapping his health, as his friends believed, in reading Oriental books, not

17. James Ussher (1581–1656), Archbishop of Armagh, Ireland, wrote a widely used history of the ancient world, *Annales Veteris Testamenti, a prima mundi origine deducti* (1650, a second part in 1654), in which he deduced that the world was created in the late afternoon of October 22, 4004 BCE.

18. William Warburton (1698–1779) was an English prelate best known for his iconoclastic work *Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated by the Principles of a Deist* (London: Gyles, 1738–1741), which argued that the books of Moses had to be divinely inspired because they did not promise an afterlife.

19. Above, n. 15.

to mention such dubious fare as accounts of voyages in the East, the works of Sir William Jones, even a little Voltaire. His industry and intelligence could have led him on the same broader path taken by Ezra Stiles, even while maintaining his conservative religious position. Furthermore, the idea that the Bible could be read as ancient Hebrew literature, according to the same principles one read Homer or Horace, was repellant to staunch Calvinists, for this could undermine the authority of Scripture as the word of God and leave it mere human poetry.

In the midst of his solitary labors, Marsh was stricken with an unidentified illness. An arduous stagecoach journey brought the failing young man to his father's home, where he died in 1803. His premature death deprived his generation of a well-stocked mind that deserved better guidance. In a letter to Benjamin Silliman, Jeremiah Day lamented the loss of this pious and affable young man and the cruel reversal of Dwight's plans to create a professorship in Hebrew at Yale.

> He was cheerful, and usually wore a smile on his countenance in conversation. His usual answer, as long as he retained his reason, to those who enquired after his health, was "I hope I am getting better." He was not however without some apprehensions that his complaint might terminate fatally. If that should be the case, he said, "he hoped he was resigned to the will of his heavenly father." The faculties of his mind seemed to weaken and in some degree deranged. After his return they were almost wholly impaired. He continued to the last with an air of pleasantry on his countenance. He was able to recognize his friends, but not to carry on rational conversation. He did not appear to be the subject of much bodily pain. He died Wednesday morning, about 6 hours after his return home. His funeral was attended Saturday by a large concourse of people.[20]

How was it that an ambitious Yale president eager to build faculty strength in science, mathematics, and philosophy would make a priority of Biblical Hebrew, a subject few students were interested in?

1.3. Hebrew in the Wigwam

Marsh worked within a well-established tradition in the New World. Many of the educated English colonists in America had come imbued with English Puritan and Pilgrim views of their destiny and expressed them in Old Testament vocabulary and imagery.[21] Like the Israelites of old, they said they had been delivered from

20. Silliman Papers, Yale Manuscripts & Archives, MS 450, series 1 box 18, Jeremiah Day to Benjamin Silliman, December 3, 1803.

21. In general, see Douglas Campbell, *The Puritan in Holland, England, and America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893). For "Jewish influence," see W. B. Selbie, "The Influence of the Old Testament in Puritanism," in *The Legacy of Israel*, ed. E. R. Bevan (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927), 407–31, who writes unsympathetically of "crude bibliolatry." In general, see Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1972), 128–30; Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of William Winthrop* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), 80–81. For more detailed surveys of the English background, see David Daiches, *The King James Version of the Bible: An Account of the Development and Sources of the English Bible of 1611 with Special Reference to the Hebrew Tradition* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1968); Lloyd Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: A Third Language*

their bondage to a new promised land, whose aboriginal inhabitants were to be driven out and a community with a new covenant established. The map of the colonies became dotted with Old Testament place names, and Old Testament phraseology echoed even in daily discourse. The first book printed in North America, the Bay Psalter, contained well-executed Hebrew characters in the text. Moreover, some philologists even suggested that the aboriginal inhabitants of the New World were actually descendants of a lost tribe of Israel and attempts to identify Hebrew elements in Indian languages persisted into the nineteenth century.[22] An imagined, appropriated Judaism was part of the very fabric of Puritan culture.

Modern readers may wonder at an almost obsessive and misdirected Christian Hebraism, but negative Christian attitudes toward Judaism itself. American Christian Hebraism tended, like its European counterpart, to be in spite of the Jews, whose denial of revelation, it was thought, led them to forfeit an authentic understanding of their own scripture. Furthermore, the Jewish presence in colonial and early republican America was small and mainly concentrated in the few cities. Even among scholars who had grown up in England there had been few opportunities to have interacted with educated Jews—for whom memory of the centuries of banishment from England (1290–1657) was no doubt still poignant. Christian knowledge of Judaism would far more likely have come more from the pages of the Buxtorfs, Selden, and Lightfoot than directly from Jewish writing.[23]

(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983); David Daniell, *The Bible in English, Its History and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); much information is collected and discussed by Louis Newman, *Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements*, Columbia University Oriental Studies 23 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925); Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe, eds., *Philosemitism in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For some Puritans, however, "Jewish influence" was anathema, such as John Cotton, who denounced instrumental musical performances in church as "Judaic actions" and "Jewish and carnal" (citing Thomas Aquinas!), *Marginalia* Book 5, 56, quoted by Edward Young, "Subjects for Master's Degree, 1655–1791," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* June 1880: 118–78, here 143, note.

22. Shalom Goldman, *God's Sacred Tongue: Hebrew and the American Imagination* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 15–30; Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 106–7. He notes that the French Orientalist Guillaume Postel (1510–1581) thought that "Gauls" had been in America but abandoned it because they disliked the vast distances, uncultivated land, and absence of towns (81). Jewish students were very rare in the colleges and Jewish faculty nonexistent; Milton Klein, "A Jew at Harvard in the 18th Century," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 97 (1985): 135–45.

23. Johannes Buxtorf the elder (1564–1629) was author of an important Hebrew and Aramaic dictionary (*Lexicon Hebraicum et Chaldaicum* [1607]), a Jewish Bible in four volumes (*Biblia Hebraica* [1618–1619]), and a study of contemporaneous Judaism (*Synagoga Judaica* [1603]), but he was most often cited by American Hebraists (largely second hand) for his *Tiberias, sive Commentarius Masoreticus* (1620), in which he argued for the antiquity of the Masoretic vowel points. In general, see Stephen G. Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies: Johannes Buxtorf (1564–1629) and Hebrew Learning in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1996). His son, Johannes Buxtorf the younger (1599–1664), was likewise best known to America scholars for his continued defense of his father's position, which was thoroughly demolished by Louis Cappel (1585–1658), a French Huguenot Protestant. It seems likely that the only work by any of these scholars to be found in American libraries was the dictionary, so Americans quoted this dispute from summaries by others. John Lightfoot (1602–1675) wrote extensively on both the Old and New Testaments (see note 62). His writings were well known in the American colonies; three editions of his collected essays appeared between 1686 and 1700.

For the venerable Pilgrim Bradford, wishing "to see with my own eyes something of that most ancient language and holy tongue" expressed an oft-stated goal of English-speaking Protestant Hebraists of his century. To an unemployed European Christian Hebraist, then, the New World, with a population supposedly professing an interest in learning Hebrew, might have looked like a land of opportunity, just as it did to the Protestant sectarians who left their native lands for New England, New York, and Pennsylvania. So it was that the Lutheran Hebraist Johann Christoph Kunze (1744–1807) journeyed from Halle to Philadelphia in 1770, with high hopes as a "Hebraician."

Kunze settled in Philadelphia and founded a German secondary school (seminarium) along the educational lines familiar to him at Halle. This school enjoyed some success until the British occupation of Philadelphia in 1777 and was revived two years later as a German language institute within the new University of Pennsylvania, with Kunze in charge; he was also on the first board of trustees of the university. As Kunze imagined it, his institute would develop into a Lutheran theological school within the university, so he added instruction in Hebrew to his other responsibilities, but very few students signed up for it. His institute was eventually suppressed with the 1787 creation of Franklin College in Lancaster, under the patronage of Benjamin Franklin, a new, secular foundation intended to serve the German-speaking population of Pennsylvania. Most would-be German-speaking ministers who enrolled were satisfied with the German Bible, so to them Hebrew was irrelevant. The discouraged Kunze gave up and left the city, succeeded by another German Lutheran, J. H. C. Helmuth, who also offered Hebrew, but no students enrolled.[24]

In the meantime, a seemingly promising opportunity arose in 1784 with Kunze's call to a pastorate in New York City. Columbia College took advantage of his presence to offer Kunze an unsalaried professorship of Oriental languages, initially for three years (1784–1787). Kunze was at first elated by the prospects and ordered a supply of expensive books from Europe, a perennial weakness of Orientalists. But although he planned courses in Hebrew, Syriac, Aramaic, even Arabic, and sought outlets for publishing his own Hebrew grammar, no students presented themselves for any of these subjects, a perennial problem for Orientalists. The trifling salary finally attached to the position (1792–1799) was terminated by the state legislature as an economy measure, so Columbia's first program, like that of the University of Pennsylvania, came to an end.[25]

24. Carl F. Haussman, *Kunze's Seminarium*, Americana Germanica Monographs 27 (Philadelphia: German-American Historical Society, 1917); George B. Wood, *Early History of the University of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1896), 88, 89, 112–13; Albert B. Faust, *The German Element in the United States*, 2 vols. (New York: Arno Press, 1927), 2:207–8; James Montgomery, "Oriental Studies in the University," *General Magazine and Historical Chronicle of the University of Pennsylvania* 36 (1933/1934): 205–16. The endowment for a professorship was two hundred bushels of wheat annually.

25. Hausmann, *Kunze's Seminarium,* 17–18; Samuel B. Miller, *A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Swords, 1803), 2:67–69. Kunze's successor at Columbia, Isaac Nordheimer, appointed in 1835, likewise had no "specific duties and no salary"; Edward Robinson, *Bibliotheca Sacra: Or Tracts and Essays* (New York: Wiley & Putnam 1843), 386; Richard J. H. Gottheil, "The Oriental Languages at Columbia University," *Columbia University Quarterly* December 1902: 24–29; Shalom Goldman,

Yet Kunze fared better than a compatriot, J. G. Kals, who opened a rival German school in Philadelphia prior to the Revolution. Seeing an opportunity in the absence of Hebrew type fonts in America, Kals thought to make his fortune by importing a supply of his own Hebrew grammar (*Grammatica Hebraeo-Harmonica* [Amsterdam, 1758]) and Hebrew dictionaries to Philadelphia, where he must have thought he could corner the market among aspiring ministers. To his astonishment and chagrin, he learned that a knowledge of Hebrew was not required for ordination in any American church, even among the German Lutherans. His school did not succeed nor did his books sell. So dire did his straits become that the very ministers whose ignorance he berated took up a collection to save him from starvation. The ungracious Kals could think of no warmer thanks than to call himself Elijah fed by the ravens. If, as the English satirist Samuel Butler suggested, Hebrew roots grew best in barren ground, colonial America was barren indeed.[26]

These German scholars need not be dismissed as naïve dreamers, even if their frustrated careers set a pattern for students of Oriental languages of all periods who were not blessed with independent means. Hebrew and Aramaic, even Arabic, had been solidly established in the English universities, particularly in the seventeenth century, although few actually studied these languages. Some of the earliest members of Massachusetts Bay Colony were graduates of Cambridge University and brought with them a bedrock belief in the importance of understanding the original languages of the Bible.[27] Therefore it was reasonable to assume, as these German ministers had, that there might be openings to teach these languages and students interested in learning them.

"Dreading to leave an illiterate Ministry to the Churches, when our present Ministers shall lie in the Dust," the settlers of Massachusetts Bay organized what became Harvard College, in a community they unsurprisingly named Cambridge. According to a small pamphlet distributed in England: "The fift day reads Hebrew, and the Easterne Tongues. Grammar to the first yeare houre the 8th. To the 2d. Chaldee at the 9th. houre. To the 3d. Syriack at the 10th. houre. Afternoone. The first yeare practice in the Bible at the 2d. houre. The 2d. in *Ezra* and *Danel* at the 3d. houre. The 3d. at the 4th. houre in *Trostius* New Testament."[28]

"Isaac Nordheimer (1809–1842): An Israelite in Whom There Was No Guile," *American Jewish History* 80 (1990/1991): 213–29; Goldman, *God's Sacred Tongue,* 163–75. In the "Notices of Books" in the *New Englander* 19 (1861): 950, Nordheimer's grammar of Hebrew was still ranked with those of Gesenius and Ewald.

26. Haussmann, *Kunze's Seminarium*, 67; Samuel Butler, *Hudibras, in Three Parts, Written in the Time of the Late Wars, with Large Annotations and a Preface, by Zachary Grey, LL.D.* (London: Crowder, Ware, & Payne, 1770), part 1, canto 1:57–63: "For Hebrew roots, although they're found / To flourish most in barren ground, / He had such plenty, as suffic'd / To make some think him circumcis'd." English grammars of Hebrew sometimes reprinted at least the more chaste part of the quip on roots, e.g., Anselm Bayly, *A Plain and Complete Grammar of the Hebrew Language: With and without Points* (London: Ridley, 1773), xxii.

27. For the English background, see Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), 74–76; Carl Bridenbaugh, *Vexed and Troubled Englishmen, 1590–1642* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

28. *New Englands First Fruits; in Respect First of the Conversion of Some, Conviction of Divers, Preparation of Sundry of the Indians.* 2. *Of the progresse of* Learning, *in the* Colledge *at* Cambridge *in* Massacu-

Since the express purpose of this pamphlet was to provide a glowing account of the conversion of Indians and the godliness of the settlers, one may well wonder if this daunting curriculum was really inflicted on the minute student body, at least for any period of time, but there is good evidence for instruction in Hebrew, at least, if only because "Hebrew Analasis Grammaticall, Logicall & Rhetoricall of the Psalms" was required for the BA degree, and the earliest statutes of the college required that students be able to translate the original languages of the Bible into Latin. This was not such a great challenge, as most students could recite the English psalms from memory, so it was a question of learning such rudiments of Hebrew as would allow matching the Hebrew words to the English text they already knew.

The Hebrew grammar most widely used at Harvard at the time was a little book by Wilhelm Schickard (d. 1635), *Horologium Hebraeum* (1623, over thirty reprintings, including in England).[29] Schickard was an astronomer, mathematician, and linguist at Tübingen. According to the nineteenth-century Hebraist Wilhelm Gesenius, he was best remembered for this, his least important work, whose main virtue was its simplicity and brevity.[30] Schickard maintained the historical primacy of Biblical Hebrew, as would Marsh, 175 years later. Expressly written for colleges, it was still, like Johannes Reuchlin's pioneering Hebrew grammar (1506) for Christians, opened from right to left in the manner of a Hebrew book, even though

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sets *Bay* (London: Overton, 1643), 23, 29, 31; Samuel Eliot Morison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 200–207. "Trostius's New Testament" referred to the Bible in Syriac, as edited by Martin Trost (1588–1636), *Novum Testamentum Syriacum* (Köthen, 1623). There are many, and varying, assessments of the knowledge of Hebrew among American Christians of the Colonial period and young Republic; as with the same phenomenon in Renaissance and Reformation Europe, Jewish scholars tend to be critical and Christian scholars enthusiastic. One of the earliest is Bela Edwards's inaugural address, "Reasons for the Study of the Hebrew Language," upon his appointment to the professorship of Hebrew at Andover Seminary, 1838, printed in the *Biblical Repository* 12.31 (July, 1838): 121–32 and reprinted in *Writings of Professor B. B. Edwards, with a Memoir by Edwards A. Park* (Boston: Jewett, 1853), 2:206–33. One of the best and most authoritative remains George Foot Moore, "Alttestamentliche Studien in Amerika," *ZAW* 8 (1888): 1–42. Subsequent commentary and studies on Christian knowledge of Semitic languages in the Pilgrim century include, e.g., Derek de Sola Pool, "Hebrew Learning among the Puritans of New England Prior to 1700," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 20 (1911): 31–83; Cyrus Adler, "Hebrew and Cognate Learning in America," in *Lectures, Selected Papers, Addresses* (Philadelphia: Privately printed, 1933), 277–94 and more fully in Adler, "The Beginnings of Semitic Studies in America," in *Oriental Studies Published in Commemoration of the Fortieth Anniversary (1883–1923) of Paul Haupt as Director of the Oriental Seminary of the Johns Hopkins University*, ed. Cyrus Adler and Aaron Ember (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1926), 313–28; I. S. Meyer, "Hebrew at Harvard (1636–1760)," *Publications of the Jewish Historical Society* 35 (1939): 145–70; R. H. Pfeiffer, "The Teaching of Hebrew in Colonial America," *JQR* 45 (1955): 363–73; William Chomsky, *Hebrew: The Eternal Language* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), 247–50, with focus on publications by Jewish scholars. In Tudor England, Hebrew was not uncommonly a subject of secondary education, so was not such an exotic subject in the New England colonies as it has been sometimes depicted; Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Colonial Experience 1607–1783* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 173–75.

29. Morison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century*, 1:203; Cremin, *American Education,* 212–17.

30. Wilhelm Gesenius, *Geschichte der hebraïschen Sprache und Schrift: Eine philologisch-historische Einleitung in die Sprachlehren und Wörterbuchen der hebraïschen Sprache* (Leipzig: Vogel, 1815), 110, "fast am bekanntesten durch seine unbedeutenste Arbeit."

printed in Latin. It claimed to teach the elements of Hebrew in twenty-four hours, though some of the "hours" were rather long. It included a glossary and a word-by-word analysis of the twenty-third psalm, giving us a good idea of what it took to meet the Harvard College Hebrew language requirement. As for its purpose, Schickard wrote, "We will seek truth in any version, and we will recognize the corruptions of the Jews without harm (to ourselves)."[31] This parroted a medieval notion that Jews had deliberately concealed the true meaning of Scripture; according to some Christian polemicists, they had even removed the vowels from their writing system for that very purpose. It also protected the student from the charge of "Judaizing," that is, becoming too Jewish from studying Hebrew.

Schickard's book was in the spirit of the wishful claims of some seventeenth-century philologists that Hebrew was easy to learn. In part this was a result of the desacralization of the language: if Hebrew was the first language of the human race, rather than the language of God, it should be simpler and more primitive in form than later languages, such as Greek, a point that had been regularly made for centuries; for example, the Hebrew verb had only two tenses, past and present, so could not mark the future, the perfect, or the pluperfect as could Greek and Latin. Furthermore, if you could learn to recognize some forms, you could easily "read the Bible in Hebrew," as already the medieval English philosopher Roger Bacon had suggested in the mid-thirteenth century.[32] There was no need to read any other form of the language than Biblical Hebrew and the Orientalist ideal of being able to decipher a text that the reader did not already know lay far in the future.[33]

However that may be, one of Harvard's original goals was to produce a learned ministry on the English university model, which implied some proficiency in Hebrew. Indeed, John Cotton (1584–1652), first minister of Boston, had been praised for his excellent performance on a Hebrew oral examination at Cambridge in the following terms:

> Wherein this is not unworthy the taking notice of; that when the poser came to examine him in the Hebrew tongue, the place that he took trial of him by was that Isaiah 3, against the excessive bravery of the *haughty daughters of Sion*; which hath more hard words in it, than any place of the Bible within so short a compass;

31. "*Tum vero in cuius libet versionis fidem inquiremus, & Judaeorum quoque depravationes agnoscemus absque noxa.*"

32. Roger Bacon (d. ca. 1294) wrote that six consonantal letters of the Hebrew alphabet were actually to write vowels but that the Jews had concealed those "consonantal vowels" in their writing "because they did not want other peoples to read their books," and he also thought that Arabic and Hebrew were dialects of the same language; Edmond Nolan and S. A. Hirsch, *The Greek Grammar of Roger Bacon and a Fragment of His Hebrew Grammar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), xxv, xxvii, 200, 205; Bacon's idea that some Hebrew consonants, such as *'ayin*, were vowels, may go back to Jerome; James Barr, "St. Jerome's Appreciation of Hebrew," *BJRL* 49 (1966): 281–302, here 283. Thus students at Harvard were exposed to millennial Christian misinformation about the language they were studying.

33. Sidney Willard's Harvard Hebrew students, to avoid simply reciting the 1611 Bible in Hebrew class, made frequent recourse to a Latin "trot" of the Bible, to the extent that one kept translating Hebrew YHWH as "Jupiter"; Sidney Willard, *Memories of Youth and Manhood*, 2 vols. (Boston: Batlett, 1855), 2:201. For an interesting statement of the Orientalist ideal, see Ignác Goldziher, *Renan als Orientalist, Gedenkrede am 27. November 1893*, trans. Péter Zalán (Zurich: Spur Verlag, 2000), 32–34.

> and therefore, though a present construction and resolution thereof might have put a good Hebraician to a stand, yet such was his dexterity, as made those difficult words facil, and rendered him a prompt respondent.[34]

Nor was Cotton alone. The first two presidents of Harvard College, Henry Dunster (served 1640–1654) and Charles Chauncy (served 1654–1672), had studied Hebrew and brought their personal interests to bear on the curriculum of the nascent college, often shouldering the tasks of its instruction themselves.

Dunster (d. ca. 1659), a graduate of Cambridge with a high reputation for his knowledge of Oriental languages, enjoys the special distinction of having written the New World's first rejection letter to an Orientalist's job application. The unemployed German Orientalist Christian Ravis, forerunner to Kunze and Kals, exchanged letters with him and sent a box of books "for the promoting of learning in the College amongst the students, and in the woods amongst the Indians in their savage booths or wigwams," including a leaflet on Hebrew grammar and a table of paradigms he had prepared.[35] In an unsuccessful effort to establish his credentials for Hebrew instruction in England, Ravis had made a new edition of an English-language Hebrew grammar by the Puritan John Udall (d. 1592), *The Key of the Holy Tongue*, published at Leiden in 1593, after Udall's death. When no job offers came, he bethought himself of the English colonies.[36]

If Dunster may not have thought the jest about Indians funny, he was of course grateful for the books, writing to Ravis:

> as you Tender your readinesse to further our studies, in the Oriental-Tongues,... with books of those languages from some able hands, and willing hearts ... then should wee bee very glad and evermore thankfull to you, and them, who shall procure us Buxtorfe's Concordances, and Bible (for the King of Spaine's we have and the King of France his Bible is more then wee dare hope for) and whatsoever

34. John Norton, *Abel Being Dead Yet Speaketh; or, The Life & Death of That Deservedly Famous Man of God, Mr. John Cotton* (London: 1658), this passage reprinted in John Norton, *Memoir of John Cotton*, with a preface and notes by Enoch Pond (Boston: Perkins & Marvin, 1834), 25; retelling of the same story in Thomas Hutchinson, *A Collection of Original Papers Relative to the History of the Colony of Massachusets-Bay* (Boston: Fleet, 1769), 243. The legend grew better with time: in A. W. M'Clure's *The Life of John Cotton* (Boston, 1870), 15, Cotton was "able to converse in that tongue." Trial by Isaiah repeated itself in a modest way, when, in the late 1970s, the Yale Near Eastern Department graduate student Robert M. Good (PhD 1980), having been recommended for a teaching post in Biblical Hebrew, William W. Hallo, then chair, and himself author of a Hebrew grammar for classroom use, was skeptical that such a quintessential WASP as Good could carry out the assignment to his standard. He summoned Good to his office and, handing him a pocket Hebrew Bible without points, asked him to read aloud and at sight a difficult passage from Isaiah, though memory does not record if it likewise dealt with the haughty daughters of Zion. Good's reading and "present construction" of it were, to Hallo's surprise, excellent, so he got the job. So proficient was Good in modern spoken Hebrew as well that when he visited the Hebrew University in Jerusalem for business purposes he was offered a post in their business office.

35. Morison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century*, 1:201.

36. For Ravis (Raue), see Archibald Gordon, *Dictionary of National Biography* 16:762–63; and Gerald J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisedome and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

> Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriack, or Arabic authors, God's providence shall enlarge their hands, and hearts to procure us.[37]

Ravis was obviously fishing for an invitation to teach at Harvard, but, as Dunster wrote him in 1638, using the arguments of "over-qualification" and "budgetary constraints" familiar to many unemployed Orientalists today, that was not to be. He could, of course, lecture for free, according to the universal principle that Orientalists, far more frequently than physicians and lawyers, are expected to share their time and expertise without compensation:

> Wee professe ourselves unable to answer the Tender of your good will and propensity of spirit towards us. Our Infant Colledge, compared with the Academyes in Europe, being like Mantua unto Rome, and as unworthy to confine a man of your parts, and place, as that small Town the Prince of the Latin poets. Yet nevertheless if Divine providence should waft you over the Atlantick- Ocean, or if your Spirit desire to see what sons of Seth wander in these woods, then Harvard-Colledge would think itself honored in your visit.[38]

Chauncy, for his part, had taught Greek and Hebrew at Cambridge until 1628, having "derived no small benefit, during the space of a year, from the conversation of a Jew" (meaning, apparently, that he had shared a house with one) but was disappointed at being passed over for a Regius Professorship. He emigrated to America, and, after difficult times at Scituate, was offered the presidency of Harvard College just as he was about to return, discouraged, to England, on condition that he not preach total immersion in baptism. He brought his Cambridge ways to fruition, it is said, by expounding at morning prayers a chapter of the Hebrew Bible read aloud by a student, while the evening prayer was enriched by reading from the New Testament in Greek.[39] Some study of Hebrew, at least, was required for the BA degree at Harvard until 1646. As Charles C. Torrey later commented, "College statutes are easily static, and the requirement of Hebrew at Harvard was kept on the books for 140 years. Some students, doubtless, enjoyed the study; most of them went to class as they went to the dentist. In 1785 the cry of the College went up to heaven, and the study was made optional."[40]

Cotton Mather offers an interesting example of the precocious Harvard student of the mid- to late seventeenth century. He enrolled in 1674 at the age of eleven, when the total student body was perhaps twenty-one students in a single building, many of them sons of ministers. The entrance requirement was an ability to read Latin at sight and to speak and comprehend it, plus an ability to write out the Greek paradigms. Mather had already been exposed to Biblical Hebrew, though this subject was normally begun in the first or second year of the college course. As for the worldview of this young scion of Massachusetts Bay, the three most important events in recent world history were the revival of learning in the

37. Morison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century*, 1:201.
38. Morison, 1:202.
39. For Chauncy, see Mark A. Peterson, *American National Biography* 4:752–53.
40. Torrey, "Two Great Teachers," see ch. 3 n. 1.

Renaissance, the Reformation, and the discovery of America. Mather's disputation thesis took up the age-old, by now sterile debate as to whether or not the Hebrew vowel points were of divine origin, for which he upheld the orthodox position that they were, though later in life, moving with the times, he concluded that they had been a human invention after all (below, ch. 1.4). As we have seen, Marsh was still flogging this long-dead issue over a century later and upholding the obsolete orthodox opinion.[41]

In 1722, a Jewish convert, Judah Monis, was employed to teach Hebrew at Harvard. He had been recently baptized in a dramatic public ceremony in Cambridge and married a Christian woman, Abigail Marret, so stood in a distinguished line, reaching back to the Middle Ages, of Jewish converts who became teachers of Christian Hebraists. For the next twelve years, he taught restive and resentful classes, four days a week, for sophomores, juniors, and seniors, in a special building dedicated to the purpose. One of the most onerous tasks for beginners was copying out, longhand, the text of a grammar Monis had written, including the Hebrew paradigms with all the points, which he insisted on retaining, against the trend of English-speaking biblical scholarship of his own time (below, ch. 1.4). Finally in 1734, to alleviate the suffering of the students, the College paid for a printing of the grammar, with a press run of a thousand.[42] Copies survive scarred

41. David Levin, *Cotton Mather, the Young Life of the Lord's Remembrance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 23–56, 83; the divine origin of the points was even an article of faith in the Reformed Church of Switzerland (1675), as noted by Edward Young, "Subjects for Master's Degree," 140 note. Mather was not above a little pomposity on the subject of his reading Hebrew, noting "I may humbly declare, I scarce ever take an Hebrew bible into my hands, but I am gratefully surprized with something I never thought of; I ever have some new view, and see something I never saw before"; *Dr. Cotton Mather's Student and Preacher, Intituled, Manuductio ad Ministerium; or, Directions for a Candidate of the Ministry* (Northampton, MA: Ryland, 1781), 33.

42. For varying assessments of Monis, see George Kohut, "Judah Monis, M.A., The First Instructor in Hebrew at Harvard University," *AJSL* 14 (1898): 217–26; Lee M. Friedman, "Judah Monis, First Instructor in Hebrew at Harvard University," *Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society* 22 (1914): 1–24; George Foot Moore, "Judah Monis," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 52 (1919): 285–312; J. K. Miklizanski, "Firsts of Hebrew Printing in America," *Hebrew Studies* 17 (1976): 100–109, here 104–5. The first Hebrew book published by a resident of the Americas may in fact be *Arte Hebraispano*, by Martin del Castillo (Madrid, 1676). Further on Monis, see Goldman, *God's Sacred Tongue*, 31–45; Eleanor F. Wedge, *American National Biography* 15:674–75. Stiles owned a copy of his book, now in the Beinecke Library, Yale. Questions about the sincerity of Monis's conversion to Christianity overlook the importance of Jewish converts in diffusing Hebrew knowledge in Europe from Petrus Alfonsus to his time; enthusiasm about his Hebrew grammar overlooks the numerous superior grammars probably available even in the libraries of the colleges. Monis himself wrote of it, "Since through the good Hand of GOD upon me, he has not only taken Mose's Vail from me, but has even placed me in his Service, i.e. to teach and Promote the knowledge of the Hebrew Tongue at HARVARD COLLEGE, in New-England, especially for the advantage of those that will Dedicate themselves to the Service of the Sanctuary; and considering that thro the great & manifest Faults & Errors (at least of the Press) that are found in ALL the Hebrew Grammars extant, besides the shortness of them, my expected work could not be attained without farther Reformation; I thought therefore to facilitate said Instructions, it was necessary to Compose One more full and correct; But for want of Hebrew Types in these remote parts of the World, it could not be Accomplished till now: For altho' that Pious and Great Benefactor, Mr. THOMAS HOLLIS, Merchant of LONDON (zyl) among others of his great Donations to our COLLEGE, sent a set of Hebrew Types to carry on said Work, yet that Set proving unhappily Imperfect it could not go

with the irreverent graffiti typical of textbooks for unpopular subjects and teachers, since Monis's classroom personality does not seem to have been winning. Like Moses Stuart at the later Andover Theological Seminary, Monis was nicknamed "the rabbi." The grammar, which included a "Nomenclator," or glossary, was mostly drawn directly from Jewish sources and was a creditable effort, considering the circumstances, though inferior to the best grammars of a century before. Reverting to the example of some of the earliest Christian grammars of Semitic languages, Monis's book included Hebrew translations of such Judaica as the Lord's Prayer and the Apostolic Creed, a well-established practice among converts to demonstrate their fidelity to the new faith, and among Christians to avoid the charge of "Judaizing," as we saw with Schickard's grammar as well. It was more worthy of the late sixteenth than the mid-eighteenth century, showing that his own Jewish education had been considerably less than rabbinical and that he had not consulted to any large extent any of the numerous Christian or Jewish grammars of Hebrew, a sample of which was presumably then available in the Harvard library.[43]

But Oriental languages then enjoyed such a cachet on the college scene that the first professorship endowed in the New World by an American was the Hancock Professorship at Harvard, whose incumbent was supposed to teach Hebrew and other Oriental languages. The first appointee (1764–1785) was Stephan Sewall, who had studied initially with Chauncy, so might be deemed America's first homegrown Orientalist. He lectured with reference to Hebrew, Aramaic, Samaritan, Syriac, and Arabic, though he was a much better Hellenist; it would be rash to assert that he actually taught anyone to read these languages. In his study, he dabbled in Ethiopic and Persian and drew up a Hebrew-Aramaic dictionary, all this in the lonely mode of European dead-end polyglot scholarship of the century previous, ever adding language to language, as enshrined in Castell's magnificent heptaglot dictionary (1669), the fruit of "unremitting toil." A present-day Orientalist peruses Castell's book with awe and mayhap a touch of sadness at so much labor to so little practical purpose. A copy was among the treasures of the nascent Yale library; it shows no signs of wear.[44] So too one reads Sewall's *Nachlass* with admiration and a sense of futility. When another home-grown Orientalist, Jonathan Edwards, accepted the

forward till the Reverend Corporation (who are true Lovers of Learning) sent for more Hebrew Types to Compleat such a good and desirable design"; *Dickdook Leshon* (1735), preface.

43. Translations of this sort were no doubt intended to prove the sincerity of conversion; an early example is the convert Matthew Adrianus's translation of the Ave Maria into Hebrew; for him, see H. De Vocht, *History of the Foundation and the Rise of the Collegium Trilingue Lovaniense 1517–1550*, Recueil de travaux d'histoire et de philologie 3/42 (Louvain: Université de Louvain, 1951), 241–56. Non-Jews also followed this curious practice, perhaps to forfend the charge of "Judaizing," as in François Tissard's 1508 Hebrew grammar, *Grammatica succincte tradita,* which included Hebrew versions of the Lord's Prayer, Sanctus, and the Genealogy of the Virgin. It should be noted that some schools of language training in modern times believed that a new language containing new cultural content was too much of a burden on the learner, so the cultural content should be that of the learner, such as Ernest McCarus's *Newspaper Arabic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1963), in which American students read in Arabic pieces about such matters as American politics and space exploration.

44. For Sewall, see Thomas J. Siegel, "Professor Stephen Sewall and the Transformation of Hebrew at Harvard," in *Hebrew and the Bible in America: The First Two Centuries*, ed. Shalom Goldman (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993), 228–45; Goldman, *God's Sacred Tongue*, 45-51. Edmund

presidency of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton) in 1758, Hebrew was the only subject he was willing to teach, perhaps in the hope that he could refresh the good progress he had made with the language as a student at Yale, but it is not likely that he had many students of his own in the subject.[45]

It would be easy to imagine from these isolated examples a learned congregation and ministry, and herein lay the contrast between Timothy Dwight's vision of the place of Hebrew in the Yale curriculum of his time and what undergraduates actually wanted to study. In fact, as Torrey later noted, for most Harvard college students Hebrew was a vexatious and useless requirement. An early Hebrew tutor, Michael Wigglesworth (d. 1705), poured out in his diary his grief at his students' outright refusal to do the work:

> August 29: My pupils all came to me this day to desire they might cease learning Hebrew: I withstood it with all the reason I could, yet all will not satisfy them. Thus am I requited for my love; and thus little fruit of all my prayers and tears for their good.
>
> August 30: God appeared somewhat in inclining of the spirit of my pupils to the study of Hebrew as I had prayed that God would do.
>
> March 7: I was much perplexed in mind with many thoughts to & fro, about leaving the college, one while ready to resolve upon it almost, and quite another way; and I know not what to do, how to live here and keep a good conscience because my hands are bound in point of reforming disorders; my own weakness and pupils' forward negligence in the Hebrew much exercise me. Yet for all this trouble God hath been with me in my personal studies; for this day I began and finished all that part of my synopsis which treats about Method.[46]

The rugged realities of New England agricultural and commercial life left little room or energy for acquisition of Hebrew, even for would-be ministers. The English 1611 or Geneva Bibles were good enough for most people and even Hebraists, like Marsh, did not see a need to correct their translations, but rather to understand difficult passages better through recourse to the original.[47] By the 1770s in America, ministers saw no need at all for Hebrew, as their positions depended upon doctrinal correctness and preaching skills. Nor did further stimulation come from England. Puritan immigration had dwindled in the years of Puritan rule in England (1628–1640). The restoration of the monarchy in 1667 isolated New England Puri-

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Castell (1606–1686) spent eighteen years of work and all of his money preparing a dictionary of seven Near Eastern languages (1669).

45. Goldman, *God's Sacred Tongue,* 74–86.

46. Edmund S. Morgan, ed., *The Diary of Michael Wigglesworth 1653–1657: The Conscience of a Puritan* (Gloucester, MA: Smith, 1970), 41, 69.

47. Above, n. 14. Thereby Protestants fell into the same mode of privileging a translation as had the Catholic Church, which deemed Jerome's version to be sufficient for theological purposes at the confirmation of the findings of the Council of Trent in 1564. In the manuscript age, an important problem became how to identify precisely what the text of Jerome's translation actually was, and to fend off stylistic improvements to his scriptural Latin. This was no longer an issue in the age of printed books. The 1611 Bible was often referred to as the "Authorized Version," insofar as James was nominally the head of the English church, whereas for Catholic scholars Jerome's was "Our Version."

tans even further. From the perspective of the New World, English prelates seemed thereafter to devote most of their energies to sermons, pamphlets, and vindication of ecclesiastical rights. American Puritans turned more and more to dogmatics and theology in preference to linguistic commentary, so the impetus to learn Hebrew well, even among theologians, lost much of the drive it had had in the minds of men like Bradford, Chauncy, and Dunster.

American institutions would, however, be slow to give up their vestigial Hebrew shibboleths, even in a new century. Some, like Columbia, were willing to ornament their faculty with Hebraists, but not to pay them. Since "Hebrew" orations remained typical of New England college commencements until the early nineteenth century, Marsh's would have been no surprise to its uncomprehending audience. As late as 1870, William Rainey Harper (ch. 3) gave his commencement address in "Biblical Hebrew" at Muskingum, Ohio.[48]

But in what sense was this Hebrew at all, if no Jewish scholar of the language could have made sense of what Marsh said?

1.4. Yankee Hebrew and Christian Doctrine

Marsh was one in a long line of Christian scholars engaged with Hebrew, beginning with Jerome in the early fifth century. What set him apart from his successors at Yale was his understanding of philology as an adjunct of theology rather than as an independent discipline. Later generations would consider theology and Hebrew language study separate fields to be pursued in different faculties or departments of universities. Therefore certain textual or philological issues that deeply concerned Marsh and his contemporaries seem to a modern reader bewilderingly misplaced and centuries behind the times. No better example of this can be cited than the vowel point controversy, alluded to briefly above, in connection with Marsh's essays and Cotton Mather's dissertation.

American Christian Hebraists of the eighteenth century often strayed so far from the received Hebrew text as to discard the markings, or "points," that indicate the vowels and accentuation of the consonantal Hebrew text. In doing so, they ignored the accumulated wisdom of generations of Jewish scholars, referred to as Masoretes, who, beginning in the sixth or seventh century of the Christian era, had added the points above, below, and within the consonants, precisely to preserve what they thought was the best reading and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. The rules for these markings seemed burdensome to some Christians, who, since they thought they already knew the meaning of the Hebrew text of their Old Testament through the English Bible, were happy to dismiss them as arcane Jewish lore.

The question of the sanctity of the points formed part of a larger discussion about the history of the Hebrew writing system, of cardinal importance because it bore on the question of the divine or Mosaic origin of the Hebrew Bible. When, where, and how did the Jews learn to write and what did this mean for the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures? Proposals in circulation in eighteenth-century America

48. See ch. 3.1.

included invention of Hebrew writing by the "secretary" of an Egyptian "king" or an ad-hoc invention at the time of the giving of the Decalogue, either story allowing for a Mosaic origin for the Old Testament. Marsh, following Warburton, agreed that the letters were Egyptian in origin. Moses must have brought them with him from Egypt, and apparently it was he who expanded the alleged original count of sixteen "Cadmeian letters" to the twenty-two "Phoenician letters." The archaic or original Hebrew characters, still used by the Samaritans, were abandoned, Marsh thought, in the time of Ezra for the Chaldaean, or "square," letters, but this did not diminish the authenticity of Scripture.[49]

Granted the supposed Mosaic origin of the consonantal text, whatever the source and date of the present written form of the consonants, what about the so-called Masoretic points? Were they invented by Moses or Ezra? Or by much later Jewish scholars, writing in the early Middle Ages? Already in the sixteenth century, a learned Jewish scholar, Elias Levita, had argued that the Masoretic points were much later than the consonantal text, dating, according to him, no earlier than the sixth century CE. Among leading Christian Hebraists he was followed by Sebastian Münster and others but was opposed, on theological grounds, by the elder and younger Buxtorfs. The Buxtorfs and their followers were concerned that dating the points later than the consonantal text would undermine the status of the Hebrew Bible as the word of God by injecting a later human scholarly element directly into Scripture. Few or no Americans would have read Levita, Münster, or even the Buxtorfs, but the arguments would have been known to them through a widely distributed handbook by Humphrey Prideaux (1648–1720), *Old and New Testament Connected*.[50]

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49. Marsh, *Oration, on the Truth of the Mosaic History of the Creation*, 10. For Marsh, the most likely explanation of the alphabet was that it was invented by the Egyptian royal secretary, hieroglyphs being too tedious and voluminous to use for practical purposes, to keep secure the secret business of the royal cabinet. For a survey of the traditions about the "Cadmeian letters," see Robert Eisler, "The Introduction of the Cadmeian Alphabet into the Aegean World and Recent Discoveries," *JRAS* 1923: 35–73, 169–207. The negative depiction of hieroglyphs versus the alphabet is found also in Johann von Herder, who claimed that "alphabetick characters and writing have universally given regularity to languages, but where hieroglyphicks are used they remain in perpetual infancy and unintelligible barbarism"; von Herder, *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, trans. James Marsh (Burlington: Smith, 1833), 1:261.

50. Humphrey Prideaux, *The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews and Neighbouring Nations* (London: Knaplock & Tonson, 1716), which had run through eight printings in London alone by 1720, was widely read in the colonies, and was translated into German (1726). Prideaux also produced a *History of the Life of the Great Imposter Mahomet,* which appeared in Glasgow in 1795 and was republished at Philadelphia the following year, so was known in the United States, but, fortunately, was nowhere near so popular as his Jewish history; see Thomas Kidd, "'Is It Worse to Follow Mahomet than the Devil?' Early American Uses of Islam," *Church History* 72 (2003): 766–90. The first major study of Muhammad by an American was George Bush's *The Life of Mohammed*, first published in 1830 and widely reprinted: "His whole history makes it evident, that fanaticism, ambition, and lust were his master-passions" (quoting from *The Family Library* edition of 1841, the year of Edward Salisbury's appointment to Yale, 161). For a brief summary of the vowel point controversy in Christian scholarship, see Gesenius, *Geschichte,* 120–22; further R. A. Miller, "The Debate over the Vowel Points and the Crisis in Orthodox Hermeneutics," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 10 (1980): 53–72; Maurice Olender, "Divine Vowels," in *The Languages of Paradise*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 21–36.

Although the orthodox, or Buxtorfian, view had crumbled by the mid-eighteenth century in continental Europe, in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, prolix supporters of Buxtorfian orthodoxy continued to turn out volumes that cluttered American shelves.[51] Marsh, astoundingly at this late date, still defended the antiquity of the points, at least to the time of Ezra, but considered arguments of "the Jews" that they were God-given "futile"; they could not be God-given because God would not have provided an imperfect writing system to the Hebrews, as argued a century earlier by Christian Ravis and many before him. God was surely a better designer of writing systems than that.[52] Marsh was laboring over issues scarcely worth his energies.

Yet there was a danger lurking for those who took seriously the Masoretic and Jewish rabbinical tradition: a Christian scholar was at risk of "Judaizing," or thinking like a Jew, a charge Judah Monis and others were well aware of. The safest course, therefore, was to dismiss it all as useless. As late as 1829 the American biblical scholar Calvin Stowe wrote of the "unnatural and barren expositions of the Rabbins," because they did not view the Bible in its "true light as a work of taste" (or, in more modern terms, as a work of literature).[53] Likewise the German biblical critic J. G. von Herder (d. 1803), whose work was available in English in the United States by 1833, deemed the writings of the rabbis on Hebrew to contain "nothing valuable…, nor in accordance with the genius of original structure."[54] The underlying theological assumption of such writers was that, since the Old Testament had passed directly to Christianity, Christians need not concern themselves with Jewish scholarly tradition and could safely discard the Masoretic points in the process.

A major advantage of Biblical Hebrew cleared of vowel points was that it looked easier to read, pronounce, and understand than the pointed text. Several "systems" of pronouncing unpointed Hebrew circulated in Europe and America. Uncluttered Hebrew became at once simple, easy to learn, and primitive. One could discard the points as fussy Jewish pedantry: "to read it with the points requires much hard labour, and great length of time to no good purpose."[55] Wonderful claims abounded,

51. James Robertson, "De Genuina Punctorum Vocalium Antiquitate," printed with separate pagination in his *Clavis Pentateuchi* (Edinburgh: Fleming & Neil, 1770).

52. See below, n. 55.

53. Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, iv; Stowe goes on to comment that "Christian interpreters were wandering in the dark wilds of mysticism [he presumably meant kabbalists like Reuchlin] or exhausting their strength and wasting their time in the useless search of etymologies and various readings [this presumably refers to the interpretation of Scripture using various other Semitic languages, such as Arabic, by comparing roots]." Rejection of Jewish interpretation was particularly pronounced in the circle of Luther, which contained some virulent anti-Semites, and in England as well; the less the writer knew about it, the more he was prepared to denounce it (e.g., Johannes Forster, see Gesenius, *Geschichte*, 115; these views would have reached Stowe through English sources).

54. Herder, *Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, 1:32.

55. Ravis comments on "the sillinesses of those Grammarians (God being able to make better worke in his primitife tongue), which hitherto lies as a plague upon those, who will learn this Ebrue with these pricks, and not otherwise, and being almost impossible to overcome, casts them of[f] from Gods tongue." He went on to proclaim, "Therefore let no *Englishman* think, that he hath not learned the Hebrew tongue, if he know not these accents, and the infinity of work in them; and rather with me pity the pains of those painful Germans and Scotchmen upon such rotten principles…. I wish this painful

therefore, in English grammars of Hebrew, stripped of nonessentials, as to how easy the language was to master: "The author knew a certain gentleman perfected in 12 hours." A Miss Parkhurst, a young lady under twelve, "can translate almost the whole Hebrew Bible" (using a pamphlet called *Easiest Introduction to the Hebrew Language*), a feat sometimes compared to the quickness of Blaesilla, the apt young woman student whom Jerome had praised in his letters; so also one Master John Ryland, "about twelve," who acquired his enviable competence from *Hebrew Made Easy*.[56]

The English biblical critic Robert Lowth, seen in Germany as a path-breaking scholar, but regarded in New England with suspicion, took a more reasonable view, recognizing the Masoretes as learned, religious scholars seeking to preserve an authentic reading of the ancient biblical text. Lowth acknowledged that their work should be given due consideration before proposing alternatives. Lowth himself had many revised readings to propose. Emending the Masoretic text remained standard practice thereafter among Protestant scholars who knew enough Hebrew to understand the Masoretic system.[57]

The result was that the pronunciation of Yankee Hebrew became a matter of individual discretion, as illustrated by John Smith's absurd 1803 rules on pronunciation, making Hebrew sound like New England American English.[58] More important, Hebrew had become a boring and pedantic re-creation of the King James Bible from a consonantal Hebrew text. No wonder the students had stayed away and Kals and Kunze had found that Hebrew was at best an ornament, rather than a requirement, for the ministry. Sidney Willard, a younger contemporary of Marsh, who taught Hebrew at Harvard during the years 1807 to 1831, had this to say of his own efforts there: "I suppose there were and are scholars who might excite some zeal in the study of Oriental languages; but the general impression is, and ever has been, in our college, that the value of such learning does not repay the labor and

man, and Buxtorf, and all those, that are so busy about pricks…, that they may bestow their pains upon better work than about these trifles of the points"; *A Generall Grammer for the Ready Attainment of the Ebreu, Samaritan, Calde, Syriac, Arabic, and the Ethiopic Languages, with a Pertinent Discourse of the Oriental Tongues* (London: Wilson, 1650), 123, 145.

56. Joshua Kettilby, *Hebrew Made Easy; Or, A Brief Introduction to the Hebrew Grammar, (upon a new and delightful plan); whereby our British gentlemen and ladies, may, in so very short a time as twenty-four days, learn the most necessary variations of that incomparable language* (London: Chandler, ca. 1762).

57. Emendation became an epidemic in Christian biblical scholarship of the later nineteenth century, but older biblical scholars may have held with Moses Stuart's comment that the better we understand the original, the less we emend; Stuart, *Dissertations on the Importance and Best Method of Studying the Original Languages of the Bible by Jahn and Others* (Andover: Flagg & Gould, 1821), 67.

58. John Smith, *A Hebrew Grammar without Points: Designed to Facilitate the Study of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, In the Original; and particularly adapted to the use of those who may not have instructors* (Boston: West, 1803), 6; Torrey, "The Beginnings of Oriental Study at Andover," *AJSL* 13 (1896): 249–66, here 253. John Smith (1752–1809), an ordained minister, was a graduate of Dartmouth (1773) and was appointed the first professor of learned languages there in 1777. Like Josiah Gibbs at Yale, he also served as college librarian. The Hebrew grammar was first written when he was a junior in the College, so can be considered remarkable only because it was produced in what was then rural New Hampshire by a college student. His manuscripts are Dartmouth Library Archives and Manuscripts MS-1266.

pains necessary to be undergone in its acquirement."[59] Thus the Hancock Professor was unconsciously echoing Archbishop Ussher's similar disparaging pronouncement on Oriental languages, the very subject of his professorship, of a century and half previous; they were not worth the trouble to learn them, despite the hucksters' alluring claims that their cheap pamphlets made Hebrew so simple even a girl could become fluent in short order.[60]

Given the numerous and often enormous misconceptions about Hebrew language and writing to be found in American treatises on the subject, not to mention the general resentment among college students forced to study Hebrew, who felt themselves subjected to a tedious and annoying requirement, the murky rhetoric of Marsh's oration was indeed a "new Semitic language," Yankee Hebrew, and very much a product of its time and place.

1.5. New England Linguists Cast Adrift

Like Sewall, the first generation of American scholars received what training they had in the New World. Owing to a more peaceable religious climate in England, fewer scholars and divines emigrated in proportion to the population than a century previously; Americans seldom had any means of studying abroad, though English books continued to reach New England. Moreover, scholarship in biblical languages made little progress in England itself in the first few decades of the eighteenth century, though it gained notably thereafter. Few had risen up to replace the learned antiquaries and linguists of the Jacobean period. Conversely, some social observers suggest that the English ruling classes were more linguistically cosmopolitan in modern languages during the mid-eighteenth than they were later on. The adventurer Giacomo Casanova, for example, could live for six months in London in 1763, enjoying an active social life, without speaking or understanding a word of English, and, when brought before the English magistrate Sir John Fielding, was gratified to have the proceeding conducted in excellent Italian for his benefit, a situation unthinkable today.[61] On the other hand, Lytton Strachey's aristocratic Victorian ancestor knew no more French than "Vous drivez damn slow!"[62]

59. Willard, *Memories* 2:201–2. Of his own college education he writes, "Our knowledge of Hebrew, if any, was very limited; in this language, our study, while undergraduates, was confined to a part of the Hebrew Psalter, without the vowel-points … those of us who had made any proficiency had probably forgotten a great part of what little we had learned" (2:99). Willard was himself author of a Hebrew grammar with the points, *A Hebrew Grammar, Compiled from Some of the Best Authorities* (Cambridge: Hillard & Metcalf, 1817), a forgettable work in eighty-six pages.

60. Ussher had the usual training in Hebrew for a man of his position, but did not consider Oriental studies worth the effort, as he commented to the diarist John Evelyn, "How great the loss of time was to study much the Eastern languages; that excepting Hebrew, there was little fruit to be gathered of exceeding labour; that besides some mathematical books … the Arabic itself had little considerable"; *The Diary of John Evelyn edited from the Original MSS, by William Bray* (New York: M. Walter Dunne, 1879), entry for August 21, 1655. Ussher's brother, Ambrose (d. 1629) was, in fact, an Arabist; Albert F. Pollard, *Dictionary of National Biography* 20:64.

61. *The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova*, trans. Arthur Machen (London: Venetian Society, 1928), 10:36.

62. Lytton Strachey, "The Eighteenth Century" (1926, reprinted in *Characters and Commentaries*

However much European languages were in the air in mid-eighteenth-century England, scriptural languages were in some eclipse, despite the continued output of Hebrew grammars. Even theological debate tended to use rational philosophy rather than philology, and some prominent theologians, like Warburton, knew little or no Hebrew. As a result, American philologists did not have a high contemporary English standard to look up to and would eventually find their models in Germany.

For many New Englanders, common schools provided their reading, writing, and ciphering, though children of ministers were often educated at home. A few went on to the colleges, such as Yale and Harvard, to study the set curriculum, which was not intended to be of professional utility. For those who sought further learning, more advanced training could be provided by a local minister or lawyer, depending upon the career contemplated; indeed, some Orientalists read law for a while, including Ezra Stiles, Moses Stuart, and Edward Robinson. Ordination, or license to preach, required no knowledge of biblical languages. This was true even for a professorship in theology at the colleges. The Massachusetts Orientalist William Bentley, whom we shall meet below, noted with contempt in 1805 that the professor-elect of theology at Dartmouth, Theodore Shurtleff, called on him in search of a Hebrew Bible: "Theological studies must be low, or the encouragement when after such an election there is such a pursuit."[63] No one could expect to make a living in America from the three learned languages, Greek, Latin, and especially Hebrew, even if this state of affairs had proved difficult for unemployed European scholars to appreciate.

Looking back on Oriental scholarship of the last third of the eighteenth century in America, later scholars, such as Moses Stuart (ch. 2.4) saw it as one of weakness and ignorance. In terms of progress in linguistic study since the preceding century, this seems a fair judgment. Late eighteenth-century American scholars, if they were learning Hebrew at all, were using grammars of a century or more ago, or their numerous imitations. Few indeed were Americans whose knowledge of the Semitic languages extended beyond Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, and, as with Greek and Latin, learning seems largely to have been by rote and recitation. Mathematics, natural sciences, philosophy, English literature, and other more practical subjects were crowding the learned languages from the curriculum and fields of interest of young men of the new republic. The Revolutionary War and its aftermath did not favor the contemplative life. As Moses Stuart expressed it, not without exaggeration, "There were no schools, no books, no teachers to aid in the study of the original scriptures."[64] Although it is scarcely true that there were no

[New York: Harcourt, 1933]); D. M. Welton, *John Lightfoot, The English Hebraist* (Leipzig: Ackermann & Glaser, 1878), 11–40, saw a sharp decline in Hebrew study in England after Lightfoot's death (1675), lasting throughout the eighteenth century, curiously parallel to the decline in Arabic study at the same time.

63. *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem* (Salem, MA: Essex Institute, 1905–1914), 3:136 [1805].

64. Stuart, *Dissertations*, 5. So too Bancroft Fowler, "This language, highly important as being the original of a large and valuable part of the Sacred Volume, has been, of late, too much neglected, by many of the literati of our country"; Fowler, *Oration*, 4–5. Moses Stuart was more specific: "I cast my eye, for a moment, on the catalogues of the New England Colleges, which contain *Exposées* of the course

books, there were indeed few schools or teachers who could make the subject seem attractive and interesting. Stuart's secondary reading, prior to his being licensed to preach, had been a few chapters of Prideaux.

Writing in 1803, the Presbyterian minister Samuel Miller, a founder of the Princeton Theological Seminary, commented,

> The study of the Hebrew language in America has long been at a low ebb. At the close of the seventeenth century much knowledge of this language appears to have existed among those venerable Divines who planted and ministered to the churches in New-England. Indeed, at that period this kind of knowledge was possessed by very few in any other part of our country. Accordingly the colleges of *Harvard*, in Massachusetts, and of *Yale*, in Connecticut, it is believed, are the only seminaries of learning in the United States in which the Hebrew language has been, for any considerable portion of time, regularly taught; and at the present period they are the only American seminaries in which there are regular oriental instructors. A few of those destined for the clerical profession in our country, make themselves acquainted, to a small extent, with this language, so inestimably important to every biblical critic; but the acquisitions of such are generally made by their own unassisted industry, or by means of private tuition.[65]

1.6. Eliphalet Pearson: Going through the Motions

The career of Eliphalet Pearson illustrates the extent to which Hebrew was declining even as a perfunctory subject of formal study in the New England colleges. He was born in 1752 in Newbury, Massachusetts, and prepared for college at Dummer Academy in Byfield.[66] There he formed a lifelong friendship with Samuel Phillips, scion of a distinguished old Calvinist Massachusetts family, and later to be the main benefactor of Phillips Academy. Pearson graduated from Harvard in 1773 and moved to Andover, where he experimented with producing gunpowder, among many other activities. He worked closely with Phillips in drawing up the constitution of Phillips Academy and was named first principal when it opened in 1778. He soon wearied of the stress of running a preparatory school, so accepted with pleasure Harvard's invitation to take up the Hancock Professorship in Hebrew and Oriental Languages, where, among other duties, he taught English composition. His knowledge of Hebrew may not have been profound, but it was adequate to a regime wherein students, in translating Holy Writ, could feel unduly pressured if called upon to point out which Hebrew words matched their sometimes-fluent Jacobean English renderings. Pearson may be credited

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of study. Here I see navigation, surveying, gauging, spherical trigonometry, conic sections, calculations of eclipses, chemistry, mineralogy, the law of nations, political economy … as an object of *liberal* and *general* education, most of them are far from having claims as high as those of the Hebrew Scriptures. *The* MORAL *education of immortal beings, ought to take precedence*"; Stuart, "Study of the Hebrew," *Quarterly Register and Journal of the American Education Society* 8 (1829): 193–205, here 199 (emphasis original).

65. Miller, *Brief Retrospect*, 66–67.

66. Klaus D. Issler, *American National Biography* 17:210–11.