JOHN COTTON
1584-1652
CHURCHMAN AND THEOLOGIAN

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My purpose in writing this thesis has been twofold: first, to make as thorough a study of John Cotton, his life and his work, as was consonant with the time at my disposal, and with the nature of a thesis; secondly, to indicate so far as is possible the extent of his influence outside the Massachusetts Bay Colony and particularly in England, his native land. That I am justified in so doing is clearly evident from a statement made by Lawrence Mayo in his revised edition of Hutchinson's famous History of Massachusetts-Bay, wherein he writes that the most comprehensive study of Cotton was made over a hundred years ago. The study to which he refers was made by A. W. M'Clure in the first half of the nineteenth century as the first in a series of volumes written for educational purposes upon the Lives of the Chief Fathers of New England. In this volume, as in other less ambitious and more recent articles on John Cotton, discrepancies of date and of order of events are to be found, and a too great dependence upon Cotton Mather's biography of his grandfather is readily discernible. Then too, although mention is made of those whom Cotton was known to have influenced, no attention has been given to the extent and nature of Cotton's reputation save within the boundaries of Massachusetts. Nor have I come across any study of Cotton's own writings, except as brief reference is made to them in studies which are inclusive of the works of all the early New England Divines.

That I am also justified in doing this research in this
country rather than in my own is proved by the fact that John Cotton was an Englishman, was educated at Cambridge, and received ordination, later becoming Vicar of St. Botolph's, Boston, Lincs., where he served for twenty years before leaving the country. His works were all published in England, and his chief opponents were clergy of the Scottish and English churches.

I have not attempted to give a complete history of the Bay Colony, or of the rise of Congregationalism: nor have I found it advisable to study in detail the controversies in theology, in church polity, and in church and state relations, in which Cotton was involved. It is for others more learned in the intricacies of seventeenth century theological debate, in the minutiae of Presbyterian and Congregational differences, in the involved local disturbances within the spheres of ecclesiastical and civil government, to undertake the work in those fields that remains to be done. I have sought only to give an accurate and full account of Cotton's life, and to examine the treatises which he wrote and the ideas for which he stood, together with the work of those who opposed him.

I gratefully acknowledge the help which I have received in the preparation of this thesis from the University of Edinburgh, the National Library of Scotland, the British Museum, John Ryland's Library, and Dr. Williams' Library. I am indebted to Principal Watt of New College, Edinburgh, and to Principal Duthie of the Scottish Congregational College, for counsel and encouragement. My thanks are also due to Canon Cook of Lincoln, The Right Rev.
R. S. M. O'Ferrall, Provost of Derby Cathedral, and Mr. E. Houlton, Verger of St. Botolph's, Boston, all of whom showed great interest and made available to me much valuable material.
CHAPTER I

The Background

The seventeenth century is acknowledged to have been a century of outstanding importance in the history and development of Congregationalism. For New England Congregationalism the major incident of that century is most frequently thought to have been the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth in the winter of 1620. For English Congregationalism the fact of most far-reaching consequence during the century could, with good reason, be said to have been the rise to power of Oliver Cromwell, Independent, General of the New Model Army, and for a short while Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland. But neither in New England nor in old was Congregationalism the fruit of one or of two or of even a few isolated though momentous events. Rather was it the result of years of continuous activity, years during which King and Parliament, magistrates and people, clergy and laity, the rich, the poor, and the in-between, all struggled to secure firm footing in the upturned soil of a long-cultivated island or in the virgin fields of an untracked continent.

Perhaps the England of the seventeenth century can best be compared to the stately willow, which, standing on the banks of an ever-moving stream, puts forth during the favourable season of the year new twigs covered with brightly
waving leaves and pliant and durable shoots fastened firmly into the living cells of its mother tree. For century upon century this sturdy England had pushed its way upward, growing strong upon what sustenance its tap-root, twisting deep into native soil, could provide. Its smaller roots, creeping slowly out to touch nearby lands, had brought to it variety, and with variety increased vigour. Good seasons and bad seasons had come and gone, leaving their contributions of normal healthy tissue or of disfiguring and even crippling scars, until at the beginning of this new and promising season England stood ready to thrust her branches across the water to greet friends or to ward off enemies, ready to drop her seeds into the ocean whose waves would carry new life to distant shores, ready to withstand the winds and storms that were to lash her again and again until it seemed as though she must surely break.

But it is unwise to labour a simile. Rather is it desirable to give a concise account of England's actual condition, her internal order and disorder, her position in relation to the nations which crowded around her, and her active concern about colonial affairs during the development of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in order that we may frame a background against which to judge the influence of the man whose life and work we are to study.

When James VI of Scotland ascended the English throne in 1603, it was immediately evident that the reign of peace achieved by Elizabeth his predecessor was doomed to an early
end. Not only did the Scottish monarch believe that his right to rule England was a right given him by birth and by God and that with such a right on his side he could speak and act with unquestioned authority, but he also instantly antagonized both the Puritans and Parliament by his failure to check the expression of his annoyance at being pressed by what they considered reasonable requests. Working through an ecclesiastical council whose laws were binding on the clergy, he forced conformity to the Church of England upon all Englishmen. When Parliament would not yield to his requests for a closer union with Scotland, and a larger revenue for his own personal use, he wielded his power as king to dissolve first one Parliament, and then another. Against both the will of the people and the advice of Parliament he bid for the favour of the Catholic Courts of Spain and France, and then, having secured the hand of the French Princess, Henrietta Maria, for his son the Prince of Wales by means of concessions to English Catholics, he backed the plan of his favourite, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, who wished to send an English army on to the continent to help Protestant Holland against Catholic Spain. The expedition failed, and in 1625 James died, leaving in England a Puritanism that was rapidly becoming a political party, a Parliament that was certainly anti-Catholic with a House of Commons increasingly aware of its own importance and lack of power, and a son, Charles, the heir to the throne, who was to follow in the direction whither his father had led.
Under the influence of Buckingham, Charles continued the process of rule which was gradually dividing England into factions. Promises made to his French wife and to the French Court regarding Catholics within his kingdom were no sooner made than they were broken, and war with France began within two years of his accession to the throne. Because he needed money to carry on the war still being waged against Spain, and the new hostilities opened against France, Charles summoned Parliament after Parliament, each time dismissing the Houses after but a few meetings because they would not vote him money nor give him their confidence. Men forced into the army or compelled to 'loan' money to the king for the support of the fleet, were objecting to a government which sent them to foreign shores to suffer starvation and disease or to prisons from which there was no release except at the king's pleasure. Dissatisfaction grew on every hand, and finally, following the assassination of Buckingham by an unpaid officer, Charles was driven to face England's defeat in the war with France, and his own unpopularity with all but a few of his subjects.

But not yet would Charles give in to those who believed that Parliament should rule supreme. When he realized with what earnestness the House of Commons was attacking the problem of unity of theological belief, striving to secure laws forbidding the expression of any doctrine save the Calvinistic, he issued a conciliatory statement to the effect that the Articles of Faith in the Book of Common Prayer were
to be understood as read, without question and without explanation. When the question concerning the methods by which he as king was to secure the money necessary for the meeting of personal and state expenses came up before the Commons, he agreed to surrender his right to seize goods provided the House would vote him the duties on certain exports and imports, as had been the custom in previous reigns. But when in 1629 the Commons, in fear of the growing Romanism apparent among the clergy, and the King's continuing grasp after power and privilege, met behind locked doors to pass resolutions forbidding innovations in religion, the levying of taxes without Parliament's consent, and payments of illegal duties, he flung aside his method appeasement and, dismissing Parliament, ruled the country for eleven years without its interference. It was during this period of time that Puritanism became the force with which Charles finally had to reckon.

During the latter half of the sixteenth century, the Puritans, those Protestants who strongly believed that Elizabeth's reform of the Church stopped short of necessary measures and that everything that savoured of Roman Catholicism should be banished from the church service, had been held in close check by the Court of High Commission and the Star Chamber both of which strove to enforce uniformity of worship throughout the land. None the less, they had grown in number and in strength. Some had fled to the continent where they were encouraged in their dislike of elaborate
church ceremony and church hierarchy by their contact with the Calvinism of the Reformed Churches. Others had remained at home, conforming under pressure to the requirements of the Church, but fighting as they could for purity of worship and the general improvement of moral and spiritual standards. With high hopes they had greeted the arrival of James from Scotland, forgetting that his mother had been a devout Catholic and that he himself had had unpleasant contact with the churchmen of the north; remembering only that he came from a nation which prided itself on its victory over Catholicism and accepted a Reformed Church and Calvinism. And it was with great disappointment that they shortly realized that the first Stuart would demand conformity to the established system just as Elizabeth had done before him.

But bending under the ill wind that had brought to them further disfavour on the part of royalty and ecclesiastics, the Puritans had still continued to gain ground. The men who desired only the purifying of the forms of worship within the Church found that under the lenient eye of a more or less sympathetic bishop they could omit the sign of the cross at baptism, or refuse to kneel while taking the Sacrament. If, by chance, they were brought to trial and to punishment by the King's men, they suffered heroically and won the increased respect of all classes alike. Those who questioned the supremacy of archbishops, bishops, and kings in private religious matters, in things indifferent, gathered about them men and women who were willing to leave England, and to
establish a really purified daughter church in another land. Others whose enthusiasm carried them beyond a disapproval of the church government to open criticism of the King's foreign policy of weighing Protestant against Catholic strength, roused the interest of many who became as much concerned with the political as with the religious aspects of Puritanism, by participating in all efforts to check the King's alliance with Spain or with France. And some who obtained important positions in the Universities were able to preach and to publish their less disturbing tenets, and to influence to a more thorough Puritanism many of their capable and earnest students.

At the invitation of Dutch theologians, James, in 1618, had sent representatives to the important Synod of Dort, the synod at which the Calvinists successfully opposed Arminianism on grounds of doctrine. At that time the English delegates who were staunch Calvinists discovered to their dismay that their royal patron, nominally orthodox in his views, had a predilection for universal redemption and the full authority of the State over the Church—both Arminian tenets of the most dangerous kind. And it was not long after the return of these men to England that it became clearly evident that Puritanism was becoming the stronghold of Calvinism, whereas Anglicanism, directed by the King and those whom he appointed to positions within the Church, was raising the banner of Arminianism. Battle lines were more and more sharply defined. Doctrine, worship, and government were all in
dispute. And when Charles dismissed his third and pre­
dominantly Calvinistic Parliament and a few months later
appointed Laud to the Bishopric of London the struggle
between Puritans and Cavaliers really began.

The lull before the storm lasted but a few years.
During that time, Laud, who was offered a cardinal's hat on
August 4th, 1633, but chose to remain Anglican, and within
two days accepted the appointment to the Archbishopric of
Canterbury, worked hard to make the Church truly uniform and
to compel strict adherence to the liturgies within the Book
of Common Prayer. Arminian in point of view, he frowned
upon the rigid Calvinists who tried by argument from the New
Testament to prove their right to worship as they pleased,
and he called many such recalcitrants to appear before the
Court of High Commission or the Star Chamber. Under such
conditions, the Puritan faction only grew stronger. True,
many of them under cover of darkness and disguise, slipped
out of Laud's hands and, in spite of guarded ports, sailed
safely to places of refuge. But all those who remained
behind were encouraged by those who had escaped, to resist
all opposition in as many ways as possible. The common
people sympathised more and more wholeheartedly with the
ever-increasing number of men who suffered, for conscience'
sake, anything from loss of property to imprisonment for
life. Those who could read and write kept watchful eyes on
all the material coming from the pens of their antagonists,
and struggled to publish comprehensive answers to all adverse
criticism even though printing presses were difficult to find. In the higher circles of society men like Lord Saye and Seal and the Earls of Warwick and of Lincoln gathered in intimate and intense groups and talked decisively and untiringly about the impossible situation existing between Charles and Parliament, and the advisability of making more extensive ventures in the colonizing of the new continent and the islands to the south of it. When the Declaration of Sports, sanctioning recreation on Sunday afternoons, was reissued, and when the communion tables were ordered to be removed to the east end of the churches, there to be surrounded by altar rails, it seemed as though an incensed people would take to arms at once. But it was not until the people of Scotland, stirred to action by an attempt on the part of Laud and Charles to force the use of a new Prayer Book upon them, declared themselves free of the episcopacy and defied the King to compel them to worship as he pleased, that the Puritans of England found the strength for determined resistance. It was then that Charles, summoning Parliament for the purpose of securing its help in his war against the Scots, discovered that, far from being willing to back him with money and men, these leading Englishmen were intent on settling their grievances with him. Threatened as he was from the north by an army of Presbyterians who were ready to rescue English Puritanism from oppression, he finally saw that there was nothing he could do save to consent to the forfeiture of many of his powers. Even then he could not win the confidence of his people.
Scotland still bristled with resistance, Ireland rose in insurrection, a majority of the House of Commons voted the Grand Remonstrance, and Charles, on January 10th, 1642, was forced to depart from London, driven out by citizens bearing arms against him. The Civil War had begun.

The progress of the war is well known; how Charles gathered his loyal subjects around him and set up his standard at Nottingham, how Parliament appointed the Earl of Essex to command its army of inexperienced and untrained men, how these men were forced further and further south by their Cavalier opponents until Oliver Cromwell, a Puritan member of Parliament who saw the great need on the part of fighting men for a real enthusiasm for their cause, rallied fine-spirited and well-disciplined troops about him and came to be recognized as the source of that energy and single-mindedness which would win through to victory, and how, on June 14th, 1645, the King's forces were completely defeated at Naseby. Of more importance to our study, however, is the progress which was made by Puritanism when once it had risen to political control.

It was inevitable that the kind of Puritanism advanced by Parliament as soon as it could turn its attention to the religious order within the state should have been Presbyterianism. At the Hampton Court Conference held by James in 1604, the Puritan ministers had made Presbyterian proposals. Men who had been in exile during the Episcopacy returned at the beginning of the Civil War having had intimate contact
with Calvinistic churches. Without the assistance of Scottish troops the Puritan campaign might never have been undertaken, nor could it be carried on with continued success unless the Presbyterian neighbours were satisfied that sound progress in religious matters was being made. Consequently in 1643 Parliament summoned leading Puritan divines to an assembly at Westminster for the purpose of discussing dogma and discipline and with a view toward the establishment of a new national church. Scottish Presbyterians of influence, among whom were Samuel Rutherfurd of St. Andrews and Robert Baillie of Glasgow, were commissioned to attend the sessions and to give advice and help. And for six continuous years these men struggled to draw up for England a religion consonant with 'the word of God, and the example of the best reformed churches'.

Two months after the Westminster Assembly had begun its deliberations the House of Commons signed the Solemn League and Covenant, pledging themselves to work for religious conformity throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland. But it was evident even at that time that such conformity - conformity to the Presbyterian order - was not desired by all members either of Parliament or of the Assembly. There were a few such members, a forceful minority, strongly Puritan, who felt that neither the state nor the clergy should control the religious life of the people, but that the individual congregation should hold such power within its own hands. To the dismay of the Presbyterian majority, some of these men, and
Oliver Cromwell was among their number, argued that each individual should be free to believe and to worship as he thought best. The result was that Presbyterianism was effectually curbed in the early years of its dominance, and another political and religious factor came into play.

The beginnings of this radical non-conformity were to be traced back into the sixteenth century, to those determined Puritans who felt that anything but complete separation from the Church of England was inconsistent with their religious convictions. Followers of Robert Browne, or of the martyrs Henry Barrowe, John Greenwood and John Penry, these Separatists were hounded into hiding by Elizabethan ecclesiastics, and although numbering some twenty thousand in 1593 according to an estimate made by Sir Walter Raleigh, were seriously reduced in number and circumstances until by the turn of the century the majority of them had conformed to the National Church or had fled the country. But with the coming of James I to the throne, the embers of this Separatism were fanned into a small flame which steadily grew in size. One man after another rose to the leadership of independent congregations, meeting with them in private homes for regular services of worship, and shepherding them across the channel to Holland whenever it became necessary to evade disaster. A few enthusiasts dared to write books in which they attacked infant baptism, urged religious tolerance, or presented some other unusual point of view. Such books were positive evidence of the growing tendency on
the part of certain of the Separatists to question orthodox doctrine or to advocate the separation of Church and State. Because many of their number disapproved of carrying non-conformity to such extremes, differences of opinion struck fire, and caused divisions to arise among the Separatists. These divisions or sects were given, by their opponents, names appropriate to the particular fallacy which they were believed to uphold. Thus groups such as the Independents, the Anabaptists, the Familists, the Antinomians, the Brownists, began to draw to themselves the ill-favour of conformers and puritans alike.

In 1620 the Mayflower left England for the New World carrying a small number of Separatists, some of whom had tasted of freedom in Holland, all of whom were anxious to find a land in which they could keep their nationality and establish their own church. To these people it seemed as though England would never be tolerant of the religion which they desired to practice. And yet little more than ten years later, in a letter to Bishop Laud, Bishop Hall of Exeter complained that there were within the bounds of London alone some eleven congregations which were Separatist in form. And in spite of Laud's stringent orders that everyone must conform, and in spite of the steady stream of migration from England to New England shores, within another ten years such congregations numbered more than eighty. Men of the calibre of John Milton were envisioning a future in which churches would be voluntarily supported, even financially, by men and
women who were free to determine how, when and where their support was to be given. Ordinary citizens without particular talents were catching glimpses of what a church, under leadership ordained by themselves, with a government ordered by themselves, could really be.

The Separatists, commonly known as the Independents, comprised the largest and most aggressive group of non-conformists of which the Presbyterians in the early days of the Civil War had to take consideration. A most vivid, though somewhat biased, description of the accumulating strength of this group following the break of the King with Parliament in 1642 has been given by William Nicholls in his book *A Defence of the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England*, published in 1715, and is worth including here because of the impression it gives of a gathering storm. Nicholls says:

...it was noised abroad beyond Sea, that Episcopacy was abolished by the Parliament in England. Therefore all these Independents, by joint consent, leave their poor Congregations abroad, and make what dispatch they can to London, not conjecturing amiss, but that in so rich an Harvest, they might obtain something, which might be worth their Acceptance. Being come to London, they presently set themselves to pick up Auditors, or (to speak in their way) to gather Members of their Congregation, in all Parts of the City. Out of this Street they gain a wealthy old Tradesman, from another a rich Widow, not sparing to make constant Court and Visits to the Houses of the most eminent Citizens; so that, in a little time, they got the most considerable of the Men and Women of the City into their Congregations. And now the common People, which were wont so much to admire the Puritans for their preaching, the Nicety being over, began to despise them as much as the Episcopalians; but as for the Independents, whithersoever they went to preach, they would follow them in a long Train, filling the
Churches, which they officiated in, with a mighty crowd, hanging in clusters upon the very windows and rafters. After this some of their novice ministers were sent abroad into the army, to gain the affections of the soldiers likewise. (pp. 54, 55)

In the planning of the Westminster Assembly, Cromwell and other members of parliament had insisted that a few representatives of the independent congregations be included among the divines. Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simpson, Jeremiah Burroughes, and William Bridge, all of whom had returned from exile in Holland as soon as puritanism had gained control of the nation, accordingly took their places in the assembly sessions and became outstanding spokesmen for the independent cause. Of their influence we have, from a letter written by Robert Baillie to David Dickson in Scotland on the first day of January 1644, the following estimate:

The independents being most able men, and of great credit, fearing no less than banishment from their native country if presbyteries were erected, are watchful that no conclusion be taken for their prejudice. It was my advice which Mr. Henderson presently applauded, and gave me thanks for it, to eschew a public rupture with the independents, till we were more able for them. As yet a presbytery to this people is conceived to be a strange monster. It was our good therefore to go on hand in hand, so far as we did agree, against the common enemy: hoping that in our differences, when we behooved to come to them, God would give us light...

But notwithstanding the diligence of these men, and their success in securing within the assembly the postponement of action on the most controversial issues, and in spite of admissions on the part of opponents such as Charles Herle that they stood their positions well, two of their fellow ministers, John Goodwin and Henry Burton, were, in 1645,
forced from their London pulpits, and except in the halls of Westminster Presbyterian domination was largely uncontested.

But this situation was not to last for long. Not only were men like John Owen quietly gathering churches which proved to be successful models of the Independent way, but the army itself, as Nicholls has suggested, was being seriously infected with Independency. Cromwell allowed the men under his command to hold what religious views they would. His Puritan background had fostered in him a Christianity that was deeper than sectarianism, and, also, experience had taught him that a wide tolerance on matters religious combined with strict discipline in matters military led to successful campaigns. It was to be observed that his men won the important victories, and that having done so, they became discontented with the way in which Parliament seemed to be mismanaging political affairs.

Briefly, the years following the adjournment of the Westminster Assembly in 1648 until the beginning of the Protectorate in 1653 were years of chaos during which the Presbyterians slowly but surely lost the power and prestige necessary for the continued control of the government. In 1647 the army of Scotland, to whom Charles had surrendered in the hope of effecting a compromise, delivered the King into the hands of Parliament. When Charles, aware of the

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1. Baillie in a later letter wrote: "Blessed be God, all the ministers of London are for us. Burton and Goodwin, the only two that were Independent, are by the Parliament removed from their places."
growing tension between the army and Parliament, immediately tried to negotiate with the Presbyterian majority in order to secure his throne before further trouble ensued, the army at once appeared upon the scene. They took the King prisoner, they demanded that the Presbyterian majority within Parliament be reduced, and when that was not done, they marched on London. They had fought for liberty from tyranny of every sort, and were determined to see that it was realised.

Perhaps things might have gone smoothly for a time, if the army in its turn had not begun negotiations with the King. As it was, Charles, unwilling to accept the proposals offered to him first by the army and then by Parliament, escaped to the Isle of Wight, leaving his two would-be allies to argue the matter out between themselves while he made a secret treaty with the Scottish commissioners. In England, Wales, and Scotland men rallied to the King's standard once again, and even while Cromwell and his army were hastening northward to put the Scottish army to rout, the man who was the immediate cause of the new uprisings was cunningly making fresh negotiations with a Presbyterian Parliament. It was not to be wondered at that as soon as it was possible the army returned to London with a terrifying determination to end the King's game. In swift succession Charles was imprisoned, Parliament was purged, a new House of Commons resolved to bring the King to justice, and, on January 20th, 1649, the sentence of death was carried out. So did the
second of the Stuarts meet defeat in the struggle between Episcopacy and Nonconformity.

In the three years following the King's execution Cromwell bent his energies to the task of quelling the insurrections instigated by Royalists who were still finding support for their cause among the Irish Catholics and the Scottish Presbyterians. When eventually he turned his attention back to England to the progress of the Commonwealth which had there been established, he discovered that members of Parliament were not only favouring friends and relatives for government positions, and accepting bribes from moneyed men who did not wish to give the government the financial support demanded of them, but were also striving to fill Parliament with members of their own political persuasion so that their particular plans for the nation could be easily carried out. Perhaps an even more serious charge against them - they were ignoring the question of religious liberty. Backed by his soldiers Cromwell dissolved this Parliament which had served its country for thirteen long and troubled years, and with the help of army officers whom he trusted, called together a Parliament representative of the various nonconformist groups. But these men proved to be entirely inexperienced in political affairs. After they had passed several unwise measures and earned great unpopularity, a small number of them gave all power directly into the hands of Cromwell. And on December 16th, 1653, Oliver Cromwell, an Independent, and an advocate of religious freedom, became Lord Protector of the Commonwealth.
During the remaining five years of his life Cromwell, following closely a Petition for the Propagation of the Gospel which had been presented to Parliament without result in 1652 by a group of Independent ministers, endeavoured to establish a satisfactory religious programme. But political power once again led to a state-controlled religion. A Commission of forty-three men supervised ecclesiastical affairs, testing candidates for the ministry, checking on order and discipline, carefully watching church attendance. Tolerance was decreed, but it proved to be a tolerance from which Roman Catholics and Episcopalians were excluded. Use of the Book of Common Prayer was forbidden, and any statement of opinion which was thought to endanger the State brought about serious consequences. In 1658 Cromwell authorized the calling of an Assembly of Independent divines for the purpose of drawing up a confession of faith, an undertaking which a number of Independents, perhaps unduly influenced by the Presbyterian Assembly at Westminster, thought to be of importance for the country. But England was not to witness this third effort to build a national church, for on September 3rd of that same year Oliver Cromwell was taken from his friends and co-religionists by death, and although the Assembly met and drew up a Declaration, the effect upon the nation was as nothing in the turmoil that followed. The unrest of the masses who had never been won to Puritanism quickly spread over the land after Cromwell's iron hand had been removed. The age-old respect for king and court sprang
full-blown into life once more, and General Monk who with the army struggled to restore order in London, finally cleared the ground for a new Parliament which immediately summoned Charles II to take his place upon the throne. The Revolution was over, the Restoration had begun. So ended that tumultuous period in English history during which both Puritanism and Separatism had tried to advance Calvinistic doctrine, change church policy, and establish an effective and acceptable relationship between church and state.

But John Cotton did not only play a part in the history so rapidly related in the past few pages. Borne by the tide which cast the seeds of Congregationalism upon New England shores, he found fertile soil in the Massachusetts Bay Colony and grew in stature until he could command the scene at his feet as well as some part of the scene in the land of his birth. And the events which were taking place on the far side of the Atlantic just prior to, and during, the years of the Civil War are a necessary part of our picture.

English colonization during the early years of the seventeenth century had been stimulated by three main factors. Bordered as she was by Spain, France, and Holland, three aggressive nations whose colonial empires were rapidly expanding, England had realized the need of holding a strong position in the race for the acquisition of more land. Engaged in almost continuous warfare both at home and abroad with a discontented army and a growing navy to support, and troubled internally by unemployment and agrarian unrest, she
had come to appreciate her dependence upon an increased trade. Torn asunder by political and religious dissent, she, or at least not a few of her citizens, had seen the importance of the establishment of colonies to which malcontents could migrate, and yet remain loyal subjects of the English throne. The result was that by the year 1640 the English flag was firmly planted on some of the islands of the south Atlantic and in several places along the eastern seaboard of the new continent, English traders were building up a profitable business in tobacco, sugar, minerals, metals, timber, fish, and pelts; and Puritans, Separatists, Episcopalians and Roman Catholics were organizing, with some success, communities within which their hopes and plans for a better life could find expression.

The reason for which colonists first sought New England shores is often disputed. There has been some suggestion that the early settlers arrived with intent to secure land there against the inroads of the French who were successfully holding territory to the north and of the Dutch who had established themselves at the mouth of the Hudson River. James Truslow Adams, in his book The Founding of New England, states that trade with the Indians, from whom valuable beaver skins could be obtained, was the original cause for taking possession of the land. But although adventurers and traders navigated New England shores and built outposts for civilization and shelters for use in fishing, lumbering, and bartering, the first real settlement of a permanent kind was
that made by those one hundred and two Separatists who sailed from England on board the Mayflower and on December 15th, 1620, after drawing up a Compact which bound them into a body politic, landed at the place now known as Plymouth. For these people neither a colonial empire nor economic gain was of prime importance: they dared the peril of the sea in order that they might find religious freedom.

The great wave of migration from England to New England began in 1630, after the Plymouth Colony had weathered a difficult ten years. It was on June 14th of that year that John Winthrop, with his fleet of eleven ships carrying more than seven hundred passengers, reached Salem to assume the governorship of the colony that had been established there almost two years earlier by Endicott, agent of the Massachusetts Bay Company. Winthrop, in whom were combined the qualities essential to the successful leadership of a new plantation, had for his deputy and assistants other competent and enthusiastic members of the Bay Company. These men had planned the enterprise carefully over a period of time and had agreed to make the venture themselves provided they could carry the Company's charter with them, thus establishing the seat of government in the colony itself, rather than, as was customary, leaving it in England in the hands of a group of directors who had not the slightest understanding of the problems confronting the colonists in the new land. Perhaps they foresaw the antagonism and misunderstanding which were later to arise between those who remained at home and those
who crossed the Atlantic. At any rate, holding the charter safely in their own hands, they were virtually independent of their mother country, and were able to disregard the cajolings and threats which dogged their footsteps and jeopardised their progress. After moving from Salem to Charlestown, they finally chose Trimountain, soon to be called Boston, for the centre of their community, and as soon as was possible set to work to develop a system of government suitable to their needs and to the peculiarities of life in the Massachusetts Bay area.

The colonists who arrived with Winthrop were followed almost at once by others anxious to search out good farm land and a constant supply of fresh water in the country that promised to be a new England. Moving about over the hills and valleys, along the coast and up the river, the adventurers chose the sites which looked most desirable and began building homes and turning the soil. Scattered though they were, they soon formed little communities within the colony, and under the guidance of the ministers who had settled among them, and following the example of the group at Boston, they began to organise the churches which were to be the heart and centre of colonial life.

Before leaving England, Winthrop, addressing those whom they were to leave behind, had said, concerning the group's religious position:

...we desire you would be pleased to take notice that the principals and body of our company esteem it our honour to call the church of England from whence we rise, our deare mother, and cannot part from our native countrie, where she specially resideth, without
much sadnes of heart and many tears in our eyes; blessing God for the parentage and education, as members of the same body, and, while we have breath, we shall sycerely indeavour the continuance and abundance of her welfare.

Despite this clear affirmation of allegiance to the Church of England, however, the first settlers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony were Puritans whose enthusiasm for non-conformity had led them, even before leaving their native land, to positions very closely bordering upon Separatism. Those who had preceded Winthrop's group to Salem had been more or less influenced in the organizing of their church by the Separatists of Plymouth who were experienced in the setting up of a church in the wilderness and, during the spring of 1629, proffered spiritual as well as medical advice to the new arrivals. In turn Winthrop and three of his friends, one of whom was John Wilson, a well known non-conformist minister, after consultation with Endicott, and with Higginson and Skelton the two Salem ministers, gathered a like congregation to which others of the colonists soon sought admission. It became clearly evident, as other churches were formed, that all the churches in the colony were to be marked with the characteristic features of the Independents - each church choosing and ordaining its own ministers, elders, and deacons; each church remaining independent of other churches; each church consisting only of members who made public confession of faith and of religious experience.

Between 1630 and 1640 the population of the Massachusetts Bay Colony grew by leaps and bounds. Although in the year 1631 only ninety more colonists arrived, and although that
number did not equal the number who had returned to England discouraged by the hardships of colonial life, those who persevered and survived the harsh winters were welded into a strong and tenacious group which defied wind and weather for the sake of an ideal. The following year a further two hundred and fifty safely reached the settlement, bringing the total number of men, women, and children in the community up to over one thousand. In 1633 a large number of non-conformists who were adversely affected by Laud's elevation to the office of Archbishop of Canterbury were received by the colonists with thanksgiving and joy. Some of these men, among them John Cotton, Thomas Hooker, and Samuel Stone, were to prove most influential in the development of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and of other colonies in New England. They had been preceded by a few friends, and were to be followed by many more, for the next year hundreds sought refuge upon New England shores, and in 1635 the peak of the movement from east to west was reached. Conditions in England were going from bad to worse under the sway of Laud and his High Commission, like-minded men who wanted not only to stamp out Puritanism at home but also to establish the episcopal order in the colonies. More and more of the Puritan leaders, men who had invested time and money in the work of the chartered companies, made preparations to leave England for one of the colonies. Because they were displeased with the type of government and the kind of churches being developed in Massachusetts, many of these men turned their attention to the colonies on the islands to the south, and gradually migration to the Bay Colony began to
slacken. A few discontented colonists left their new homes to try their fortune in more fertile territory. But some twenty thousand people had reached New England, fourteen thousand of whom had settled in the Massachusetts Bay area. And because of the number and because of the kind of people who had come, (there was one university man to every forty families in Massachusetts, and a college had been established as early as 1636), the future of the only successful Puritan colony was well assured.

It must not be thought that those who left England for America in the seventeenth century became completely isolated from the life they had known before. Although it is difficult to picture a steady traffic across the North Atlantic in days when it took sailing vessels six weeks in good weather to make the hazardous journey from shore to shore, none the less, and this is important, contact between the mother country and her daughter colonies was continuous and vital. From the beginning the young colonies needed materials and equipment which only England could supply. Requests for food supplies, animals, and seed, for tools, cloth, furniture, and utensils, were carried to friends and relatives by obliging ships' captains who for due consideration brought the forthcoming supplies back to eagerly waiting colonists. Luxuries as well as necessities were among the things desired. Letters and diaries show that china and silver, silks and shawls, musical instruments and music were imported. Since no printing press was set up in the Bay Colony until 1638, books
which were needed by ministers and teachers, books for children as well as for the students at Harvard College, had to be provided by English publishing houses. And authors in the colony who desired to be read on either side of the Atlantic were obliged to send their manuscripts back to England for publication.

There were those who found it necessary and possible to revisit England more than once after they had made their new homes in America. John Wilson, returning in April 1631 to secure the money bequeathed to New England by his brother, and to help his own wife and family make the trip across to Boston, remained until the spring of the following year when Mistress Wilson, the daughter of Lady Mansfield, was able to make the voyage back with him. In 1634 he again went to England, this time to purchase ordnance and stores for the colonists, and in October of 1635 he returned to the colony accompanied by Hugh Peters, Thomas Shepherd and other worthy ministers. John Winthrop, Jr., crossed the Atlantic twice at least to attend to business for his family and the colony. He and those with him proclaimed the cause of New England in Ireland, Scotland, in northern England and in Newfoundland. Roger Williams spent some time in London during the years 1642 to 1644 writing and publishing treatises while awaiting interviews with those who could help him in securing a charter for Rhode Island.

The correspondence which passed between the two countries appears to have been voluminous. Men like Sir Henry Vane and
Sir Richard Saltonstall who had lived for a while in the Bay Colony and had then returned to England to take their places among the important men in the Puritan government, retained their interest in and affection for the colony which they had helped to establish and frequently wrote at length to the governor or to other responsible persons about colonial policy and the state of affairs in England. Ministers kept up a fairly regular correspondence with former parishioners, telling them about the churches in the new plantation and giving them advice as to the degree and kind of non-conformity they should practice in the home land. Those who could, wrote long and affectionate letters to those who had been left behind. Of such letters, fine examples are those of John Winthrop to his wife, in which he speaks of his great satisfaction at the progress the colony is making, of his sorrow at having to be separated from her, of his grief over the loss of one of their sons who was drowned shortly after arriving in New England.

By these means as well as by trade, by consultations with voyagers who stopped in the harbour for shelter or supplies, and by negotiations with agents sent to investigate apparent disloyalties to the crown, the people in New England kept in close touch with their mother country, watching the changing political scene, the rising and, later, the declining power of the Puritans, with keen interest. In England, on the other hand, comparatively little attention was given the colonists save on the part of a few. People in general were
content to call them courageous or foolhardy, pioneers or deserters, and to forget them in the trials of everyday life. The government, whether in the hands of the Stuarts, the Presbyterians, or Cromwell, developed no really consistent policy toward them, choosing rather to aid or to check them according as it was decided that they were profitable traders, and personal friends, or political enemies and exponents of an unacceptable religious view. Even those in high position who were favourably inclined toward the Bay colonists were guilty of making arbitrary plans to depopulate Massachusetts in an effort to populate Jamaica and Ireland.

But there were some in England who looked toward New England with watchful eye and alert ear. Those who had backed the enterprise but had been forced by circumstance or position to remain behind, followed the development of the colonies with a deep concern, not because they had invested money in the Companies involved, but because they were closely bound to the colonists by ties of blood, marriage, and neighbourhood. Among such men the Earl of Lincoln was outstanding. Those who were planning to join the colonists as soon as conditions would permit, eagerly seized upon every opportunity which would increase their knowledge of the land to which they were going. Such people were often residents of parishes from which ministers had had to flee, and they sought information in correspondence with friends who had left England earlier. A third, and most important group of people interested in the Massachusetts Bay Colony consisted
of those who were watching the experiment in religious freedom being carried out there. Some of these people, for example, John White of Dorchester, wrote forceful letters to leaders in the colony urging them not to institute separatist policies such as had been put into practice in Salem. Others wrote asking for advice as to ways of effectively resisting those who were compelling conformity. When, under a Puritan Parliament, the English Divines met to consider the doctrine and polity of the Presbyterian church, certain of them wrote requesting that some of the New England ministers return to give advice and to make suggestions in the light of their recent experience. Others of the Assembly, having read much of the material that was coming from across the Atlantic, were more and more convinced that the colony was travelling down the wrong road, and they took up their pens to write lengthy treatises in opposition to the New England Way. Those who returned from the colony witnessed more or less favourably to the practices which they had observed there; and the English Independents, some of whom agreed, while others disagreed, with various aspects of the polity described by their New England brethren, also made their contributions to what became a war of pamphlets. For all of these people the ocean was merely a low fence over which opinions regarding the true nature of the church or of churches were thrown in swift confusion. New England was but a next-door neighbour.

It is true, then, to say that during the first half of
the seventeenth century much that went on in England was reflected in the life of New England, and, conversely, much that went on in New England influenced the thinking of English Puritans and Separatists. Because of this interplay of ideas there arose in both countries a sturdy Congregationalism which today has become one of the most liberal and most progressive of the Protestant denominations. But to begin the story of John Cotton, the New England Divine who was largely responsible for the definition of early Congregational polity, the Boston pastor who was to be "a famous light in his generation, a glory to both Englands", it is necessary to go back to the reign of Queen Elizabeth, to the century before England was caught in the throes of a Civil War, and before Puritans and Separatists left her shores to find religious freedom in the new world.

CHAPTER II

The Life of John Cotton

John Cotton was born in Derby on the fourth of December in the year 1584. Little is known about his parents. His father, Roland Cotton, had trained for law at the insistence of friends who apparently had thought that that profession would assure Mr. Cotton of sufficient income to help in the regaining of his family estate. However, the lawyer was far more interested in attempting reconciliations than in collecting fees, and as a consequence his financial situation can only be described as competent, not wealthy. On the

The most important sources for Cotton's life are: (1) Samuel Whiting's biography, found in Young's Chronicles, and written shortly after Cotton's death; (2) John Norton's Able being Dead yet liveth, published in 1657. Norton used Whiting's account and also (3) Excerpts from Davenport's public discourse at the time of Cotton's death, quoted in Hutchinson's Original Papers. Young thinks this discourse may never have been printed. (4) Clark's biography in A General Martyrology...Glasgow, 1770, late edition; (5) C. Mather's biography in Magnalia Christi Americana. Mather used (2) and (4).

1. Tacchella, Miller, and Page agree on this date. St. Alkmund's Parish Records indicate that Cotton was baptised Dec. 15th, 1584. But the majority of sources give the year as 1585. The Massachusetts Historical Society, Vol. III, 1794, p. 257, states that Cotton died at the age of sixty-seven.

2. Mather, Magnalia, Bk. III, p. 14. P. Thompson says that from accumulated evidence we might suppose that Cotton's father was the son of Sir Rowland Cotton, Knight, whose elder brother married two distinguished ladies and left no family. The estate should then have proceeded to Roland, the next brother.

3. Norton, Abel being Dead, p. 6f.
sixteenth of August, 1582, he had married Mary Hulbert,¹ and during the early part of his married life his home is known to have been in the Full Street, Derby.² Mistress Cotton is reported to have been pious and gracious. And it can easily be seen from the briefest of glances at the life of their son, that both parents were of fine quality. Four children were born to them. The eldest of these was a daughter, Mary; the other three were boys, named respectively, John, Roland, and Thomas.³

As a youth, John Cotton must have enjoyed the advantages afforded those who live in a town which is both ancient and modern. After a long history of occupation by the Celts, Anglo-Saxon and Danes, Derby had been created a royal borough in the time of Edward the Confessor. In succeeding centuries it had become an important Catholic centre: its six religious houses cared for monks, friars, students and lepers. Although the last of these 'houses' had been dissolved in the early part of the sixteenth century, during the reign of Henry VIII, the people of Derby still flocked to the ancient churches.

Commercially, Derby had early developed into an important ale manufacturing centre. Outlying shepherds brought wool in to the Full Street to be dyed. The town was a crossroads of

3. Mary, baptised September 1, 1583. Roland, baptised March 17, 1588. Thomas, baptised May 19, 1594. Mary married a man by the name of Coneye, who was the town clerk of Boston, Lincs. She is buried in Boston. By this marriage there was a son John. Baptism dates from St. Alkmund's Parish Register.
industry in the flourishing days of 'good Queen Bess'. It was a beautiful town too, with the river Derwent winding past its door, small hills dropping gently into the valley, and the Pennine Chain climbing to the sky in the distance. Without a doubt, John Cotton, during his years away from home, dearly loved his annual ride back into town to see friends and relatives,\(^1\) and well-known streets and buildings.\(^2\) Only rarely would be remember with a shudder the story of the blind woman, Joan Waste, who in 1556, after having her New Testament read to her, denied Transubstantiation and was burned alive in Windmill Pit.\(^3\) And perhaps as he crossed the market place to enter the Full Street he vaguely recalled the three priests who, when he was only three and a half years of age, were hanged, drawn, and quartered, after which the heads and quarters were set up on poles in and about Derby.\(^4\) At the age of seven Cotton entered the Derby Grammar School which had been founded before the year 1150.\(^5\) There he was most fortunate in having as his head master, the Reverend Richard Johnson, who had taken his Master of Arts degree at Trinity College, Cambridge.\(^6\) We have no record

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1. The following Cottons are mentioned in Parish records of Derby churches: Margaret, m. William Francys May 1572; John, m. Ann Lanttt, w. January 1602; William, m. Ann Girlington August 1618; Ann, m. Robert Humilowe October 1592.
3. Inside the cover of the oldest register of All Saints Church, Derby, is this note: a poore Blinde Woman Called Joane Waste of this parish a Martyr Burned in Windmill pitt 1st. of Augst. 1556.
5. Ibid. The building still stands, used as a Parish House by the church of St. Peter.
6. Tacchella, op. cit. Johnson was head-master of the Grammar School until 1610.
of the kind or quality of work that Cotton did while studying under Johnson, but he must have mastered his languages quickly and competently, for after five years of school, 1 "at the beginning of the 13th year of my age," 2 he was admitted to Trinity College, his schoolmaster's Alma Mater.

Cotton's fourteen years at Cambridge, from 1598 until 1612, were full of rich experience. During his first few years he was one of the group of students known as 'sizars', and in return for a food allowance from the college buttery he was expected to perform certain menial tasks. In 1602 he managed to raise his rank to that of Scholar, 3 and a good share of his expenses were taken over by the college. 4 Because of his diligent work and growing academic reputation his father's law practice is reported to have improved while his son was at the University: and Cotton was gradually freed from financial worries. Later in life he made the claim: "God kept me in the University." 5 But life at Trinity was difficult even without the problem of finding a means of subsistence. The morning chapel bell rang at five, and from then until late evening there was an exacting round of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, rhetoric, logic, metaphysics, and history, interspersed with morning and evening prayers, students' disputations, homilies and a little recreation. It was

1. 1593-1597. Page gives the dates as 1592-1597.
required that all conversation be in Latin, Greek or Hebrew, and many a minute must have passed while a student was searching for an adequate word or phrase. Discipline was very strict, and flogging was not an unusual punishment. Excursions into town were infrequent, and were forbidden to undergraduates unless they were accompanied by a senior member of college.\(^1\) Cotton was a good student, having a 'generous mind'\(^2\) and a great ability to apply himself to difficult tasks. He studied languages with zest, and was able to speak fluently and well. He soon mastered the rules of reasoning as taught according to the new logic of Ramus - a logic which stressed a practical process of reasoning which began with the observation of nature and continued through the formulation and practice of the rules observed.\(^3\) By January or February of 1603 Cotton had won his Bachelor of Arts degree, and by 1606 he completed his Master of Arts degree.\(^4\) He then looked about for a fellowship. It is conjectured that a fellowship would have been granted him by his own college if Thomas Neville, Master of Trinity, had not been spending some three thousand pounds on enlarging and

\[1.\text{Mullinger, The University of Cambridge, Vol. II, Chapter V.}\]
\[2.\text{Mather, op. cit., Bk. III, p. 14.}\]
\[3.\text{Mullinger, op. cit., p. 410f.}\]
\[4.\text{Records for the degrees given in 1602-3 are lost. D.N.B. states that Cotton's name occurs as a B.A. in 1604. Young seemed to think that Cotton's second degree was also from Trinity College, but Ball, and Venn, and others agree that it was granted by Emmanuel. D.N.B. claims that the M.A. was from Trinity, and that Cotton moved to Emmanuel in 1606, becoming a Fellow not later than 1607. Cotton's father died April 24th, 1604.}\]
improving college buildings. However, Emmanuel College, 'The Puritan College' founded in 1585 by Sir Walter Mildmay, offered Cotton a fellowship and asked him to submit himself for examination. Cotton undertook an exegesis of the third chapter of the prophet Isaiah – one of the most difficult Hebrew passages in the Old Testament, and came through with flying colours. His replies to the questions of his examiner were prompt and more than satisfactory, and Emmanuel College gladly elected as a Fellow one who was later to become lecturer, dean, catechist, and tutor.

Cotton quickly became a popular and competent lecturer, and an able teacher. Those whom he tutored liked him and enjoyed studying under him. His Academical Exercises displayed a wealth of reading and a fulness of reason which attracted many. His lectures, which sparkled with wit and were vibrant with strength and gravity, drew larger and larger audiences. And when Dr. Robert Some, Master of Peterhouse and Vice-Chancellor of the University, died early in 1609, Cotton was asked to deliver, in Latin, the funeral

1. Young, Chronicles of the First Planters, p. 420, n. 3. Also, Norton, op. cit. Thomas Allen in his letter to the reader, Cotton, Revelation 13, says: "according to his yeare it fell out so as he could not be capable of a Fellowship" at Trinity. A, 1, verso.
2. Mather, op. cit., p. 15. P. Thompson says that Cotton was a Fellow of Magdalen College. There was a John Cotton at Magdalen in 1637.
oration. Shortly after this, a florid and eloquent sermon preached from the pulpit of the University church, St. Mary's, won him the approval of the most exacting of academic minds. But Cotton himself was not content. As early as 1602 the even flow of his academic life had been ruffled by the sermons of William Perkins, a man of outspoken Puritan bias, a preacher and teacher of wide repute, and an author of disturbing religious treatises. Cotton did not wish to have religion interfere with his studies, and "when he heard the Bell toll for the Funeral of Mr. Perkins, his Mind secretly rejoiced in his Deliverance." In 1608 and 1609 he must have listened with troubled mind to the University sermons which cost those determined non-conformists, Thomas Taylor, Nicholas Rush, and William Ames, their positions in the University. And in the latter year he heard a sermon delivered by Dr. Richard Sibs which was to change the direction of his life. Concerning this important experience in Cotton's life, Thomas Alien, in his letter to the reader which prefaces Cotton's exposition of the thirteenth chapter of the Revelation, says: "...he himself had by his owne blessed experience found the tongue of that righteous man

1. Dr. Some (1542-1609) died Jan. 14, 1608(9), and was buried with great ceremony on February 10th.
2. Perkins received his Puritan bias from Laurence Chaderton, Master of Emmanuel. He published an Exposition of the Apostles Creed which was attacked, and the Reformed Catholike which indicated the essential points of difference between Protestantism and Catholicism.
(Dr. Sibbs) as choise silver...by which the Lord was pleased
to convey heavenly and eternall treasure into his souls..."¹

Listening to Dr. Sibs talk about the insufficiency of living
a blameless life and the importance of letting God into one's
life, Cotton came to feel that he had continuously resisted
God's grace. For three years he struggled against the
dawning of a new consciousness. But he built up a friend­
ship with Dr. Sibs and finally, in 1611 or 1612, made the
decision which was to direct his steps toward the New World.²

Once again he was asked to preach in St. Mary's. He knew
that he could hold the attention of all who would flock to
hear his almost unsurpassed skill of rhetoric. He yearned
for the 'humming' of the University wits which in the past
had indicated approval and assured him of a secure and
honoured reputation. Instead he chose to discourse
"practically and powerfully, but very solidly upon the plain
Doctrine of Repentance".³ The students pulled their hats
down over their eyes, his fellow lecturers yawned and
fidgeted, and his academic reputation was lost.⁴ Retreating
to his rooms to ponder upon this disquieting reaction, he was
sought out by one member of the congregation who had been
impressed. John Preston, Fellow of Queen's College, "whose
heart the Lord wrought powerfully upon by the tongue of Mr.

¹. Cotton, Revelation 13, A, 1, recto.
². Haller, Rise of Puritanism, p. 71, says 1611. P. Thompson
   says 1609.
³. Mather, op. cit., p. 15.
Cotton, knocked at his door under pretence of borrowing a book, and remained to talk seriously and at length with the man who became his 'Spiritual Father'. In recognition of a struggle well worth the winning, Cotton thereafter kept upon his wall a portrait of the peerless Dr. Sibs.

On July 13, 1610, Cotton seems to have been ordained deacon and priest at Lincoln. On June 24, 1612, shortly after his decisive but disappointing sermon in St. Mary's, he was chosen vicar of St. Botolph's parish church in Boston, Lincolnshire. Turning away from the University which had for fourteen years trained him into an academic wit and finally had unwittingly offered him the true Bread of Life, he started what was to be twenty years of service as a parish minister. At the time there was some objection to Cotton's

1. Ibid., A, 1, recto. Haller, op. cit., quotes: "For he saw an over-ruling gravity and majesty in that Sermon, that he thought had been impossible to Pulpits...For these were higher things that now were offered to him, concerns of eternal influence, which nothing could divert that he had studied hitherto." Source not given.

2. Mather, op. cit., p. 16.

3. Mather, op. cit., p. 15. Except in quoting I have used the acceptable spelling, Sibs, for this man's name.

4. This date is given by Venn and Venn, and by Adams. A presentation deed in the Lincoln Diocesan Record Office dated July 13th, 1612, and recording the presentation to Cotton by the mayor and burgesses of Boston of the vicarage of Boston, states that Cotton was ordained deacon and priest on June 13th, 1610. A Liber Cleri in that same office records a visit paid to Cotton who was ordained deacon and priest at Lincoln on June 3rd, 1610. It is possible that Cotton might have been ordained earlier in his career, as it was customary for Fellows to have received ordination before accepting fellowships. However, I have found no other records.

call to St. Botolph's on the part of Bishop Barlow, the
bishop of the diocese. Perhaps, having heard of the famous
University sermon, he suspected Cotton of being seriously
infected with Puritanism. His expressed objection, however,
was that the talented university lecturer was much too young
for the responsibilities of so large and factious a parish.
Cotton, who was twenty-seven, modestly agreed, and would have
retreated back into a situation at the University which could
have been none too comfortable, except for the interest and
affection of friends who spoke to one Simon Biby who was
'near to the Bishop'.\(^1\) Cotton was finally given the Bishop's
permission to accept the call.\(^2\)

Upon arrival in Boston, Cotton did indeed find a factious
parish. One group within the church had been responsible for
his call. Another group, headed by the Mayor of the town,
had wished to call another Cambridge graduate. When the
matter came to a vote, so the early sources tell us, there
was an equal number of ballots for both candidates. It was
necessary for the Mayor to cast the deciding vote, and to
Cotton's friends it looked as though victory would go to the
wrong man. But chance fell otherwise. And Mather tells us
that the Mayor "by a strange Mistake pricked for Mr. Cotton".\(^3\)
A second time the vote was cast: the same thing happened

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1. Norton, op. cit., p. 15. Simon Biby also helped Richard
Mather back to his parish at Foxtheth, Nov. 1633, after he
had been suspended in August for non-conformity. D.N.B.
says that Biby was the Bishop's nominee for the Boston
parish.
2. Cotton succeeded Thomas Wooll. See note 4, previous page.
3. Mather, op. cit., p. 16.
again. Either the Mayor or fate had decided upon John Cotton.

Perhaps Cotton, aware of dissension, purposely chose to avoid troubled waters for the first few years of his ministry. We are told that he concerned himself with his own problems and gradually calmed the fears and checked the suspicions of his opponents.\textsuperscript{1} Certainly he had enough problems to keep him occupied. A few months after his removal to Boston he went back to the University to take his Bachelor of Divinity degree.\textsuperscript{2} His \textit{Concio ad Clerum}, written from the text in the fifth chapter of Matthew - \textit{Uos estis sal terrae: quod si sal euanuerit, in quo sallietur?} - and delivered at that time, was very much admired. And his disputation with a worthy opponent, Mr. William Chappell, upon the Divinity-Act in the Schools was so well done as to make him famous.\textsuperscript{3} Having won his degree, Cotton's next problem was to win a wife. Through a Mr. Bayns, he had met Mistress Elizabeth Horrocks, the sister of James Horrocks, a well-known minister in Lancashire. Mistress Elizabeth was a 'vertuous Gentlewoman', discreet, grave, and attractive.\textsuperscript{4} After a successful courtship, the marriage took place on the third of July, 1613, in Balsham, Cambridgeshire.\textsuperscript{5} Hard study, plans for marriage, and the

\textsuperscript{1} Norton, op. cit., p. 16.
\textsuperscript{2} Venn and Venn say that this was taken at Emmanuel. The Corporation of Boston Records show that Cotton was given twenty pounds gratuity to help pay for the degree (May 28, 1613), because he had repaired his house at great expense to himself. The vicarage was entered from the church yard. Thompson includes a sketch of it in his volume, p. 214.
\textsuperscript{3} Norton, op. cit., p. 15.
\textsuperscript{4} Mather, op. cit., Bk. III, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{5} Dictionary of American Biography, IV, p. 462.
still recent experience of regeneration through which he had passed, had whipped Cotton into shape, thoroughly preparing him for his work. He felt that he had been "tempted of the Devil",¹ and had been victorious. And on the very day of his marriage, according to Mather, "he first received that Assurance of God's Love unto his own Soul, by the Spirit of God, effectually applying his Promise of Eternal Grace and Life unto him, which happily kept with him all the rest of his Days: for which cause he would afterwards often say, God made that Day, a Day of double Marriage to me."²

With resolution Cotton now turned his attention to the troubles of the church. The Arminian controversy was throwing Boston into confusion, and Doctor Baron, a physician who was entirely convinced of the certainty of salvation by faith and by the power of man's free will, had won to his side many of the chief men of the town.³ Cotton avoided a frontal attack. He discovered the strengths of his opponent. He listened to the debates which were going on all about him. Then he publicly preached and privately talked in defence of what he considered to be the essential points of Christianity - God's eternal election, the redemption of the elect, the vocation of a sinner, and the impossibility of the fall of a sincere believer.⁴ His gift of speech was a strong sword,

¹ Norton, op. cit., p. 15.
and the people were rescued from heresy. Even Dr. Baron confessed his error, and Cotton gained the lasting respect of town and parish. Years later, his worthy successor in the First Church of Boston in New England could report of Cotton that "he hath been heard to say by Testimony yet alive, and above exception, That he looked at Arminianism as another Gospel, and directly contrary to the tenor of the Covenant of Grace". But the church in England could only report that by gentle persuasiveness, by a painstaking and skilful use of words, by a sincerity that shone throughout his whole conduct, Master Cotton had preached to them the true Gospel.

Looking back upon his ministry at St. Botolph's from the distance of new shores and new times, Cotton afterwards said:

> When I think of the sweet and gracious company
> That at Boston once I had,
> And of the long peace of a fruitful ministry
> For twenty years enjoy'd,
>
> The joy that I found in all that happiness
> Doth still so much refresh me,
> That the grief to be cast out into a wilderness
> Doth not so much distress me. (2)

And without a doubt the twenty years of service in Boston were some of the best years of Cotton's life.

He was an excellent and convincing preacher, delivering two sermons every Sunday, and special sermons at the monthly celebration of the Eucharist. He was methodical in his work and undertook to cover the first six chapters of John, the book of Ecclesiastes, and the prophet Zechariah in his

2. Ibid., pp. 29, 30.
morning sermons, a catechistical treatment of doctrine in his evening sermons, and pertinent chapters of Scripture at the celebrations of the Lord's Supper. He also preached "at the election of their mayors, and at that time when they took their oath, and were installed in their office, and always (if he were at home) at the funerals of those of the abler sort that died". It is evident from this comment that sermons were unnecessary at the usual sort of funeral service!

We have reports of two occasions on which Cotton's preaching had unusual effect. One day "whilst he was...handling the Sixth Commandment, the Words of God which he uttered were so quick and powerful, that a Woman among his Hearers, who had been married sixteen Years to a Second Husband, now in Horror of Conscience, openly confessed her murdering her former Husband, by Poison, tho' thereby she exposed her self to the Extremity of being burned". Another day, a happier one, I am sure, the Earl of Lindsay and the Earl of Dorset, chancing to pass through the town, heard Cotton preach on the 'Duty of living by faith in prosperity' - a sermon which had originally been concerned with adversity but was quickly altered to fit the unexpected guests. The two men were much impressed and returned on another day to hear a lecture on civil government.

3. M'Clure claims the two to have been the Earls of Lindsay and Dorchester. There was no Earl of Lindsay that I can find. Norton and Mather also say Dorchester. There was no Earl of Dorchester. The Viscount of Dorchester seems to have been abroad most of the time. I rather think the Earl of Dorset who later comes into the story was meant.
Occasionally members of the Boston congregation took detailed notes on Master Cotton's sermons, and after their minister was safely harboured in Massachusetts Bay and the press was finally available to them, they published all such notes as they could find.\(^1\) Truly the pulpit was Cotton's great lighthouse from which the light of the Gospel spread abroad into the lives of his parishioners. And it is right that the following words should have a place on the memorial erected to John Cotton in St. Botolph's church in 1907:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ne viri eximii nomen} \\
\text{utriusque ordis desiderii et decoris} \\
\text{Diu quis a templo nobili excularet,} \\
\text{In quo per tot annos oracula divina} \\
\text{Diligenter docte sancteque enuntiavisset...} 
\end{align*}
\]

(2)

In addition to his Sunday sermons which, with his prayers, frequently used up the better part of six hours, Cotton gave weekly public lectures. At first there was just the usual Thursday afternoon gathering,\(^3\) but, as his fame grew, additional meetings had to be arranged. Scholars from Germany and Holland were attracted to Boston and remained to hear all that fell from his lips.\(^4\) From Cambridge came students who were directed to Master Cotton by Dr. Preston, who himself paid an annual visit to talk to his friend and

\[1. \text{Such publications are probably - Gods Mercie mixed with His Justice, The Way of Life, Expositions of Revelation, Canticles.}\]

\[2. \text{"...in order that the name of an illustrious man, the love and honor of both worlds, might not any longer be banished from that noble temple in which he diligently, learnedly, and sacredly expounded the divine oracles..."}\]

\[3. \text{Mather, op. cit., p. 18.}\]

\[4. \text{Norton, op. cit., p. 17.}\]
Until the year of Preston's death (1628) it was commonly rumoured: "Mr. Cotton is Dr. Preston's seasoning vessel." All these people were accustomed to assemble at Cotton's home. But when the townspeople begged entrance to listen to the lectures and the discussion, the small rooms were found to be inconvenient, and additional public meetings were scheduled in the church for Wednesday and Thursday mornings and Saturday afternoons. It was finally necessary for the church to secure a colleague for Mr. Cotton, and Anthony Tuckney who married one of Cotton's cousins and later succeeded him in the vicarage, was appointed as assistant.

The lectures grew in importance and Cotton wrote and delivered detailed expositions of I and II John, Canticles, and the parables in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Cotton never neglected his correspondence, and answered "many Letters that were sent far and near, wherein were handled many difficult cases of Conscience, and many doubts cleared to great satisfaction". Some of these letters were used by opponents as convenient ground upon which to base a refutation of some phase of Cotton's theology. In The Way

1. Mather, op. cit., p. 18.
2. M'Clure, op. cit., uses this quotation, p. 75.
3. Whiting, op. cit., says that lectures were on the 4th and 6th mornings, and the 7th afternoon at 3. P. 425. Other sources agree on Thursday rather than Friday.
4. Young, op. cit., p. 425, n. 2. D.N.B. says that Tuckney was Cotton's cousin. Boston records show that Tuckney was elected Town Preacher on October 2, 1629. Lincoln Diocesan Records show that Tuckney was presented the vicarage on July 24th, 1633.
6. Ibid., p. 18.
Cleared Cotton tells us something of a letter which about the year 1618 he had written to a Mr. Pell, a minister and friend, living some sixteen miles from Boston, who was in doubt about the doctrine of reprobation. This letter, which answered certain of Mr. Pell's questions, reached the hands of Dr. Twisse who wrote an answer which was subsequently published in 1646. Some of Cotton's letters concerned social issues of his time which are still problems in ours. For example, in 1625 he wrote to a friend justifying dancing from Old Testament passages. He forbade "only lascivious dancing to wanton ditties". In other letters Cotton gave sage advice, or helpful consolation. Nathaniel Rogers, in 1630, needed a warning against preparing sermons on Sunday except in dire necessity. The next year he received a letter from Cotton expressing sympathy over his illness. Occasionally a letter was written by Cotton to a parson of outstanding repute who had requested correspondence. Such a one is the letter now preserved in the Life of the Most Reverend Father in God, James Usher compiled by his chaplain, Richard Parr. Usher, the Archbishop of Armagh, had written Mr. Wood, a minister and a neighbour of Cotton's, that he wanted to hear from Cotton concerning "the way of God's eternal Predestination and the Execution of it". Cotton wrote immediately,

1. P. 34.
indicating his affection and reverence for Usher and sending him the discourse prepared a year earlier for Mr. Pell. He requested Usher to let him know what, if any, tenets were unsafe.

There are many indications that Cotton, throughout his Boston ministry was held in high esteem and was much loved. The town corporation voted him gratuities of five or ten pounds each year from 1616 until 1631. As early as April 22, 1614, they increased his income by thirty pounds a year "during the pleasure of this house; part of which was heretofore employed towards the maintenance of a preacher to assist the vicar, which is now saved".\(^1\) Dr. John Williams, who succeeded Bishop Barlow as Bishop of Lincoln in 1621, followed his career with deep interest and recommended him to Royal favour.\(^2\) Thomas Leveret, one of Boston's elders, was a self-appointed guardian, warding off troubles and dangers. The Earl of Dorset put himself at his disposal, to give help when it was needed, and the Earl of Lincoln frequently opened his home to Cotton and his wife. Others besides Preston made great effort to visit him occasionally. In 1627 Charles Chauncy wrote: "I shall be glad to see you at my poor vicarage, in transitu, and for my part (if God permit) I will not fail to see you once a year..."\(^3\) But there were enemies

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1. Thompson, The History and Antiquities of Boston, p. 414.
as well as friends, and Cotton's earliest biographer took care to show that the ministry was not without its dark side.

He had many enemies at Boston, as well as many friends, and some that rose up against him, and plotted secretly to undermine him, and others that practised more openly against him. But they all of them were blasted, either in their names, or in their devices, or else came to untimely deaths; which shows how God both owned his servant in his holy labors, and that in the things wherein they dealt proudly against him, he would be above them. (1)

To friend and enemy alike Cotton responded with true Christian love. The people of Derby, who greeted him warmly on his annual visits, never failed to have capable ministers preaching from their pulpits because of Cotton's forethought and care. 2 Nathaniel Ward, a minister who was to join Cotton in New England later on, closed a letter to Cotton with a keen appreciation of his friend.

And so blessing God with my whole heart, for my knowledge of you and imderited interest in you, and thanking you entirely for that faithful love I have found from you in many expressions of the best nature, I commit you to the unchangeable love of God... (3)

And in his will Isaac Johnson, who had lived some time in Lincolnshire before leaving England for Massachusetts-Bay, included a special gift—thirty pounds, a gown cloth, and also a half-share in the advowson of the parish church of Clipsham— to Cotton "from whom, to the praise of God's grace, he acknowledges to have received much help and comfort in his spiritual estate..." 4

1. Whiting, in Young, Chronicles, p. 427.
3. Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 120, n.
A reformation of Boston gradually took place. Profaneness and superstition decreased, and people flocked to join the church, to embrace and to practise Christianity. But a more serious reformation was taking place in the mind and heart of Master Cotton. Within four years after accepting the call to Boston, he began seriously to question the 'ceremonies' of the Church of England. He himself later said that shortly after the trouble with Arminianism "God opened mine eyes to see the sin of conformity". There were two grounds for his dissent. They were, in his own words:

First, The Significacy and Efficacy put upon 'em, in the Preface to the Book of Common-Prayer: That they were neither dumb nor dark, but apt to stir up the dull Mind of Man, to the remembrance of hid Duty to God, by some notable and special signification, whereby he may be edified; or Words to the like purpose. The Second was the Limitation of Church Power, even of the highest Apostolical Commission, to the Observation of the Commandments of Christ, Mat. 28.20. Which made it appear to me utterly unlawful for any Church-Power to enjoyn the Observation of indifferent Ceremonies, which Christ had not commanded...

Cotton could not accept the value placed upon liturgy, vestment, kneeling, and the sign of the cross, and he could not agree that the Church had the right to enforce these 'indifferent' practises. He began to omit from his services those things which he thought unnecessary, and the greatest part of his parishioners supported him in his action. His influence spread over the rest of the town, and finally the Bishop's Court decided to silence him. They offered him a preferment

1. Mather, op. cit., p. 18.
2. Cotton, The Way Cleared, p. 34.
if he would conform to the rites of the Church just once. He refused. Then Thomas Leveret, without Cotton's knowledge, presented a gift of a pair of gloves to one of the proctors of the archi-episcopal court, made an appeal from the court below, swore that "Mr. Cotton was a man conformable to the mind of the Lord", and Cotton was restored to the ministry! The charge, apparently, had not been thought too serious, but the situation itself was more serious than anyone knew. Cotton continued to reject the ceremonies for which he found no scriptural command. Writing to Bishop Williams on the 31st of January 1624(5), Cotton denied that people were coming from other parishes to receive the communion without kneeling at the Boston church, but he reminded the Bishop that his doubts concerning kneeling had been presented to Williams and to the Bishop of Salisbury some time earlier. Cotton also came to hold the position that, according to Scripture, a bishop should rule a diocese no larger than a particular congregation. Concerning this tenet, he later said: "I... learned of Mr. Parker, and Mr. Baynes (and soon after of Dr. Ames) that the Ministers of Christ, and the Keyes of the Government of his Church are given to each particular Congregationall Church respectively." Thus we can see that he was in contact with and may have been quite closely associated with the leading non-conformists of the day. In 1627 Chauncy, mentioned before as a correspondent of Cotton's, wrote to

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1. M'Clure, op. cit., p. 73.
Cotton asking for his...

...best direction how I may, with most profit and edification of my charge, proceed in the Lord's work. I have a very large parish and a dissolute town to deal with...and which is worse, we have little government in the place to assist us...I have already sustained aliqua gravamina conscientiae, to go thus far in regard to the government and discipline of our church, and am likely to undergo more in the book of articles, which we are bound to read publicly and to yield our assent unto; the article concerning the ordination of bishops and ministers doth somewhat trouble me, as also the ceremonies which we are bound unto, which though I forbear myself, yet I know not how to avoid but that my curate must use if I will stand here. I pray afford your wisest advice herein. Haec sub sigillo. (1)

We can imagine that Cotton gave sound and helpful advice. His friends among the townspeople continued to follow whither he led. After he had crossed the Atlantic he made claim that the church at old Boston had, under his guidance, entered into a covenant with the Lord and each other to practise a purity of worship which should be more than the old nonconformity.  

James Truslow Adams believes that Anthony Tuckney was appointed Cotton's colleague in order that Cotton might purify the service as much as he pleased for the minority of the church members who were his adherents, while Tuckney and the majority worshipped according to the old form. However no hint of such a division within the church can possibly be found in the letter written to the members of St. Botolph's on July 7th, 1654, in which Tuckney says: "I oft call to mind those most comfortable days, in which I enjoyed the happiness of joint-

ministry with so able and faithful a guide, and both of us so much satisfaction and encouragement from a people so united in the love of the truth and of one another."¹

However the situation in his own church may have been, we know that by March of 1630 Cotton had become greatly interested in the New England experiment which had been planned by the Massachusetts Bay Company, among whose members were some non-conformists who were connected by marriage with the Earl of Lincoln. Perhaps he had been invited to attend the meeting on July 28th, 1629, at Sempringham, the Earl's seat in Lincolnshire, at which John Winthrop, Isaac Johnson, Thomas Dudley and John Humphrey made the decision to leave their native land and venture the trip across the sea to found a 'plantation' in which they could enjoy freedom of worship. In any case, he must have been well-known and well-liked by these men, for when they did leave,² to board ship at Southampton, Cotton accompanied them and preached the farewell sermon.³ He chose for his text II Samuel 7.10;⁴ and assured them that the "placing of a people in this or that Countrey is from the appointment of the Lord".⁵ "What hee hath planted he will maintaine," he said; and having inspired them

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2. Date of departure April 8, 1630, according to Ellis, The Puritan Age in Massachusetts.
4. Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime.
5. Cotton, Gods Promise To His Plantations, p. 3.
to believe that they were the Lord's chosen people, he advised them to train their children in religion, work for the public good, advance learning, grow strong in righteousness, and "offend not the poore Natives, but as you partake in their land, so make them partakers of your precious faith".\(^1\) His interest in the new plantation grew as reports of the Massachusetts-Bay colony drifted back to Boston by letter and by word of mouth. He believed that he had given his blessing, not to separatists from the Church of England, but to a group of men who would plant the seed from which would grow a daughter-church, strong in faith and pure in form. So it was with some severity that on October 2nd, 1630, he wrote to Skelton,\(^2\) a minister who had accompanied the first group of planters who had sailed in 1629 under Endicott's leadership, taking him to task for having been unduly influenced by the Separatists who had settled at Plymouth, in the matter of not accepting at the Communion Table those coming from England under Winthrop's leadership. "You went hence," he said, "of another judgment, and I am afraid your change hath sprung from New England men, whom I esteem as godly and loving Christians; yet their grounds which they have received for this tenet from Mr. Robinson, do not justify me; though the man I reverence is godly and learned."\(^3\) However, in the same letter, Cotton, gave Skelton the definition of a church which was thereafter

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1. Ibid.; also quoted by Morison, p. 72.
2. Skelton had formerly been minister in Sempringham.
to be used by a denomination quite distinct from the Church of England. A church, he said, "is a flock of saints, called by God into the fellowship of Christ, meeting together in one place, to call upon the name of the Lord, and to edify themselves in communicating spiritual gifts, and partaking of the ordinances of the Lord."¹

A few months after Winthrop and the others sailed for New England, in September of 1630, Cotton and his wife both became seriously ill with a tertian ague. The Earl of Lincoln took the invalids into his home,² and there sometime after the second of October Mistress Cotton died.³ For eighteen years she had been a valuable and beloved helpmate, but now Cotton was left to face the problems of his parish alone. He took an extended leave of absence from his church, travelled to London and to other places, and fully regained his health before returning to his work.⁴ Back in Boston he continued to maintain his nonconformity, protected, probably, by his friendships with the Earl of Lincoln, the Earl of Dorset, and Bishop Williams, who in 1621 had become Keeper of the Great Seal. His own tolerance and tact, which were the result of his natural love for people, protected him

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¹ Quoted by M'Clure, op. cit., p. 135.
² M'Clure, op. cit., p. 82. Theophilus Clinton, the fourth Earl, took care of them after February, 1631.
³ Dictionary of American Biography, IV, p. 462. P. Thompson, p. 416, and D.N.B. say that Cotton's wife died in April. Corporation records of Boston say that on Nov. 1st, 1631, seven pounds and ten shillings were paid to Mr. Mayor for expenditures on Mrs. Cotton's funeral. Thompson, p. 416.
⁴ Mather, op. cit., p. 19.
from complaints within his parish. On April 25th, 1632, he married Mistress Sarah Story, a widow who had been a close friend of his first wife.¹ In June he received a letter from a former parishioner who had just returned from New England in order to get his family. The parishioner, a Mr. Coddington, wrote:

I am, I thank God, in bodily health, yet not enjoying that freedom of spirit, being withheld from that place which my soul desireth and my heart earnestly worketh after; neither, I think, shall I see it till towards the next spring, my wife being with child, and all her friends unwilling she should go in that condition. (2)

Then the blow fell. One not too reputable townsman who had suffered punishment by the town magistrates for dissolute living, went to London to complain to the High Commissioners that Boston magistrates were not kneeling when taking the Sacrament, and were not observing other required ceremonies. For a time he refused to give evidence against Master Cotton, for the minister had done him no harm. But at last the name

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1. Ibid. Mistress Story was the daughter of Anthony Hawkred and the widow of Roland Story.
2. Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 24. The first Mrs. Coddington died of pestilence in Massachusetts in 1630. Skelton had refused to baptise a child of this marriage. Coddington left New England March 30, 1631, with Wilson and others. He returned May 1633 with his second wife Mary on board the Mary and Jane. She became the 158th member of the Boston Church. Winthrop, I, p. 102.
was forced from him, and Cotton was called before the court. To escape imprisonment that might well have lasted the rest of his life, Cotton went into hiding. He wrote the Earl of Dorset, asking him to intercede on his behalf, but the Earl, after a fruitless attempt to win sympathy from the Commissioners, wrote reply that "if he had been guilty of Drunkenness, or Uncleanness, or any such lesser Fault, he could have obtained his Pardon; but inasmuch as he had been guilty of Non-Conformity, and Puritanism, the Crime was unpardonable; and, therefore, said he, You must fly for your Safety." In disguise, Cotton travelled to London and sought out a friend, John Davenport, who was then vicar of St. Stephen's in Coleman Street. Some years later, writing from New Haven in New England, Davenport said: "I admire the special providence of God towards myself and some others in it, amongst whom safe retirement and hiding places were provided for him in and about London." This statement of Davenport's is even more significant when we realize that he and others, among whom

1. M'Clure used Mather's story of the 'debauch'd Fellow', and names him Gawain Johnson. Rev. John Rogers of Dedham prophesied that Johnson would come to no good end. Johnson died, according to report, of the plague, and was found under a hedge in Yorkshire. Samuel Fuller, deacon of the Plymouth Church, wrote home while visiting Charlestown, Mass., August 2, 1630: "Bishop Laud is chancellor of Oxford. Five ministers are to appear before the high commissioners, amongst whom Mr. Cotton, of Boston, is one." Felt, op. cit., p. 139. But Cotton was not called until 1632. The Domestic Papers of Charles I contain in a minute book of the proceedings of The Court of High Commission this record: Feb. 18, 1633-34. John Cotton, clerk, Richard Bellingham, and Allerton Hough, all of Boston. Inconformity. Fined 50£ apiece. (PP. 479, 480.)


were included Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye and also Henry Whitfield, tried to persuade Cotton to conform, but were finally convinced by him that nonconformity was the only stand that could rightfully be taken. From London on October 3rd, 1632, Cotton wrote to his wife asking her to send on some clean linen for him. He assured her: "I am very fitly and welcomely accommodated, I thank God." It was only six weeks later that she joined him, never to return to her Boston home again.

Though Cotton may have had Holland in his mind as a safe place of refuge, it seems likely that the Massachusetts-Bay Colony from the first looked a more promising place. Boston friends of his had migrated to New England as early as 1630, and Massachusetts court records indicate that on September 7th of that year, Trimountain, the place which was to be chosen for the seat of the colony's government, was renamed Boston after the town from which some of the settlers had come, and, notes Hutchinson, "from respect to Mr. Cotton, minister of Boston in England, who they expected to follow them." Cotton consulted John Dod, the elderly puritan divine of Fawsley, Northamptonshire, concerning whether or not he should leave England. The observant old minister replied,

2. Young, op. cit., p. 432.
4. Mather says that, intending to go to Holland, Cotton changed his name and his dress and hastened to a shipping place. He was persuaded by a kinsman not to go to Holland, but rather to try London.
"That the removing of a Minister, was like the draining of a Fish-pond; the good Fish will follow the Water, but Eels, and other Baggage Fish, will stick in the Mud."¹ We can hardly go so far as to say that those who remained behind in Boston deserved the label 'Baggage Fish'. But some fifteen years later, writing to his former parishioners, Cotton describes what happened in these words:

And though at the last, in that houre and power of darkness, when the late High Commission began to stretch forth their malignant Arm against us, I was forced (as Jacob did from Laban) to depart secretly from you...yet sundry of you yielded up your selves...to follow the Lord...and to go along with me...in this (late) howling wilderness. (2)

On May 7th, 1633, Cotton wrote to the Bishop of Lincoln, tendering his resignation. He explained what policy he had tried to follow while at Boston: "The bent of my course hath been...to make and keep a threefold Christian concord amongst the people: between God and their conscience; between true-hearted loyalty and Christian liberty; between the fear of God and the love of one another." He then described the situation which was forcing him to leave: "the Lord, who began a year or two ago to suspend, after a sort, my ministry from that place by a long and sore sickness, the dregs whereof still hang about me, doth now put a further necessity upon me wholly to lay down my ministry there...in things pertaining to God and his worship, still I must, as I ought, live by mine

¹. Mather, op. cit., p. 20.
². Cotton, Of The Holiness of Church Members, p. A, 2, verse.
own faith, not theirs (the Commissioners). ¹ A second letter went to the Boston Assembly of Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council in July. On July 8th the Bishop declared the vicarage void of incumbent and Cotton was free to leave. ²

Only with great difficulty did Cotton arrange his departure. Laud, who in 1633 was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, was rapidly taking the steps he thought necessary to prevent Puritans from leaving England and planting their corruption on other shores. While Bishop of London (1628–1633) he had known of, and perhaps had been involved in, the action taken by the High Commission against Cotton; and now in an attempt to catch both Cotton and Thomas Hooker ordered that all ships leaving English shores submit to a search upon arrival at the Isle of Wight. The captain of one ship, however, had been persuaded to take on a few more passengers after leaving the island, and, at the Downs,³ still in disguise, Cotton and Hooker joined the people on board the Griffin, sometime about the middle of July, 1633.⁴ Hunted like rabbits, the two ministers who were to play such an important part in the settling of a new country fled – not away from their work – but toward larger and heavier responsibilities.

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1. Young, op. cit., p. 434.
2. Ibid. Thompson thinks there was only one letter. However, the usual practice indicates two.
3. Sources agree on stating the place as The Downs. Further description is not given. Some point off Dover seems questionable for the ship would then have turned around on her course, travelling back up the coast.
4. The date July 13th is given by Thompson.
For over seven weeks the three hundred ton ship ploughed the seas. As soon as it was safe Cotton and Hooker discarded their disguise, and with Samuel Stone, another younger minister, entered upon their religious duties. Morning, afternoon, and evening the people gathered to hear their ministers preach. Four of the two hundred passengers died, and their burials were performed at sea. The frightened were comforted; the lonely, made glad; and the sick, given good care. In August after a month at sea Mistress Cotton gave birth to a son, and the grateful father, conscious of the importance of this venture across the Atlantic and hopeful of the destiny awaiting them on the shores of New England, named his first child Seaborn. Time gradually passed until at last, on Wednesday, the fourth of September, the harbour of New Boston was gained. There, in company with other ships which had made the perilous voyage, the Griffin dropped anchor; and with hearts full of thankfulness and joy, the passengers went ashore to be welcomed alike by friends and by strangers.

To the people of Boston, Master Cotton's arrival was the fulfilment of a three years' hope, the answer to many a colonist's prayer. Ecclesiastical affairs, as well as civil

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1. Winthrop says that the voyage took eight weeks from the Downs. Journal, I, p. 108. Winthrop's History of New England is hereafter called his Journal.
3. Mather and M'Clure say September 3rd. Winthrop gives the fourth.
4. Hubbard, p. 169, says that there were many ships coming into Boston harbour in September of 1633 'so as that sometimes a dozen or fourteen came into the harbour in one and the same month'.
affairs, needed organizing and defining. The Boston church needed a teacher,\(^1\) and were looking for one who could clarify moot doctrinal points in addition to indoctrinating into the essentials of Christianity all those who attended the church services. Individuals were in need of a spiritual guide to help them through the troubles which in a strange and difficult land so often beset them. And it was with a sign of relief that they turned to Cotton, asking him to preach on his first Sabbath\(^2\) evening in New England. He took as his text the sixth chapter of Canticles and discussed various kinds of churches and their different grades of purity. At this meeting his name and that of his wife were put forward for consideration for church membership. The following Sunday (September 15th) Cotton conducted the afternoon worship, making his Confession of Faith while at the same time explaining his interpretation of the rite of baptism. Because he stated his belief that it was neither a modest nor an authorised procedure for a woman to make public confession of faith, Mistress Cotton was asked if she agreed to his confession. Her agreement was indicated and the church admitted them to membership. The pastor, Mr. Wilson, then baptized Seaborn whose baptism had

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1. John Wilson was Pastor. When in 1631 he returned to England to get his family, John Eliot substituted for him. The Church offered Eliot the teaching eldership but he declined in order to become minister to friends newly arrived from England and settling in Roxbury. Morison, Builders of the Bay Colony, p. 291.

2. Winthrop, I, p. 110. The word Saturday is used but is questioned. Sunday is suggested as possible. The Sabbath extended from Saturday at sundown to Sunday sundown. Felt, p. 168, says it was Sunday the eighth.
been postponed until the Cottons should become members of a 'settled congregation'. Master Cotton presented the child; no sponsors were thought necessary for the ordinance of baptism was held to be designed for the parents as an "incentive for the help of their faith".¹

At a meeting of Governor Winthrop and the Court of Assistants on Tuesday, September the 17th, it was officially decided that Cotton should settle at Boston while Hooker and Stone joined the former's friends in Newtown. Those who had come with Cotton were given permission to establish themselves as farmers in any part of the Bay Colony not belonging to other towns.² Thus Cotton was designated as the future Teacher of the Boston church. His ordination was planned for the tenth of October, which day - a Thursday - was observed as a day of Fasting. When the church met, Leverett, who had left the old Boston church to accompany Cotton on his flight, was chosen ruling elder, and was then ordained with prayer and the imposition of hands by the presbytery - the pastor Mr. John Wilson, and the other ruling elder. Following this the church members voted, by the raising of their hands, that Mr. Cotton should be asked to become their teacher. The question was immediately put to Mr. Cotton by Mr. Wilson: and when the assenting reply had been given, the pastor and the two elders, placing their hands upon Cotton's head, gave him, in behalf of the church membership, charge to fulfil his

¹ M'Clure, op. cit., p. 109.
² Winthrop, I, p. 110.
new responsibilities. They then blessed him. The ministers of the neighbouring churches came forward to give him the right hand of fellowship. Mr. Wilson next "made a mutual stipulation between the church and its newly inducted teacher", evidently briefly explaining the contract which had just been put into effect between the minister and the congregation. And finally Cotton commended to the church those who had come with him from England to the new country.\(^1\) Hutchinson states in his *History of Massachusetts-Bay* that the "circumstances and order of proceeding, in Mr. Cotton's ordination, were intended as a precedent, and the congregational churches in New-England have generally conformed thereto ever since."\(^2\) It is clearly evident that a form of ordination had developed by the closing months of 1633, for all the incoming ministers called to be pastors or teachers were given charge of their churches in a very similar way. I should surmise however that the real reason for the subsequent following of the procedure used at Cotton's ordination was not an intention on the part of the Boston church to set a precedent but rather the fact that a careful record of the day's events was kept by Governor Winthrop.

Although Cotton's ordination did not take place until October, by December of 1633 Governor Winthrop who was a member of the Boston church was able to report: "It pleased the Lord to give special testimony of his presence in the

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1. Ibid., p. 115.  
2. Hutchinson, p. 34.
church of Boston, after Mr. Cotton was called to office there. More were converted and added to that church than to all other churches in the Bay...Divers profane and notorious evil persons came and confessed their sins, and were comfortably received into the bosom of the church.”

It is evident that the members of the church were drawn to Cotton. On November 11th when they met to consider what stipend they would pay Mr. Wilson and Mr. Cotton, they voluntarily contributed sixty pounds toward the finishing of Mr. Cotton’s house. Cotton, who had spent some eighty pounds and more for passage, building, and other expenses, refused to accept more than the sixty pounds, and was so pleased by the successful gathering of that amount that within a month he suggested that his maintenance and all church expenses be paid out of a treasury raised from weekly contributions.

It is worth while noting here that in spite of the truth of Osgood’s statement that “the passage of orders for the taxation of all inhabitants for the support of the clergy and worship began with the founding of the colony and was regularly continued”, Cotton was one man who saw the value to his congregation and to himself of the maintenance of the church and its ministers by voluntary contributions. And it may be that because of his insistence that this method of raising money be tried, the New England churches wrested themselves free from a

1. Winthrop, I, p. 121.
2. Ibid., p. 118.
3. Ibid., p. 121.
government system of support by taxation. Preaching from the eighth chapter of I Kings, on May 2nd, 1639, he declared that "the minister's maintenance should be by voluntary contribution not by lands or revenues or tithes, etc.; for these always been accompanied with pride, contention and sloth, etc."¹ Both he and Mr. Wilson received their income from the free will offerings of the congregation.² And Cotton found it possible, in 1639, to persuade the people of his parish to raise the money necessary for the building of a new house of worship by voluntary contribution rather than by assessment.³ That the Boston church grew in strength and in unity for the first three or four years after Cotton's arrival may have been in part due to their teacher's emphasis on the importance of giving.

As teacher of the Boston church, Cotton's main responsibility was the indoctrination and the education of the people. The genius which had won him many auditors at Cambridge and at St. Botolph's immediately became evident at the Boston church, and the people who flocked to hear him felt that an "eminent spirit of grace was poured into the lips of that famous preacher".⁴ He preached on Sunday, on every Thursday

¹ Winthrop, I, p. 295.
³ M'Clure, op. cit.; the amount raised was £1000.
⁴ Hubbard, op. cit., p. 190.
evening as he had done in his former parish,\(^1\) and on the special fast days decided upon by the church.\(^2\) And he spent the main part of the week in preparation for these two or three or more addresses, managing – according to his early biographers – to set aside twelve hours a day for study!\(^3\) Those who came to know him well developed an ever-growing respect for the scholarship which was evidenced not only by his library and his habits of work but also by his Biblical exegesis and his doctrinal discourses. His knowledge was encyclopaedic. His grandson later wrote of him: "Mr. Cotton was, indeed, a most Universal Scholar, and a Living System of the Liberal Arts, and a Walking Library."\(^4\) Yet his parishioners knew, and profited by the knowledge, that his study was guided more by prayer than by textbooks. Those who heard him only occasionally and knew but little

\(^1\) There is only one instance of the discontinuing of the weekly Thursday lecture recorded. Winthrop says, under October 5, 1634: "It being found, that the four lectures did spend too much time, and proved... burdensome to the ministers and people, the ministers, with the advice of the magistrates, and with the consent of their congregations, did agree to reduce them to two days, viz. Mr. Cotton at Boston one Thursday, or the 5th day of the week, and Mr. Hooker at Newtown the next 5th day, and Mr. Warham at Dorchester on the 4th day of the week, and Mr. Welde at Roxbury the next 4th day." But on Dec. 11th of the same year "the lectures at Boston and Newtown returned again to their former course, because the weather was many times so tedious as people could not travel, etc." pp. 144, 151.

\(^2\) Such a day was January 13, 1635, set aside for prayer for Wilson and others who were in England, and seemed to be in danger of detention by Laud's agents. Winthrop, I, p. 153.

\(^3\) Mather, op. cit., III, p. 26.

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 25.
about him appreciated the clarity of his style, and the forcefulness of his delivery. And young and old, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, all alike were grateful for the simplicity of his language and for his vivid illustration. John Hull, Goldsmith, who became the first Master of the Mint in the year of Cotton's death, tells in his diary of the tremendous influence of the preaching and the teaching of this great but humble man. Hull, himself, was a member of the Boston church and had been converted through Cotton's ministry.¹

Cotton might possibly have plunged headlong into a routine which would have kept him isolated in his study, if life in the newly-settled colony had not demanded that every man move about among his neighbours. The famous Boston preacher, had, upon his arrival, been asked to take a part in community affairs, and thereafter he was frequently to be seen walking briskly from home to meeting house, from market place to hall, or from court to a friend's house, stopping on the way to talk over some matter of business or faith. Every month ships from England crowded with men, women, and children came into the harbour. Sometimes friends were to be greeted and given shelter until homes could be built.

¹ Morison, op. cit., p. 169. Hull was converted Oct. 15th, 1648. At Cotton's death he wrote in his diary that he (Cotton) "seemes unparaleled with respect to the living, and noe less gain to the dead".
Henry Vane, who was to become governor of the colony for a year before returning to England to hold important position as Joint-Treasurer of the Navy and member of the House of Commons during the Commonwealth, arrived in 1635 and lodged with Cotton while he was in the colony. The two men developed a friendship that seems to have continued until Cotton's death. In the same year arrived Hugh Peters, Richard Mather, John Norton, and Thomas Shepard, all of whom were to be closely associated with Cotton in affairs of church and community. Unexpected gifts sometimes arrived with the ships. One day in June 1634 Mr. Humfrey, returning to the colony from England, brought sixteen heifers which had been given to the plantation by a Mr. Richard Andrews. It was stipulated that one heifer should go to every minister and the rest to the poor, and that one half of the increase of the ministers' heifers should be set aside for other ministers.

1. Vane's father was Sir Henry Vane, Secretary of State under Charles I. Young Vane returned to England August 1637, was himself knighted June 23, 1640, and was executed June 14, 1662, on grounds of high treason.
2. Hutchinson notes, p. 53, that "a small house which he (Vane) lived in, at the side of the hill above Queen-street, he gave to Mr. Cotton, who made an addition to it after Mr. Vane went away, and lived and died there." M'Clure says that Vane boarded with Cotton until his return to England and helped him build the south part of his dwelling place. (p. 291.) The latter would seem more probable since we know that Cotton built a house at some cost to himself, and that Vane was a young man not over 24 or 25 years of age with no family. He married in England, in 1640.
3. Peters became pastor of the Salem church in 1637, Shepard of the Newtown church, Mather of the Dorchester church; and Norton, who succeeded Cotton, was at Ipswich.
Since Mr. Wilson was shortly to leave for a visit to England, he gave his young cow to Mr. Cotton who then had two animals to care for as well as two ecclesiastical positions to fill.\(^1\) As a fellow servant of the people of God, Cotton worked closely and even intimately with the elders and the leaders of the colony. As early as 1635 the first association of ministers was formed in Boston, and Cotton joined the other preaching and teaching elders at one of the parsonages once in two weeks for discussion and mutual edification.\(^2\) When a new church gathered, or when a new minister was called, Cotton attended the service of ordination. We know that at the gathering of a new church at Newtown on the first of February 1636 he was asked to represent the churches and to give the right hand of fellowship to the pastor, Thomas Shepard. "In the name of their churches, he gave his hand to the elder, with a short speech of their assent, and desired the peace of the Lord Jesus to be with them."\(^3\) Some time in the latter months of 1637 he was appointed to the first board of overseers of Harvard College, and together with Governor Winthrop, John Humfrey, Thomas Welde, Hugh Peters, Thomas Shepard and John Wilson (all of whom had had some former connection with Cambridge University), and with others of no less importance he helped to plan and to supervise the education of the men who were later to be New England's chief ministers.\(^4\) On

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1. Wilson went to England a second time in 1634 and returned to the colony Sept. 6, 1635, with Shepard.
occasion he filled an empty pulpit or preached to the crew and passengers of a departing vessel.\(^1\) Once in a while his associates called upon him for personal help and advice, and he gave them the benefit of his wisdom and experience. Mr. Richard Saltonstall, who had made a vow to God "that he would not leave the country whilst the ordinances of God continued there in purity",\(^2\) consulted him when it became necessary for his wife, who was very ill, to return to England. Cotton helped him in his difficulty by explaining that of the two vows which had been made, the one concerning his country of abode and the other concerning the safe keeping of his wife, the latter was the most binding. And at another time when one of the daughters of Mr. Wilson was dangerously ill, and it was thought that she would not recover, Cotton comforted the family by prayer in the girl's behalf. Richard Mather's son Increase, who married Cotton's daughter Maria in 1662, later claimed, in his Letter to the Reader, in Cotton Mather's Magnalia, that through his father-in-law's prayer the girl was healed.\(^3\)

During the winter and spring of his first year in Boston, Cotton became more and more concerned about matters of government. Norton, who succeeded him as teacher in the Boston church claimed that "at his first coming, he (Cotton) found

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1. In June 1636 we know he preached at the Salem church (following Roger William's dismissal). Winthrop also records a speech delivered on February 3rd, 1637, to a group leaving for England. Other such occasions dot Winthrop's Journal.
2. Hutchinson, op. cit., note p. 94.
them not without some troubles about settling the matters of the Church and Commonwealth.\(^1\) Intensely interested from the first in the Colony's experiment with the interlocking of religion and administration Cotton consented to put his shoulder to the wheel. At the session of the General Court of Deputies and Assistants on May 14th, 1634, he took the oath of freeman,\(^2\) swearing loyalty, obedience and support to the government. When he had thus been admitted to the franchise, he threw his support on the side of Winthrop who was seeking re-election to the governorship. Preaching to the Assembly on the privilege of election, he advanced the view that no magistrate should be removed from office except he show himself incapable of fulfilling his responsibilities.\(^3\) Although Winthrop lost the election - mainly because the people felt that a change of governor would insure against the danger of one man's holding the governorship for life, Cotton was asked to preach the election sermon.\(^4\) Six months later Cotton was one of three appointed by the magistrates to remonstrate with John Eliot, the teacher of the Roxbury church, who had complained from the pulpit that the Assistants had failed to confer with the people before making a treaty of peace with the Pequod Indians. The three men persuaded Mr. Eliot to retract his statement on the next Sabbath, and so a

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possible division between people and magistrates was avoided.\(^1\)

Only a few weeks later on December 11th, another danger to the peace of the community threatened, and Cotton—this time by himself, rescued the situation. After the evening lecture, the Boston people had met to elect seven men to a committee for the distribution of the remaining town lands. They had refused to elect any of the chief men of the town, except Winthrop, who would not serve, to this committee, fearing lest a committee composed of men having money and authority should set aside the greater part of the unused land for public use and for newcomers. Cotton pointed out that according to the Hebrew tradition such a problem ought to be the concern of the elders. He argued that if it seemed inadvisable to leave the matter to the discretion of the magistrates, then the only just thing to do would be to elect to the committee men of differing position and interest. Then he suggested that a new election take place on the next lecture day.\(^2\)

This was agreed upon, and within a few days Cotton found himself one of a new committee appointed by the people "to divide and dispose of all such lands, belonging to the town, as are not yet in the lawful possession of any particular person... leaving such portions in common, for the use of new comers, and the further benefit of the town, as, in their best discretion, they shall think fit."\(^3\)

\(^1\) Winthrop, I, p. 151.
\(^2\) Winthrop, I, p. 151-2.
\(^3\) Ibid., note 2, p. 152. From the Town Records.
Because of his position in the Boston church and also because of his Cambridge accomplishments, his years of pastoral experience, and his long friendship with some of those holding positions of leadership, Cotton was very frequently called for consultation by the magistrates. On July 9th, 1634, William Bradford, Edward Winslow, and their pastor Ralph Smith arrived from Plymouth to confer with Massachusetts-Bay authorities about the clash between Plymouth and Massachusetts-Bay traders at Kenebeck. Winthrop, Cotton, and Wilson took part in the discussion. It was agreed that the territory on both sides of the Kenebeck River had been granted to the Plymouth Colony,¹ and that the Plymouth traders had been right in asserting their claim. The Plymouth delegation expressed their regret that one of the Massachusetts men had been killed during the fracas, and it was generally conceded that although it was permissible to take up arms against intruders, a less violent means of protection against illegal entry should have been used.²

In January 1636, Cotton was asked by Henry Vane and Hugh Peters to join a group of magistrates and elders called together to discuss the problem of discipline in the colony. A division of mind on the part of Winthrop and Dudley, the two former governors, had been apparent to the people, and it was thought that some decision as to policy should be made.

¹ This territory had been granted them by the Council on January 13th, 1630.
² Winthrop, I, pp. 136, 137.
During the discussion it became evident that although Winthrop and Dudley had made peace with one another, Winthrop still continued to believe that in a new colony leniency is preferable to strictness of discipline. The three elders—Hooker, Cotton, and Wilson—were asked to ponder the question overnight, and the next day they returned their conclusion "that strict discipline both in criminal offences and in martial affairs, are more needful in plantations than in a settled state, as tending to the honour and safety of the gospel". ¹ Winthrop accepted this rebuff, and all together the men drew up ten articles of magisterial procedure and etiquette. ² Again in 1636, when it was discovered by the English ship the Hector, that the Massachusetts-Bay Colony had no royal standard and would not fly one even though it were to be presented to them, Cotton was among those who were pressed for an overnight decision on the problem. Some of the magistrates held that "the cross in the ensign was idolatrous"³ and should not be displayed. But after consultation it was decided that since the fort was held in the name of the King, the King's colours might be flown at Castle Island.

But matters more serious than the flying of a flag, and more troublesome even than the differing policies of successive but congenial governors, were to demand Cotton's attention. There was the time-consuming problem of how much power should

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¹ Ibid., p. 178.
² Ibid., p. 178, 179.
³ Ibid., p. 187, 188.
be delegated to the freemen. Under the charter which was granted to the Massachusetts Bay Company in March 1629, the governor, the deputy governor, and the board of assistants who were to govern the colony were to be elected annually by the members. When it was decided to transfer the charter and the seat of government from England to New England, those who were able to accompany Winthrop were elected to these positions of authority. These men, not more than twenty in all, were at first the only freemen in the colony. Shortly after their arrival, they admitted as freemen many of the colonists who were joining them in their new venture, but they insisted that they, the assistants, were to continue in office from year to year and were to retain the power of appointing the governor and the deputy governor from among their own number. The other freemen were only to elect assistants to fill vacancies on the board. As the body of freemen grew larger and demanded more say in the governing of the colony, the assistants were forced to the decision that all freemen should participate in an annual election of all magistrates. With this power in their hands, the freemen, as we have seen, immediately chose to elect Dudley, rather than to re-elect Winthrop to the office of governor. In ever growing numbers they attended the sessions of the General Court but still the assistants, once elected, had control of the colony's administration, determining the policies and procedures that were to guard the interests of
the colony and advance the well-being of the people. And the freemen were willing, at least for a time,\(^1\) to put into office those who had served them so faithfully in the past. By 1634 the number of freemen had increased to such an extent, that it seemed wise to the assistants to suggest that at all meetings of the General Court representatives of the freemen be present to assume some of the responsibilities of government. This was the first step in the formation of a House of Deputies. However, the assistants retained the power to cast a final negative vote on all matters brought to the attention of the Court by the freeman.

1. From 1630 until 1654 only seven men held the office of governor and deputy governor. Three of these men held office for only one year. The other four filled forty-seven terms of office.
Early in 1634 Thomas Hooker and the members of his church had asked the General Court for permission to leave the Massachusetts-Bay colony and settle elsewhere. Hutchinson explains, perhaps justifiably, that the "great influence, which Mr. Cotton had in the colony, inclined Mr. Hooker and his friends to remove to some place more remote from Boston than Newtown". Whatever the reason for the original request, the Court had enjoined the Newtown church to search for the land which they wished to acquire, and to report to the Court at the next session. So it was that on September 4th, 1634, Hooker appeared before the Deputies and the Assistants with the plea that he and his people be allowed to depart for Connecticut. The reasons argued for such a strenuous and unprecedented undertaking seem to have been good. The adventurers needed more room for crops and for cattle in order that they might more adequately support themselves and their ministers. They were averse to living in such close contact with the neighbouring towns. They knew that the Connecticut valley was fertile and could supply timber, water, and game for as many as wished to settle there. They also thought it wise to claim such land for England as soon as possible, thereby checking the possible infiltration of the Dutch and the French. Lastly they were very desirous of going and were ready in every way to make the hazardous journey. The experienced Assistants frowned.

1. Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 43.
They explained that the Massachusetts-Bay Colony derived its strength from the fact that although it comprised several towns, it remained one body of people. Any withdrawal from the colony would not only endanger the lives of those venturing into the wilderness; it would cast suspicion of disunion upon the colony and might turn the stream of migration away from New England's shores. But the majority of the Deputies were willing to accede to Mr. Hooker's request, and an argument ensued. Was it right that the Assistants should have the power of a negative vote? Was it reasonable to expect those who petitioned the Court to be satisfied with an answer agreed to by a minority — even though that minority was principally made up of Assistants? It was necessary to adjourn the Court before the business of the day could be settled. September the 18th was set aside as a day of fasting and humiliation, a day on which Deputies and Assistants could seek God's direction for the solution of the problem. And the Court reassembled on September 24th.

We can imagine that Cotton had taken part in all the discussion concerning the rights and the privileges of free-men. By his support of Winthrop in the election of 1634 he had indicated his fear that the people, using power without discretion, would cast aside the trained and experienced men who were leading them and race forward into the uncharted and turbulent waters of self-rule. Later, in a letter to Lord

Saye and Scalfe, he was to write: "Democracy, I do not con-ceyve that ever God did ordayne as a fitt government eyther for church or commonwealth. If the people be governors, who shall be governed?" But on this occasion, anxious that action be taken and that it be taken by a concurring group, Cotton delivered an address before the Assembly in which he defined the powers of magistrates, ministers, and people, and expressed the conviction that each of these divisions within the community should have the power of a negative vote. Preaching from Haggai 2:4, he explained: "the strength of Zerubbabel, or the magistrate, is his official power and authority: the strength of Joshua, or the minister, is the purity of his life and teaching: and the strength of the people is their liberty." "...the ultimate resolution ought to be in the whole body of the people." The sermon closed with a solemn declaration of the people's right and duty to maintain their own liberties against any unjust violence or aggression. The strength of Cotton's sermon was such that the majority decided to agree with the minority, and the Assistants won the day! Not until May 31, 1636, after several successful expeditions had been made from the sea to the great inland river, did Hooker and his group finally move on to form their colony at Hartford. And not

2. Yet now be strong, 0 Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; and be strong, 0 Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith Jehovah, and work; for I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts.
until 1644 did the Deputies and the Assistants separate into two co-equal legislative houses.

A second problem began as a scruple over civil procedures in the Massachusetts-Bay colony and developed into a theological controversy which agitated England and New England, and occasioned the publication of several of Cotton's letters and treatises. It concerned the kind of loyalty required of a colonist to the colony of his choice and to England. Early in 1631, Roger Williams, a Puritan minister driven to find peace in a new land, arrived at Boston. He refused to become a member of the Boston church because they had not made "a publick declaration of their repentance for having communion with the churches of England while they lived there".¹ The Salem church, approving this attitude, asked him to become one of their elders, but the Board of Assistants voiced its disapproval and warned Endicott, Salem's leading townsman, that Williams seriously questioned the right of the town magistrates to punish those found guilty of breaking any of the first five Commandments. Finding himself unwelcome in the Bay Colony Williams withdrew to Plymouth where his views were more acceptable and where he was admitted into church membership. By the fall of 1633, however, his strange opinions "caused some controversy between the church and him, and in the end some discontent on his part, by occasion whereof he left them something abruptly".²

¹. Felt, op. cit., p. 149.
and he returned north to make his home in Salem. Though he held no office in the Salem church, he was able to assist Mr. Skelton and to discuss in public his views on church polity and secular government. In December he sent to the General Court a treatise in which he denied the right of the King to grant land by charter. Because they felt that Williams' several references to the King were nothing short of treason, the Court wrote to Salem urging that the treatise be withdrawn. Williams would not retract, and so Cotton, Wilson and the Assistants took the matter up again. After reading the treatise a second time they decided that "they did not find its sentiments so evil as they at first thought".  

They asked Williams to give proof of his loyalty by making some concessions or by swearing allegiance to the King. Matters might have stopped there if Williams had been able to hold his tongue. But within a short time he was openly denouncing the Church of England as AntiChrist, was recommending that the cross be removed from the flag, and was asserting that thanks should not be returned to God following any meal, not even the Lord's Supper. When he refused to take the oath of fidelity to the King required of all non-freemen who were resident in the colony, he was called before the Board of Assistants. In July 1635 his case was referred to the General Court, and but for the intervention of the elders who hoped to convince him of the seriousness of his errors as

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well as the precariousness of his situation, he would have been heavily penalized at that time. That a few in the colony were convinced of the reasonableness of his position is evidenced by the fact that he was called to the church of Salem after the death of Skelton in August 1634. Perhaps others, like Cotton, believed that he was not intending sedition, but was faithfully obeying the voice of conscience. But the reports of his discontent having been carried back to England were endangering the colony's already insecure relationships with the mother country. And when he would not give heed to the advice and the warnings of Cotton and the other elders, but instead refused to worship with the Salem church and even with his wife because they would not withdraw from communion with the neighbouring churches, he was called before the court once again and was given six weeks in which to leave the colony. An extension of time was later granted him so that he should not have to struggle for food.

2. On March 29th, 1636, an interesting letter concerning Williams and the trouble in the colony reached Winthrop from Sir William Marsham in England. He wrote: "I am sorry to hear Mr. Williams's separation from you. His former good affections towards you and the plantations were well known unto us, and made us wonder now at his proceedings. I have written to him effectually to submit to better judgments, and especially to those whom formerly he reverenced and admired; at least, to keep the bonds of peace inviolable. This has been always my advice, and nothing conduces more to the good of plantations. I pray show him what lawful favor you can, which may stand with common good. He is passionate and precipitate, which may transport him into error; but his integrity and good intentions will bring him at last into the way of truth, and confirm him therein. In the mean time, pray God to give him a right use of this affliction." Quoted by Felt, op. cit., p. 248.
and shelter during the severe winter weather; but in January 1636, when the magistrates were again forced to reconsider his case because he was preaching his doctrines to those who gathered in his home, he vanished from Salem and made his way to Seekonk, where, according to Cotton, friends had made "provision of housing and other necessaries for him against his coming". During the summer he moved on to Narragansett territory and settled in a place which he called Providence. His colony became well known for the freedom which it allowed in matters of belief, and Williams, beyond the reach of the Massachusetts magistrates, was able to develop and to propagate the theory to which his experiences had given rise - namely, that liberty of conscience should be accorded to all.

A third matter of great concern to Cotton was the assembling of a body of law for the ordering of the colony. Mather states that upon his arrival in Boston Cotton was immediately requested to give help in this matter and proposed the setting up of a theocracy, recommending "that none should be Electors, nor Elected therein, except such as were visible Subjects of our Lord Jesus Christ, personally confederated in our Churches". Since the requirement that freemen must be church members had been put into effect on May 18, 1631, over two years before Cotton fled from England, we can not maintain

1. Quoted from Cotton in Felt, op. cit., p. 248. As early as Nov. 1634 Williams negotiated with the Narragansetts for land - apparently preparing to leave Massachusetts-Bay.
2. Details of this theory and the controversy with Cotton will be reviewed in a later chapter.
that Cotton was responsible for the legislation that initiated the church-centred law. On the other hand he was an ardent exponent of theocratic principles and proved to be one of the most influential lawmakers in New England. When it became evident that no results would be forthcoming from the committee appointed in 1635 for the framing of a body of laws, a new committee of interested laymen and clergy was quickly formed. At the head of this committee was Cotton. Although the other committee members failed to function, Cotton worked long and arduously. Through the spring and summer of 1636 he pored over his books, and on October 25th he presented to the court a compilation of laws drawn from the Massachusetts Charter and the history of the Hebrew people. This code, appropriately called Moses his Judicialls, comprised ten chapters and seventy five articles, and was copiously reinforced with marginal references to the Old and New Testaments. Probably because of its provision that assistants retain office for life - an unwise revival on

1. Cotton's criticism of democracy is followed by this statement: "as for monarchy, and aristocracy, they are both of them clearely approved, and directed in scripture, yet so as referreth the soveraigntie to himselfe, and setteth up Theocracy in both, as the best forme of government in the commonwealth, as well as in the church." See his letter to Lord Saye and Seal, Hutchinson, pp. 497, 498.

2. "Mr. Peters, preaching at Boston, made an earnest request to the church, that they would spare their teacher, Mr. Cotton, for a time, that he might go through the Bible, and raise marginal notes upon all the knotty places of the Scriptures." May 15, 1636. The committee was appointed on May 25th. Perhaps Peters foresaw Cotton's heavy responsibilities and realized the contributions his scholarship could make. Evidently the church complied.
Cotton's part of an old controversy - the code was rejected by the Deputies, and nothing more was done about the matter for over a year. In the spring of 1638 however the General Court appointed another committee. By September it was decided that Cotton should revise Moses his Judicialls, and that Nathaniel Ward, the minister of Ipswich, should draft a new body of laws. Another fourteen months passed. Then the two men presented their codes to the General Court, and a further committee, which included among its members the Governor and the Deputy Governor, was appointed to fuse the two codes into a final draft which could be presented to the court in the month of May 1640. The discussion, revision, and amendment of the code continued for a good many more months, until the final arrangement of one hundred laws, called the Body of Liberties, was formally adopted on December 10th, 1641. At this same session of the General Court John Cotton and Nathaniel Ward were each granted six hundred acres of land in return for the important work which they had done.  

It is difficult to measure the exact influence of Cotton's years of effort in the making of laws. In the preface of the edition of Moses his Judicialls which was published in London in the year 1655, William Aspinwall, in speaking of the laws, says: "which had they then the heart

1. Felt, op. cit., p. 439. This seems to me an indication that the Court held the work of the men to be of equal importance. Nothing is said about the nature of the work, but because the two men's names are linked and we know that they were working together on the laws, we can infer that the land was payment for that labour.
to have received, it might have been better both with them there and us here." ¹ Evidently Mr. Aspinwall, once a resident of 'Boston in New-England,' felt that Cotton's work had, unfortunately for all, been pushed aside. On the other hand, James Nichol, editor of Cotton's commentaries on Ecclesiastes and Canticles, held that his influence - at least in his own day - was considerable. "Dr. Cotton's share in the legislation of the colony is matter of history. He probably overstrained the application of the Jewish law; but undoubtedly for a time virtue abounded and good order reigned, and the blessing of God rested upon the colony." ² Certain it is that some of Cotton's suggestions, such as the one concerning the magistrates' term of office, were immediately rejected. Others, like the one recommending that a small group of experienced men be appointed as a permanent council of advisers to the colony, were tried for a time but were gradually discontinued.³ But an examination of the Body of Liberties reveals that a good proportion of Moses his Judicialls was incorporated therein and was to remain in effect for many years. And strangely enough in the Body of Liberties those laws that are today so frequently thought examples of rigid New England Puritans but which, in reality, are more lenient than the contemporary laws of England, those laws are Cotton's laws and were accepted

¹. Felt, op. cit., p. 263,
³. This 'Council for Life' existed only between May 1636 and June 1639.
without question by the Deputies. In another part of New England, Cotton's *Moses his Judicialls* was used *in toto*, for Davenport, moving to the south-western part of Connecticut in 1638, took a copy of it with him and made it "the fundamental law and frame of government for that colony during the quarter-century of its existence".\(^1\) Nathaniel Ward, trained in the English common law, was able to draft a code which was applicable to the needs and the conditions of the Massachusetts Bay colony. Cotton, student and divine, holding high the principle of the sovereignty of God, formed a code which interlocked churches and magistrates in their efforts to so guide and govern a people planted by God in a wilderness that they could "enjoy their owne place with safety and peace".\(^2\) The two men together were responsible for the earliest law-code in New England, but it should be remembered that Cotton's was the initial effort.

In a letter to Lord Saye and Seal written some time in 1636 Cotton said: "I can get litle, or noe opportunity to reade any thing, or attend to any thing, but the dayly occurrences which presse in upon me continually, much beyond my strength either of body or minde."\(^3\) Hardly had he finished preparing *Moses his Judicialls* for its first presentation to the Court when there began a theological controversy which was to concern Cotton greatly and to provoke

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2. Cotton, God's Promise to His Plantations, p. 11.
3. In Hutchinson, History of Massachusetts-Bay, p. 496.
much bitterness of feeling in the colony.

On November 2nd, 1634, Mrs. Ann Hutchinson had become a member of the Boston Church. Her father had been a Lincolnshire minister and she had had contact with Cotton while he was still vicar of St. Botolph's church. To the Massachusetts Court she later gave a revealing statement of her reasons for leaving England. "When I was in old England," she said,

I was much troubled at the constitution of the churches there...none of those Ministers could preach the Lord Jesus aright...I begged of the Lord that this Atheisme might not be in my heart: after I had begged this light, a twelve moneth together, at last he let me see how I did oppose Christ Jesus, and he revealed to mee that place in Esay 16.12,13. and from hence shewed me the Atheisme of my owne heart, and how I did turne in upon a Covenant of works; and did oppose Christ Jesus... thenceforth I was the more carefull whom I heard, for after our teacher Mr. Cotton, and my brother Wheelwright were put downe, there was none in England that I durst heare...after this the Lord carrying Mr. Cotton to New England (at which I was much troubled), it was revealed to me, that I must go thither also, and that there I should be persecuted and suffer much trouble. (1)

A year and a half after she had settled in Boston, Wheelwright, actually her brother-in-law, arrived, and also joined the Boston church. Perhaps Mrs. Hutchinson was stimulated by the presence of Wheelwright to speak more loudly concerning her convictions. At any rate, the meetings for the discussion of religion which were regularly held in her house and which were well attended by the women of Boston, shortly began to attract the unfavourable attention of church members, ministers, and

1. Welde, A Short Story, p. 37f. A slightly different version in Hutchinson, II, Appendix II.
magistrates. Mrs. Hutchinson, it was discovered, was not only repeating and amending the sermons which she heard during the week, but was also claiming that all but a few of the ministers were preaching a covenant of works; that "the Holy Ghost dwells personally in a justified person; and that nothing of sanctification can help to evidence to believers their justification." On October 25th, 1636, in an attempt to check the spread of such errors, some of the ministers held consultation with the court. Cotton and Wheelwright, the two ministers especially favoured by Mrs. Hutchinson, tried to explain their understanding of the doctrines of justification and sanctification, and to indicate exactly how they differed from Mrs. Hutchinson and from the ministers of whom she disapproved. But the consultation only served to divide the court into two camps. Vane, who had been elected governor in May, supported Cotton and Wheelwright, but clearly accepted the more extreme views of Mrs. Hutchinson. Winthrop, on the other hand, agreed with Wilson, Peters, and the other ministers. The majority of the members of the Boston church became followers of the Hutchinson contingent and even went to the extreme of requesting that Wheelwright become their assistant minister. To this Winthrop strenuously objected, and Cotton himself could not give consent. He felt that Wheelwright was apt to raise "doubtful disputations" and that further

1. Welde, op. cit., Preface, p.**, says that 50, 60, or 80 attended her 'double weekly lecture' from Boston and other towns.
2. Quoted in Hutchinson, History of Massachusetts-Bay, p. 56.
controversy would destroy the unity within the church.

Throughout November the controversy grew in size and in intensity. Hutchinson succinctly says: "The town and country were distracted with these subtleties, and every man and woman who had brains enough to form some imperfect conceptions of them, inferred and maintained some other point..." 1 Winthrop, Wilson, Vane, Cotton, and Wheelwright carried on the debate in writing, each sending to the others full explanations with scriptural support of his views. The Boston church furthered the Hutchinsonian cause by asking Mr. Hutchinson to become their deacon on the twenty-seventh of November. And on December 13th, the General Court took up the matter again.

At the morning session of the legislature Wilson delivered an address that so displeased Cotton and other members of his church that he was called to task for it. He later defended himself before his congregation, 2 and escaped censure only because Cotton felt that "he (Cotton) might not do it, because some opposed it". 3 At the afternoon session, Cotton was seriously questioned about, and tried to justify, his own position. Because he seemed to favour the theory that justification is adequately evidenced by immediate revelation, a theory that would without question lead to Antinomianism, the clergy asked him to answer some sixteen questions which they raised concerning the working of the Holy Spirit within

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2. December 31, 1636.
3. Winthrop, op. cit., I, p. 211.
and upon man. Some of Cotton's answers were satisfactory; others gave rise to further argument.

More fuel was added to the fire when Wheelwright, on a January Fast day, delivered a discourse in which he accused those who preached justification by faith and sanctification of preaching a covenant of works. In February, 1637, Cotton briefly defined the problem when he addressed the passengers of a ship ready to leave for England, asking them to "tell our countrymen, that all the strife amongst us was about magnifying the grace of God; one party seeking to advance the grace of God within us, and the other to advance the grace of God towards us, (meaning by the one justification, and by the other sanctification;)..." In March the General Court met again to try to decide the issue. The ministers, invited to attend, cancelled all lectures for three weeks so that they could spend as much time as possible at the sessions. It was generally agreed that Wheelwright, because of his Fast day sermon, was guilty of sedition. But no end to the controversy could be discovered.

In May the General Court met at Newtown for the election of magistrates. The Hutchinsonian controversy had become, by this time, a political issue, and it was only with difficulty

l. Ibid., I, p. 213.
that the business of the day was carried through. Throughout all the speeches and discussions, the arguments and the debates, there ran an undercurrent of emotion that threatened to escape control and turn the meetings into chaos. But in Winthrop's Journal we find that even in the tumult and the excitement of those days a sign of a coming reconciliation could be discerned;

Mr. Cotton also replied to their answer very largely, and stated the differences in a very narrow scantling; and Mr. Shepherd, preaching at the day of election, brought them yet nearer, so as, except men of good understanding, and such as knew the bottom of the tenants of those of the other party, few could see where the difference was; and indeed it seemed so small, as...they might easily have come to reconciliation. For in these particulars they agreed: 1. that justification and sanctification were both together in time; 2. that a man must know himself to be justified, before he can know himself to be sanctified; 3. that the spirit never witnesseth justification without a word and a work. (2)

During June and July further meetings and discussions between Cotton and the other ministers brought about a clearer understanding of the chief points of difference expressed during the months of debate. Cotton continued to maintain that his doctrine was sound. He continued to differ from the other elders in his interpretation of the relationship

1. One law passed at this session of the Court forbade the entertainment of strangers from England who intended to reside in the colony, without permission from one of the council or two other assistants. Cotton says, in his answer to Baillie, that he so disliked this law that he "intended to have removed out of the jurisdiction to Quinnypiack". Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 62.
2. Winthrop, op. cit., I, p. 221.
between faith, justification and sanctification. But he began to see clearly into what dangers Mrs. Hutchinson's beliefs were leading those uninitiated into the intricacies of theological argument. Realising that peace was better than a sword, that the well-being of the community depended upon its unanimity in matters religious just as much as upon its political unity, he stressed the things wherein he agreed with Wilson and Winthrop, and minimised as much as possible the ground of controversy. Once again the ministers worked in harmony.¹

In August Cotton and Wilson, in several private meetings, tried to persuade Wheelwright to temper his views in order that peace might be restored.² But Wheelwright remained obdurate, and at the end of the month it was decided to call together the pastors, teachers, and ruling elders, so that they might make a definite decision as to what the colonists were or were not to believe. The Synod or Assembly convened at Newtown on the 30th of August. Doctrine was fully discussed and some eighty heresies known to exist within the colony were condemned. Cotton gave his approval to this action of the assembly although he would not affix his name to the official listing of these fallacies.³ It is possible that he hesitated to condemn as heretics those whom he knew were truly Christian in spirit. The five points of main contention between Wheelwright,

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¹ M'Clure, op. cit., p. 243.
² Winthrop, op. cit., I, p. 236.
³ M'Clure, op. cit., p. 246.
wright, Cotton, and the other elders were then carefully considered. Two of these were gradually resolved, and after much labour the remaining three were so stated by those assembled that Cotton felt that he could give his assent to them.\(^1\) When the Synod finally drew to its close, on the 22nd of September, there was a feeling that great progress had been made. Every possible error of belief had been set down in black and white. And most important of all, Cotton, the minister of the church to which both Mrs. Hutchinson and Wheelwright belonged, had indicated a willingness to take part in any disciplining that might be necessary.\(^2\)

It had been hoped that both Mrs. Hutchinson and Wheelwright would amend their ways after the Newtown Synod. But by the November meeting of the Court it was evident that Mrs. Hutchinson intended to continue her meetings and that Wheelwright still based his sermons upon false doctrine. Therefore the two were called before the Court. There was some disorder when the two deputies from Boston, insisting that they be permitted to present an affirmation of Wheelwright's innocence, had to be dismissed. When the Court requested that two other deputies be sent in their stead, Boston determined "to have sent the same men again; but Mr. Cotton, coming amongst them, dissuaded them with much ado".\(^3\) Wheelwright was finally convicted of sedition and contempt of court, and

\(^1\) Winthrop, op. cit., I, p. 237ff.
\(^2\) Osgood, op. cit., p. 247.
\(^3\) Winthrop, op. cit., I, p. 245. Also see Jelde, A Short Story, p. 24.
was banished from the colony. Mrs. Hutchinson, making the mistake of talking in her own defence after Cotton had favourably pled her case, was also sentenced to banishment but was given permission to remain in the colony during the winter months. She was placed in the custody of Joseph Weld, a resident of Roxbury, in whose house she was virtually imprisoned, and only her personal friends and the elders were allowed to see her. On March 15th (1638) she was placed on trial by the Boston church. She was judged guilty of holding twenty-nine erroneous opinions, and Cotton "pronounced the sentence of admonition with great solemnity, and with much zeal and detestation of her errors and pride of spirit". The following week she spent in Cotton's house, and Cotton with Davenport made a final and apparently successful effort to convince her of her errors. Again, on the 22nd, she appeared before the church, presenting written reply to the charges made against her. But when her answers failed to give satisfaction and she was further questioned concerning her beliefs, it was obvious that she in fact would not, or perhaps could not, retract. A sentence of excommunication was pronounced by Mr. Wilson, and she was ordered to leave.

1. Wheelwright went to Exeter, New Hampshire, and later to Wells, Maine. After five or six years he retracted his errors, and was permitted to return to the colony.
2. Winthrop, op. cit., I, p. 256. Welde lists the opinions, A Short Story, p. 60f.
the colony before the end of March. 1

Winthrop relates two further incidents which throw some light upon Cotton's struggle with Antinomianism. Mary Dyer, a friend of Mrs. Hutchinson's, gave birth to a 'monstrosity' while attended only by her husband and a midwife. At Mr. Cotton's suggestion, the birth and the burial of the still-born child were kept secret. However, through the midwife, the terrible facts concerning the 'monstrosity' became known, and because the birth was thought to be the result of antinomian beliefs held by the Dyers, Cotton was reprimanded for having concealed important evidence. He confessed that he had had three reasons for giving his advice. First, because there had been only two witnesses to the birth of the 'monstrosity' he had thought that God intended that it should be kept secret. Second, if it had happened within his own family he would not have let it be known. And third, the fact that the birth was so hideous was enough punishment for the parents in their heresy. A public apology was considered sufficient punishment for Mr. Cotton! 2

Another person influenced by Mrs. Hutchinson and brought

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1. Mrs. Hutchinson and her family went to Rhode Island. After Mr. Hutchinson's death, Mrs. Hutchinson moved on to Dutch territory near New Rochelle and met her death at the hands of Indians.

2. Winthrop, op. cit., vol. I, p. 261f. On page 271 Winthrop describes a further incident of a similar kind. Cotton heard a false rumour concerning the birth of a monstrosity to Mrs. Hutchinson while she was in Rhode Island. He publicly interpreted it as due to her 'error'. Later a letter from a physician indicated that there had been no birth, that Mrs. Hutchinson had been ill. Cotton apologized again!
before the Massachusetts Court for holding 'erroneous opinions' was Captain John Underhill,¹ the commander of a force of twenty men sent to help the people of Saybrook in their fight against the Indians. A witness reported that once Captain Underhill, in explaining his conversion, had stated that after a five years' struggle he had finally found peace while taking a pipeful of tobacco. Upon hearing this Cotton immediately was convinced that Underhill was misinterpreting his experience, for, he pointed out to the soldier, "any sense of assurance obtained while he was occupied in so trivial and worldly a practice as smoking his pipe was suspect".² Furthermore, "God doth often lay a man under a spirit of bondage, when he is walking in sin, as Paul was, yet he never sends such a spirit of comfort but in an ordinance..."³

Mr. Cotton's position during the Hutchinsonian controversy has been variously judged. James Truslow Adams in the Index of his book The Founding of New England lists him as "a follower of Ann Hutchinson". In the body of the same book he condemns him with the following words:

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1. Underhill, forced from the colony, joined Wheelwright in New Hampshire.
3. Winthrop, op. cit., p. 270. Mather, op. cit., p. 7, says that about the year 1637, Cotton corrected another person: Mr. Lenthall, a minister who came from England and became mixed up in Antinomianism after his arrival in the colony.
Mr. Cotton, who had no taste for that banishment which he claimed was no hardship, now went over to what was evidently to be the winning side. With a broader mind and wider vision than any of the other clergy of the colony, he had not the courage to stand alone, beyond a certain point, against their unanimity in intolerance. The higher promptings of his nature were crushed by the united voice of the priesthood... and...(he) from that time tended to sink to the lower level of (his) fellows. (1)

Since evidence indicates that Cotton at about this same time seriously considered self-banishment to the southern part of Connecticut (prior to Davenport's establishment of his colony there), and since the greater portion of Cotton's publications were to appear in the following decade, during which decade he produced his famous works on Congregational polity, this seems an unusually biased statement. On the other hand Nichol, in writing about the charge of antinomianism placed against Cotton, goes to the other extreme when he says: "It seems perfectly clear that there was no foundation for it; but it was propagated in various books and pamphlets." 2 Perhaps a clear view of the matter may never be possible, but when we examine the records of those who lived in the same century with Cotton, and when we look at the words of Cotton himself, we find convincing explanations of Cotton's situation.

Samuel Clarke, in his Life of Master John Cotton, wrote:

...yet he could not forbear them whom he knew to be evil. An experience whereof he manifested when some Heterodox spirits, by their specious discourses about Free-Grace and subtle Concealings of their Principles, so far deceived him into a better opinion of them than

1. P. 170.
there was cause, as that notwithstanding they fathered their Errors upon him in general, and abused his Doctrine, to the Countenancing of their denial of Inherent Grace in particular, yet was he slow to believe these things of them, and slower to bear witness against them. (1)

Hutchinson relates that on December 13th, 1638, Cotton publicly confessed and bewailed the churches and his own security and credulity, by means whereof so many dangerous errors had spread, and shewed how he came to be deceived; the errors being formed, in words, so near the truth which he had preached, and the falsity of the maintainers of them being such that they usually would deny to him what they had maintained to others. (2)

Journal Winthrop reported:

Mr. Cotton, finding how he had been abused, and made (as himself said) their stalking horse, (for they pretended to hold nothing but what Mr. Cotton held, and himself did think the same,) did spend most of his time, both publicly and privately, to discover those errors, and to reduce such as were gone astray. (3)

In The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared, Cotton explained that Mrs. Hutchinson and her followers actually accused him of saying things in private conversations which contradicted what he had delivered from the pulpit. 4 And in a letter to Mr. Davenport he self-reproachfully wrote:

The truth is the body of the Island is bent to backsliding into Error, and Delusions: The Lord pity, and pardon them, and me also, who have been so slow to see their windings and subtil Contrivances, and insinuations in all their transactions, whilst they propagated their opinions under my expressions diverted to their constructions. (5)

2. History of Massachusetts-Bay, p. 74. Also Hubbard, op. cit., p. 298.
5. Quoted in Clarke, op. cit., p. 226.
If we understand Cotton to have been sincere — and there is no question whatever in my mind but that throughout his life he was a most sincere and a most honest Christian — then it is obvious that to the end of the controversy he was really striving to clarify the doctrines of justification and sanctification, and that because of his love for people and his belief in their integrity, he failed until the summer of 1637, to see the inconsistencies in the character and in the conversations of Mrs. Hutchinson.

Cotton's popularity as a teacher and preacher did not diminish because of the part he had played in the Hutchinsonian controversy. In Winthrop's Journal, references to his sermons and lectures indicate that he continued to preach successfully on important issues of the day as well as upon difficult passages in the Old and New Testaments. In one of his important sermons in 1637 he sought to prove from an example in II Chronicles that ministers should be consulted by the magistrates before the latter decided to participate in war.\(^1\)

In 1639, following the appearance before the Court of one Robert Keaine, merchant, who had been making too large a profit in the sale of his merchandise and was consequently ordered to pay a fine, he lectured on the principles of trade and suggested these general rules:

1. A man may not sell above the current price...
2. When a man loseth in his commodity for want of skill, &c., he must look at it as his own fault...

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3. Where a man loseth by casualty of sea, oe, &c., it is a loss cast upon himself by providence...
4. A man may not ask any more for his commodity than his selling price... (1)

When the church wished to excommunicate Mr. Keaine for having overstepped his rights and privileges, Cotton insisted that there was no sin against conscience in what Keaine had done and that admonition would be sufficient punishment. ²

During the latter part of 1639, and in 1640 and 1641, we know from Winthrop, from Edward Johnson, and from Thomas Allen that Cotton regularly preached from The Revelation of St. John, finding therein material for his condemnation of the Papacy, for his identification of the Papacy with Anti-Christ, and for his belief that "neither Jews nor any more of the Gentiles should be called until Antichrist were destroyed, vis. to a church estate, though here and there a proselyte". ³

Cotton was frequently asked to speak on special occasions. On September 24th, 1642, when a new ship, built by Boston men, was ready to sail, Cotton preached to the captain and the crew. So many people gathered to listen and to watch that the speaker and his audience had to move from the ship to the meeting house. ⁴

1. Ibid., I, p. 316f.
2. Ibid., I, p. 313ff. Robert Keaine filled two volumes with notes of Cotton's sermons and proceedings in the Boston Church. See Green, S.A. Remarks on Note-Book kept by Capt. Robert Keayne.
colonists were about to return to England in order to spread evil reports concerning the refusal of the Massachusetts churches to admit English Presbyterians to the Sacrament, Cotton preached a sermon on Canticles 2:15. He identified the trouble-makers with the 'little foxes that spoil the vines', and foretold stormy weather and a dangerous voyage unless the plan to complain to Parliament was given up. On another occasion, he preached at the 'contraction' of the Reverend Samuel Danforth to John Wilson's daughter. Perhaps this was the girl for whom Cotton had earnestly prayed in time of sickness. If so it was particularly appropriate that he should be requested to speak at the ceremony.

Cotton, far from being a narrow and bigoted Bostonian interested only in his own community and church, displayed an active interest in people of a different race, creed, or nation. He watched Eliot's work among the Indians with keen attention, lingered to hear the sermons preached to the Indians who gathered in the English towns, and when the

1. This is a very short statement of the trouble the colony had with Dr. Robert Child, and his friends in 1646-1647.
2. Mather, op. cit., IV, p. 155. "After his Contraction, according to the Old Usage of New-England, unto the Virtuous Daughter of Mr. Wilson (whereat Mr. Cotton preached the Sermon) he was married unto that Gentlewoman, in the Year 1651." Felt, op. cit., p. 599; uses a quotation that would seem to imply that Cotton preached at the service of marriage—against the custom in New England. Marriage was a civil, not a religious, matter. The ceremony of 'Contraction' seems, from Mather, to have been otherwise.
3. The gathering on June 9th, 1647, following the synod session is one example given by Felt, op. cit., p. 597f.
Indians began to show their eagerness to cooperate with the magistrates and to give pledges of assistance in time of trouble, he observed thankfully: "God hath begun to open us a door, in that divers of their sachems and sagamores have submitted themselves to the government of the English." When some Puritans, forced from the island of Bermuda because of their beliefs, lost their provisions and goods in landing on the island of Sigataea, Cotton at once determined to help them. Because of his enthusiasm, the Boston church raised two hundred pounds with which they purchased supplies and arranged to have them delivered to the destitute islanders. When La Tour, the French Catholic commander of a fort at St. Johns, came down the coast to Boston seeking help against armed intruders, Cotton conferred with the two friars who accompanied him. One of these friars, before his departure, "came and bade adieu to Cotton, Wilson, and Winthrop, expressing his gratitude for courtesies received".

1. Felt, op. cit., p. 526, 1644. Atkins and Fagley, History of American Congregationalism, quote Cotton as saying: "Let us be mindful in our dealing with the Indians that as we share their temporalities we share with them our spiritualities, and as we share their bread, let us share the Bread of Life with them." Cotton's son, John, worked with the Indians, and knew their language.

2. Sigataea (Segetea (M'Clure), Bigothea (Felt)) was the island of Eleutheria, in the Bahamas. It had been discovered by Columbus Cigatoo or Segatoo. In 1649 Nathaniel White with a group of Independents, exiled from Bermuda, decided to land at this island. In 1650 he and those with him sent a letter of thanks to the churches who had sent them supplies.

Until the end of his life, Cotton retained an important position as an adviser to the Court. In 1641, when, at a session of the Court, one of the deputies made the motion that the Court remove from office two of the older magistrates who had been reduced to poverty by the struggle of making a living in the colony, Cotton straightway spoke publicly in defense of the two men. He took occasion...to confute, and sharply (in his mild manner) to reprove such miscarriage, which he termed a slighting or dishonouring of parents, and told the country, that such as were decayed in their estates by attending the service of the country ought to be maintained by the country, and not set aside for their poverty, being otherwise so well gifted, and approved by long experience to be faithful. (1)

He was present in the Court when the interesting case of Captain Keaine versus the woman who owned a sow was considered. Cotton, supporting Keaine who was accused of having butchered the woman's sow rather than his own, held that the evidence was insufficient to convict the defendant. The people's representatives, prejudiced against Keaine because of his shrewd business dealings, had hoped to find him guilty, and again they questioned the power of the negative vote. 2 When, in October, 1644, the Court assembled once more to discuss the differences between the Assistants and the Deputies and to come to some answer to the question of whether or not the magistrates were empowered to act in a case not covered by law, Cotton, chosen by the elders to deliver their verdict, replied that

2. Winthrop, op. cit., II, p. 70.
the magistrates held such power, and should, in such event, be guided by the Word of God until the General Court gave adequate ruling.\(^1\)

In 1643 the Massachusetts magistrates arrested Samuel Gorton and his friends, Familists, who in seven years of wandering about New England had been driven out of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Plymouth, Aquedneck, and Providence, and finally had been betrayed by the Indians because they kept stirring up trouble and confusion. The Sunday after their capture they were ordered to attend the morning service in the Boston meeting-house. Refusing to do this, they were compelled to go to the afternoon service, at which meeting Cotton preached out of Acts 19. "After sermon Gorton desired leave to speak, which being granted, he repeated the points of Mr. Cotton's sermon, and coming to that of the silver shrines, he said that in the church there was nothing now but Christ, so that all our ordinances, ministers, sacraments, \textit{\textemdash} the church there was nothing now but Christ, so that all our ordinances, ministers, sacraments, \textit{etc.} were but men's inventions for show and pomp..."\(^2\) Two days later when the prisoners were brought before the Court for examination, Cotton questioned them about the rite of Baptism. He discovered that they believed there was no need for the churches' Sacrament or Baptism when a man was already baptized with the Holy Ghost. According to Winthrop, Cotton found the men 'illiterate' for they could not write 'true English'.\(^3\) When one Captain Partridge, another...

\(^{1}\) Ibid., II, p. 204ff.
\(^{2}\) Ibid., II, p. 143.
\(^{3}\) Ibid., II, p. 145.
Familist, arrived from England in October of 1645, Cotton was assigned the task of conferring with him and estimating the amount of error in his belief. He found that the man was ignorant as well as corrupt, and tried to convince the Court that in time he could be persuaded to conform. But the Court thought otherwise, and Partridge left for Rhode Island.¹

That Cotton recovered the confidence and the goodwill of the ministers and elders who fought the Hutchinsonian faction so tirelessly is further evidenced by his positions of importance at the Cambridge Synods of 1643 and 1646. At the first of these Synods, Cotton and Hooker were chosen moderators. Under their guidance, the fifty or more elders discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the 'Presbyterial way', and decided "to dissuade the Newbury ministers, Thomas Parker and James Noyes, from attempting to introduce the Presbyterian government in their church."² Perhaps the most remarkable thing about that synod was the way in which the college fed the delegates at a cost of six pence per meal!³ The second Synod, called by the magistrates for the purpose of deciding upon a platform of church government which would stand firm against the inroads of Presbyterianism, met in three successive sessions. At the first session Cotton, Richard Mather, and Ralph Partridge were each given the responsibility of drawing up a system of polity to be presented at a subsequent session.

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¹ Hubbard, op. cit., p. 413.
² M'Clure, op. cit., p. 260, 261.
³ Winthrop, op. cit., II, p. 137.
Because of sickness which may have been aggravated rather than relieved by the gift of "twelve gallons of sack and six gallons of white wine, as a small testimony of the court's respect to that reverend assembly of elders at Cambridge", 1 the second session of the Synod - held in June 1647 - sat for only a very short time. It was not until the summer of 1648 that the Synod met again. The three plans of church government were then carefully studied, and Mather's platform, thereafter known as the Cambridge Platform, was adopted. Cotton's work for this, his last synod, may be incorporated in Book Two of A Survey of the Sum of Church-Discipline, a 1648 publication usually accredited to Hooker. 2

During his first years in New England, Cotton, under the pressure of church, home, and community affairs, had had time to write only an occasional letter and treatise. In 1634 he had sent a letter to friends in England who wished to know more about his reasons for removing to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. 3 Another letter, written by him on October 5th, 1635, later provoked Robert Baillie of Glasgow in his book A Dissuasive from the Errors Of the Time (p. 56) to accuse him of changing his views on ecclesiastical matters as soon as he

1. Quoted from Felt, op. cit., p. 598.
2. This is suggested by M'Clure, op. cit., p. 258.
had reached New England.\footnote{Cotton answered this charge in \textit{The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared} by saying: "Two whole years and more giveth a man more than a taste of New English air; nor is that act done incontinently which is done upon two years' deliberation."} In 1636 he had been chosen by the magistrates and elders to write the answer to a letter of inquiry from Lord Saye and Seal and his friends, who were desirous of settling in the colony provided certain of their demands concerning rank and power could be met.\footnote{Hutchinson, \textit{op. cit.}, Appendices II and III, pp. 490ff. Cotton's letter is a brilliant defence of the colony's requirement that all magistrates be church members.} And immediately following the Hutchinsonian controversy he had found time to reply to a treatise by Mr. Barnard of Batcomb, Somersetshire, who was convinced that the method of gathering a church in New England was wrong.\footnote{M'Clure, \textit{op. cit.}; Emerson, \textit{First Church of Christ}, p. 60.}

Shortly after the Synod of 1637 however, Cotton began to devote himself more exclusively to his writing. He undertook a heavier correspondence, exchanging letters with Oliver Cromwell, whom he had hoped to greet on New England shores in 1635,\footnote{Hutchinson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 42. M'Clure, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 281.} and with others in England who continually sought his advice; and writing more frequently to his colleagues around Boston and in the neighbouring colonies,\footnote{One interesting letter to Thomas Shepard attempts to prove that the first day of the week should be observed as the Sabbath.} and to those of his church who had been banished because of errors in belief.\footnote{Cotton tried, in this way, to convince the people of their error. One attempt is described by Winthrop, \textit{op. cit.}, II, p. 15f.} He further turned his attention to the
task of preparing theological treatises for publication. In 1638 he wrote a reply to a treatise on the value of set forms of prayer by Mr. Ball. This reply was published in London in 1643 as A Modest and Clear Answer to Mr. Ball's Discourse. In 1641 he was asked by the Court to prepare a catechism for publication. He drew up the questions and answers later published under the title Spiritual Milk for American Babes, Drawn out of the Breasts of both Testaments. The fact that over seven million copies of this catechism were printed before 1841 gives some indication of the great influence Cotton must have had upon the 'New England Mind'. During the sixteen forties Cotton engaged in literary warfare with Roger Williams, who, while he was in England, attacked Cotton in a treatise titled The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution. Cotton replied with The Bloudy Tenent, Washed, and made white in the bloud of the Lambe, and Williams retaliated with The Bloudy Tenent yet more bloudy by Mr. Cotton's washing... In 1647, after the passing of the act which condemned as heretics all those who believed the baptism of infants to be no ordinance, Cotton's treatise The Grounds and Ends of the Baptisme of the Children of the Faithfull was published.

But Cotton's most important works were concerned with church polity. These greatly influenced the thinking of the English Independents and occasioned replies from outstanding Presbyterians. When Thomas Hooker dissuaded him from

2. Other such publications are listed in the Bibliography.
accepting Parliament's invitation to attend the Westminster Assembly in an advisory capacity, Cotton sent in his place a manuscript—The True Constitution of a Particular Visible Church, proved by Scripture—in which he briefly described the polity of the churches in New England. This was published in London in 1642. At about the same time there was printed his Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. According to M'Clure, this treatise on church polity was New England's "first printed guide in ecclesiastical matters", it was "the standard book of New England church discipline, till the Cambridge Platform", and it is "at the present day, the most important of his published writings". On John Owen's own testimony we know that this was the treatise which convinced him that the Congregational cause was the cause he should support. Two other books on polity which were written by Cotton in response to a demand for a more detailed understanding of the 'New England Way', appeared in 1645 and 1648. These—The Way of the Churches of Christ in New England, and The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared—were widely circulated in England.

It is indicative of the way in which Cotton spent the later years of his life that thirty different treatises or editions of treatises from his pen were published in London between 1641 and 1651. Not one of these years passed without

There remains to say a word or two about Cotton's personal appearance, for without that this study of his life would be incomplete. The engraving which usually bears his name shows a man of large frame, dressed in the black clothes and white bands of a seventeenth century Divine. His face, framed by a well-curled wig reaching down to his shoulders, is full, and his features distinct. His forehead is broad and high, his nose long, and his jaw square. His whole appearance suggests a strong and resolute character tempered with patience and understanding. This engraving, copied from an earlier painting, hangs in the library of St. Botolph's church in Boston, Lincolnshire. Its authenticity is questioned by the Reverend A. M. Cook, Canon of Lincoln Cathedral and formerly vicar of the Boston church, who has done a considerable amount of research on the early New England fathers.

A second portrait of John Cotton is in the possession of the Connecticut Historical Society. This painting, rather poorly executed by an amateur artist, depicts a more austere gentleman, in black cap and Puritan collar, with thin, straight, white hair, and a drawn face. The features are similar to those of the Divine in the wig, and, taking into consideration the differences of time and circumstance, it is possible to suppose that the two portraits are of the same person. However, since the second portrait was repainted

1. See Morison, Builders of the Bay Colony, facing p. 228.
following Cotton's death as a portrait of Increase or Cotton Mather, doubts as to its accuracy are immediately raised.

According to Cotton's grandson, who remembered him as an elderly man,

he was of a Clear, Fair, Sanguine Complexion, and like David of a ruddy Countenance. He was rather low than tall, and rather fat than lean, but of a becoming Mediocrity. In his younger Years his Hair was brown, but in his latter Years as white as the Driven Snow. In his Countenance there was an inexpressible sort of Majesty, which commanded Reverence from all that approached him. (1)

That Cotton was hospitable, kindly, and responsive to the needs of others was attested by those who knew him well. John Norton, whom we have mentioned as his successor in the church of Boston, wrote that he had "a happy, a quick, comprehensive, and benign understanding", and that any one who argued with him was "likely to fall soft enough ordinarily (except through his own default) not likely to lose anything besides his error". 2 With respect to this last attribute these words were carved on his tombstone:

Could Wound at Argument without Division,
Cut to the Quick, and yet make no Incision. (3)

He had trained himself to overlook the injuries done him, and to observe the goodness of everyone and everything. He served as a most successful moderator in composing differences of opinion because he could see the different sides of an argument. 4 Of him, Norton could sincerely say:

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1. Mather, Magnalia, III, p. 28.
4. Norton, op. cit., p. 34.
He was an example to the flock, clothed with love and humility amongst his brethren: One of a thousand in respect of his worth; but...as one of the multitude in respect of his facile and companion-like behaviour.(1)

But Cotton was not soft. He would not sacrifice any one of his principles for peace, but stood staunchly for those things which he believed right and true. He ruled his large family well, disciplining them and catechising them with a firm yet gentle hand. His self-discipline extended to habits of eating, drinking, and fasting, to hours of prayer and hours of study, and to the careful planning of his day's work. He rose early and wasted no part of the day in idle talk or in paying calls.3 Those who wished to consult him came to his study, where he was always available except when attending to town or church affairs. Of the work of ministers he once said:

No calling more wasteth and grieveth him that is occupied therein than theirs doth. The ploughman's employment is a pastime to theirs; his labour strengtheneth his body, but theirs wasteth body and spirit; whence it is the one so long a time outliveth the other. (4)

And it is certainly true that in his ministry his life was

1. Ibid., p. 26.
2. Cotton had six children. His youngest son Roland and his eldest daughter Sarah died of smallpox within a few days of each other in 1649. His eldest son Seaborn married Dorothy Bradstreet on June 14th, 1652. His second son John became a minister, as did Seaborn. His second daughter Elizabeth married Jeremiah Egginton, but died at the age of nineteen. His youngest daughter Maria married Increase Mather and was the mother of Cotton Mather. When Cotton Mather wrote his Magnalia five of Cotton's grandsons were in the ministry.
3. Mather, op. cit., p. 27.
spent to the full.

Cotton continued to be active until the close of his life. In November of 1652 he fell ill as a result of getting wet while travelling to Cambridge by ferry to keep a preaching engagement at the college. Feeling that he had a very short time remaining to him on this earth, he lectured the next Thursday, November 18th, on the last verses of the Epistle to Timothy, which epistle he had been expounding; and the following Sunday he preached his last sermon, using as a text John 1:14. He conscientiously set his study in order, and at last, weakened by the strain of attending to these duties and responsibilities, retired to his bedchamber. Magistrates, ministers, and friends came to call upon him. To all he gave his advice and his blessing. The ruling elders of the church gathered in his room for parting instructions and prayer. His wife and his four children, waiting upon him tenderly, were gently dismissed. Alone in his room, on the 23rd of December, he gave his soul into the hands of God.

About fourteen days before Cotton's death the people of Boston had seen, flashing across the sky, a meteor, to them a token of ill-omen. According to Norton, Cotton, when asked

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1. Increase Mather, then a student at Harvard, recollected this. Mather, op. cit., III, p. 9.
about this sign, said that "he thought it portended great changes in the Churches". Following the death of their beloved teacher, all reverently agreed that the change had come, that the star had foreshadowed the tragedy which had befallen them. Cotton himself would have reproved them for such an interpretation, for above all he was modest and humble, ascribing all that he was and all that he had done to the power of God's grace working unto salvation.

CHAPTER III
The Theology

Protestant theology in England and in her colonies during the greater part of the seventeenth century was predominantly Calvinistic. Under the careful supervision of Queen Elizabeth, and influenced by men who, during Mary's Catholic régime, had spent their years of exile in Switzerland, the Bishops of the Church of England had, in 1563, formulated Thirty-nine Articles based upon the reformed Protestant doctrine. Within a few years these Articles had been accepted by the nation as the authoritative statement of the theology of the national Church, and Elizabeth had been excommunicated by Papal Bull because she was guilty of forcing her subjects to accept "the impious constitutions and atrocious mysteries of Calvin".¹ Divines trained in the dogma that sprang from Geneva, thenceforth preached its tenets from pulpit and rostrum, successfully brushing Lutheranism and Romanism to one side. By 1608 students at Oxford were being encouraged to read Calvin's Institutes - "the best and perfectest system of Divinity, and fittest to be laid as a groundwork in the study of that profession."² And although

2. Quoted by Henson, Puritanism, p. 80f, from Sanderson.
tendencies toward Arminianism began to appear among High Church Anglicans as early as in the reign of James I, still most of the clergy and laity found satisfaction in Calvin's explanations of religious truths.¹

Puritans within the Church of England proved to be extreme Calvinists. Not only did they accept Calvin's dogma as authoritative in matters religious, but they also used his theological assertions to argue the soundness of their political position. Calvin's great work became the text-book of religion and politics wherever Puritan Divines secured University posts.² And when the Presbyterian wing of the Puritan party came into power in 1643, they assembled Divines at Westminster for the purpose of drawing up a Calvinistic Confession of Faith, and they signed the Solemn League and Covenant, thus binding the nation to the Calvinism which had been expounded for Scottish Presbyterianism by John Knox.

Those who had separated from the Church of England, and differed in point of view from the Presbyterian majority, were nonetheless grounded in Calvinistic doctrine, even though Arminianism and other varieties of religious belief were attracting increasing numbers of followers. The Independents, who were so ably represented at the Westminster Assembly by Goodwin, Nye, and others, proved to be staunch Calvinists in spite of differences of opinion on matters of faith which

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1. William, Anglican Tradition, p. 32f. Also accounts of the Synod of Dort.
2. Osgood, American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century, p. 201.
seemed of importance to Baillie, one of the Scottish contingent. In one of his treatises the latter, arguing against toleration and liberty of conscience, scornfully reports that the Independents
tell us that those things which are cried out upon for errors, are in matter obscure and disputable: instancing expressly in the Trinity, the union of Christ's two natures, the fruits of Christ's death, the power of freewill, the state of the soul after death, and lest any error should stand without the compass of their liberty, they tell us farther that no error is in any justice punishable, because now there is not on earth any Apostle or Prophet or infallible Judge who can determine any question without possibility of erring. (1)

On the other hand, Goodwin and Nye in An Apologeticall Narration, a treatise in which they presented the position of the Independents to the other Divines in the Assembly, declared:

Moreover, if in all matters of Doctrine, we were not as Orthodoxe in our judgements as our brethren themselves, we would never have exposed ourselves to this tryall and hazard of discovery in this Assembly...But it is sufficiently known that in all points of doctrine...our judgements have still concurred with the greatest part of our brethren, neither do we know wherein we have dissented. (2)

And this interpretation of the Independents' doctrinal position seems the more accurate when we discover that in their Declaration of Faith drawn up at the Savoy Conference in 1658, at which Conference Goodwin, Nye, and John Owen were all present, the representatives of the Congregational Churches accepted with only very minor alterations the Westminster

Confession of Faith. ¹

Thus we see that the background for New England theology was Calvinism.² The ministers who migrated to the new land had been trained by Calvinists. Some of them were graduates of Cambridge, the University which had been given over to the special encouragement of Calvinistic theology. The church members had from childhood been drilled in their Catechism by Puritan parents and teachers and were at ease in discussions of Calvinistic doctrines. It was to be expected then that Calvinism would be preached from the pulpits of the Bay Colony. And it was not surprising that the colonists should approve the work done at the Westminster Assembly even though they were not there represented. In 1648 New England church delegates at the Cambridge Synod voted the acceptance of the doctrinal portions of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Thirty-two years later the Elders and Messengers of the New England churches, meeting again in Synod, adopted the Savoy Declaration of Faith almost word for word as their own statement of belief. Concerning these decisions Cotton Mather later wrote:

...they hoped, that this Proof of them being Fellow Heirs of the same Common Salvation, with the Churches beyond Sea, would not only free them from the Suspicion of Heresie, but clear them from the Character of Schism also.............they chose to express themselves in the Words of those Assemblies; That so (as they speak in their Preface) we might not only with one Heart, but with one Mouth glorifie God and our Lord Jesus Christ. (2)

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2. Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, Book V, p. 3f.
For the seventeenth century Calvinism was secure in New England. There was no inclination on the part of New England Divines to do anything other than to interpret it so as to answer the needs of the souls in their care.

In many ways perhaps the most influential man on the New England scene, John Cotton played a most important part in shaping the theological thought of the colonies. From 1635 until the year of his death, as Teaching Elder in the Boston church, the largest church in the Bay Colony, he was responsible for the indoctrination not only of all his church members but also of all the non-members who attended the church services. His sermons, readily followed, easily understood and applied, were given close attention on the part of his congregation, some of whom persisted in taking careful notes of what was said and later published these without Cotton's consent. He was the author of occasional theological treatises and of several catechisms. One of the latter - Milk for Babes - was accepted by the Salem church in the year 1660 to "be used in their families in teaching their children in order to public catechising in the congregation", and was in great demand for two centuries after Cotton's death. As one of the outstanding figures in the Hutchinsonian controversy, he stood his ground on theological issues, winning

3. Quoted by Walker, op. cit., p. 113, from the Salem Church Records.
strong support from his parishioners and only yielding to the opposition when it was proved that false friends were intentionally misinterpreting his doctrinal assertions. He was chosen a moderator at one synod, was asked to make substantial contributions to other synods, and was frequently called upon by the Court for counsel based upon the interpretation of Scripture.

From the beginning of his ministry Cotton showed himself to be a keen and exhaustive student of Calvin. While at Cambridge he had been won to the cause of Christianity by the lives and lectures of such Puritans as Perkins, Chaderton, Cartwright, and Whitgift. He had formed friendships with John Dod, Arthur Hildersham, and William Ames. The people of Boston in Lincolnshire found him more interested in expounding the great truths of religion than in arguing controversial points, and from Cotton's own pen we have the following statement to indicate his enthusiastic Calvinism.

I began publickly to preach, and in private Meetings to defend the Doctrine of God's Eternal Election, before all Foresight of Good or Evil, in the Creature; and the Redemption (ex gratis) only of the Elect; the effectual Vocation of a Sinner, Per irresistibilem Gratiae vim, without all respect of the Preparations of Free Will; and finally, the Impossibility of the Fall of a sincere Believer, either totally or finally from a State of Grace. (1)

Those writings of his which were published as the result of his work before leaving England are, with a single exception and that at least questionable, soundly orthodox in point of

1. Quoted by Mather, op. cit., Book III, p. 16f.
Perhaps the most vivid testimony to Cotton's interest and delight in Calvin after his arrival in New England has been given by his grandson, Cotton Mather. In his description of Mr. Cotton's habits of work Mather says:

Indeed his Library was vast, and vast was his Acquaintance with it; but although amongst his Readings, he had given a Special Room unto the Fathers, and unto the School men, yet at last, he preferr'd one Calvin above them all... a Calvinist was our Cotton! Said he, I have read the Fathers and the School-men, and Calvin too; but I find, That he that has Calvin has 'em all. And being asked, why in his Latter Days he indulged Nocturnal Studies more than formerly, he pleasantly replied, Because I love to sweeten my mouth with a piece of Calvin before I go to sleep. (2)

Cotton himself defended his orthodoxy in the face of every criticism. In reply to the charges of Arminianism, Montanism, Antinomianism, and Familism brought against him by Robert Baillie, he calmly asserted:

...we professe the Orthodox Doctrine of Faith, the same with all Protestant Churches; we celebrate the same Sacraments; and submit to the spiritual government of the same lawful Guides, so farr as Christ and our own choyce hath set them over us. (3)

Did I change my minde then to any other judgment or practice, then what the Reverend Assembly of Divines, and the Honorable Houses of Parliament have found (by the grace given to them) to be the Truth... (4)

In his writings and sermons he made occasional reference to

1. The exception is Cotton's Treatise on Predestination as examined by Dr. Twisse. Other early writings seem on examination to be: The Way of Life, The Saints Support and Comfort, Exposition of Canticles.
4. Ibid., p. 29.
chapter and page numbers in Calvin's Institutes. And he was convinced throughout his life that he was a faithful interpreter of those things which Calvin clearly explained, and that when he differed from others in points of doctrine he was departing "not so much from the received doctrine of our Church, as the received manner of explication of it".  

A. The Structure of Cotton's Doctrine.

Before examining the particular items of doctrine upon which Cotton and his opponents held long debate, it is necessary to consider the theological framework into which such pieces of the puzzle were expected to fit. Cotton's theology was based, as is all good Calvinistic dogma, upon the supposition that God, omnipotent and omniscient, so orders and controls the world, and everything that takes place and everything that is therein, that it demonstrates, for His greater glory, His power and His might. God is the First Cause, the source from which everything derives.  

God is the Creator; out of nothing He produced matter, out of nothing He made man. God is the Governor of the Universe, before whom all living things must bow. And God is the Divine Overseer, ever-present, ever-alert, determining every action, cognisant of every thought, word, and deed.

1. Cotton, A Treatise...Concerning Predestination, p. 129.  
2. Cotton, A Briefe Exposition of...Ecclesiastes, p. 35.  
3. Ibid., p. 122.  
4. Ibid., p. 122ff.
According to Cotton the two attributes which best display God's glory, and exemplify His sovereign will, are justice and grace. "It is a greater honour to a Prince," he claimed, to be gracious and just, than to be wise and powerful; ...If then grace and justice doe more set forth the glory of their sovereignty, surely God (who aimeth at his highest glory) in the highest and first place, he aimed chiefly at the manifestation of his grace and justice, above the manifestation of his power and dominion. (1)

To the unholy and the unrighteous, to the wicked of the world, God in His holiness and righteousness sends destruction. Those who through the years of their lives refuse to do good and choose to do evil, those who drift with the current of corruption of which they are heirs through Adam, and become entangled with Satan, those who weary of Him, refusing His Ordinances and declining to attend to the ministry of His Word, all these He brings to judgment, taking from them all hope of future glory, and casting them, body and soul, into hell. 2 In doing this God manifests His justice, for voluntary iniquity, and wilful disobedience merit such reward. 3

But to those whom He has chosen for His own, God is gracious. They too are corrupt, unworthy of the salvation which is accorded them, yet to them He shows mercy, to them He reveals His love. Through sin and suffering He leads them on to humility and patience. 4 For their own benefit He

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1. Cotton, A Treatise...Concerning Predestination, p. 35.
3. Cotton, A Treatise...Concerning Predestination, p. 42f.
confronts them with difficulties. He even controls the price of cattle in order to make them sensible of His power and His purpose!

from 25/- they shall fall to 5/- price...they shall either be worth little, or else he will deny us fodder for them; if they devour our spirits, and take off our minde from the Ordinances of God; he will rend away anything that standeth between him and our soules... (1)

The ones chosen become the recipients of the greatest gift which God has to offer; for them

he hath given his Son out of his own bosom; to take our nature upon him, to lead a miserable life, and to die a cursed death; and in him hath given all his attributes, his mercy, and power unto the sons of men...This doth the Lord for his people, and it is a clear evidence of his grace, and sheweth that his love unto his people is beyond all banks, and bottoms... (2)

And in the giving of Himself in this way, God reconciles the Elect to Himself. He becomes a Father to them, showering upon them all His blessings. They become His sons by adoption, turning to Him in faith, surrendering to Him in love. A new directive controls their lives; as apprentices they obey God’s commands.  

As the beames of the Moone darting into the Sea leads it to and fro, so doth a secret inclination darted by God into our hearts leade and bowe (as a byas) our whole course. (5)

And though they fall short of what God desires of them, they find that He never fails to satisfy all their needs.  

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4. Cotton, Covenant of...Free Grace, II Sam. 23.5, p. 20.
6. Cotton, Covenant of...Free Grace, p. 11.
their strong tower, and their defence; and, for a few, He
comes the source of that peace for which they have long
searched. 1

God is never fully known to man. His works and His
attributes are veiled mysteries. His decrees are eternally
secret. 2 Yet man must strive for a knowledge of Him, for
such knowledge leads to the conviction of sin, and to a
deeper understanding of the life which the Christian should
live; such knowledge drives away folly and increases
spiritual strength. 3 According to Cotton this knowledge of
God comes from a study of nature and from a study of the Word.
Because God has created everything that is, because He orders
events and is responsible for material blessings, He reveals
Himself in the world around us.

the Lord is wrapped up in all his Blessings...he will
not only give a Man Wife, and Children, and Ordinanaces
and Providences, but he himself will be in all these,
and bless his People in the enjoyment of them all... (4)

Therefore we must examine this world, seeking to grasp the
truth it discloses and to understand the way in which it
operates. Cotton clearly felt that a certain knowledge of
nature was of great benefit to man, for in his exposition on
Ecclesiastes he gives as a point of doctrine: "To study the
nature and course and use of all God's works is a duty imposed
by God upon all sorts of men, from the king that sitteth upon

the throne to the artificer." And in the last chapter of The Saints Support and Comfort he goes so far as to suggest that the world is "a mappe and shaddow of the spirituall estate of the soules of man", implying that those who will read therein will discover something of God's plan for the redemption of men.

Thus there was reason in Cotton's mind as in the minds of other Puritans for the continued enjoyment of things material. God gave the world to man for his profit and pleasure, therefore man should make good use of it.

God would have us to live comfortably in the World, and use all the lawfull comforts of it, wee shall need them all against the discouragements of the World... (3)

The good which he directeth a man to take is in the enjoyment of the comfortable use of all the blessings which God giveth him in this life; which blessings are chiefly five: first, meat or bread, it to be eaten with joy...secondly, Wine, it to be drunken with a cheerful heart...thirdly, Garments, and they to be always white; fourthly, Ointments, and they not to be lacking to the dead...fifthly, The wife beloved, and she to be joyfully lived withal. (4)

But should the knowledge and use of these gifts of God crystallize into a love for the things of this world, should food encourage gluttony and possessions breed covetousness, should the desires of the flesh cause incontinence, then corruption spreads and evil takes root. For intemperance and greed separate men from God, exposing them to the temptations of Satan. And the things of this world, "all the Creatures,

1. Cotton, A Brieve Exposition of...Ecclesiastes, p. 15.
all the fashions and courses of the World; the condition thereof, Honour, Credit, Profit, Pleasure, all these pass away", and those whose happiness rested in them are left desolate and lost.\(^1\)

The knowledge of God obtained from nature is not satisfying nor is it able to direct us to saving faith. This is forcefully demonstrated in Cotton's commentary on Ecclesiastes. Cotton discusses the first chapter of that book in detail, explaining why things and the knowledge of things are but vanity, and briefly summarizes his whole argument in the stating of two doctrines:

all things under the sun, whether creatures of God or labours of men, are altogether vain to the attaining of true happiness... (2)

The crooked perverseness and sinful defects of our nature are not healed by the knowledge of God's works in nature. (3)

But saving knowledge is available to men, and may be found in the Word of God as contained in the Old and the New Testaments. These writings present a full account of God's commandments, His threatenings, and His promises.\(^4\) In them men can find everything that is necessary for their indoctrination, instruction, and exhortation.\(^5\) They are the means by which God reveals Himself and His Will to mankind. They are the vehicles through which His Grace descends upon the Elect.

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2. P. 7.
3. P. 16.
5. Ibid. Also Cotton, Covenant of Grace, Acts 7.8, pp. 57ff.
...the Lord useth to convey himself unto the soul in some word of promise of the Gospel, that sheweth unto the soul the riches of the grace of God in Jesus Christ: This word being taught in the publick ministry of the Word, or brought to remembrance in some spiritual duty, as prayer, or conference, or the like...usually it is done in the ministry of the Gospel; and though the Lord doth not limit himself, yet he doth limit us to attend upon the means, which he usually worketh by... (1)

To secure the knowledge imparted by Scripture men must study the Bible diligently, reading it again and again, reading it with purpose. It is also required that they

2. Cotton's own use of Scripture is exemplary. He had a thorough knowledge of the Bible, and filled his pages with references and quotations. For him the Old and the New Testament were equally authoritative. He was skilled in Biblical criticism, and regularly used the Fathers and the School-men, as well as the Latin and Greek texts, in searching out the meanings of passages. He held that "whatsoever is drawn out of the Scripture by just consequence and deduction, is as well the word of God, as that which is an expresse Commandment or Example in Scripture". (on Baptism, p. 4.) And of the value of the use of Scripture by the Scholar he says in his prefatory letter to Hildersam's book on the Gospel of John (A3 verso): "When Schollers furnish themselves with store of other writers, besides the Scriptures, and being little conversant in the Scriptures, doe draw the Scriptures to the Authors whom they most affect, and not their Authors to the Scriptures, their Divinity proveth but humanity, and their Ministry speaketh to the braine, but not to the conscience of the hearer. But he that diggeth all the Treasures of his knowledge, and the grounds of Religion out of the Scriptures, and maketh use of other Authors...for the better searching out of the deepe wisdome of the Scriptures, such an one believeth what he teacheth, not by an humane credulity from his Author, but by a divine faith from the Word... and speaking from faith in his own heart, he speaketh much more powerfully unto the begetting and strengthening of faith in the Hearer."
give careful attention to the ministry of the Word, that is, to preaching, and to the other ordinances, and that they meditate upon God's Word whenever possible. If they perform these duties faithfully, with humility and with reverence, they will be markedly helped along the road to better Christian living, and they will open up a channel through which faith may enter their lives.

I beseech you, if you would not reade the word in vaine, then read it in faith, it will not profit you else; and therefore, when ever you goe about to reade, life up your hearts to Heaven, that God would give you a faithful heart, to looke at all the word as neerely concerning you. Labour so to reade, as that you may suck life from it, and so may you, when ever you reade, say, it is a sweet Ordinance. (1)

A true knowledge of God, reaching us through the agency of the Word, is a gift from God Himself. Those to whom this gift is given recognise themselves as recipients because of the change which the knowledge effects in their lives. The heart, or will, since Adam the seat of natural corruption, is cleansed of evil; and the conscience, long troubled by sin, is comforted. (2) Things of the world appear in their true perspective; things of the spirit become important. The commandments of God call for careful obedience. His promises offer encouragement. (3) Faith stirs, and the machinery of salvation is geared to action.

a Spiritual knowledge is not superficial, but such a knowledge as is operative, not dead, but lively,...

such a knowledge as makes all the World dead to us;... it is such a knowledge as makes us trust in him, fear him, honour him, serve him, cleave to him, and yield obedience unto him... (1)

all saving Knowledge, stirs us up to obedience to God, to righteousness to man... (2)

God does not work haphazard among men. Although it may seem that chance alone selected those who are to be saved and misses all the others, this is not so. From before time God planned those things which were to take place in time, ordaining Christ, choosing the elect, presupposing the Creation, the Fall of Man, and the Incarnation with the purpose in mind of glorifying Himself and of glorifying Himself in Christ. Those things so planned He decreed and then worked out in history.3 He has further regulated His relationship to men by establishing two Covenants, one of Works and the other of Grace, in which He gives Himself to be a God to the world (the non-elect) and to the elect. The Covenant of Works, also called the Covenant of Circumcision or of the Law, was initiated with God's promise to Abraham to

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\text{establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.} \quad (\text{Gen. 17.7})
\]

This Covenant served and continues to serve the task of keeping the world in order and preparing the elect for the new Covenant which was made possible by the coming of Christ. Concerning

2. Ibid., p. 64.
this Covenant Cotton says:

it is given, to the lawless, and disobedient; to the ungodly, and sinners; to the unholy, and profane; to murtherers of fathers, and murtherers of mothers; to man-slayers, and whoremongers; and to them that defile themselves with man-kind; to men-stealers, to lyars, to perjured persons, and if there be any other things that are contrary to sound Doctrine; the Covenant of the Law is given unto such (and unto none but such) to convince them of their sins against the Law, to humble them to the death, and to drive them out of themselves, and confidence in themselves. (1)

for God never calleth any unto fellowship with himself in a Covenant of Grace, but ordinarily he first bringeth them into a Covenant of Works. (2)

Since all men, even the Elect, are sinners these two passages are not contradictory. No matter whether one is to be saved or to be doomed, this Covenant is effective. Through it, God offers Himself as God to those who fulfil the condition of obedience to the Law. But good works will not effect salvation, and although some men achieve a semblance of faith and of sanctification under the Law, they are still condemned unless they are caught up into the Covenant of Grace.³

The Covenant of Grace is everlasting, ordered, and sure. It is all that man needs for salvation.⁴ In this Covenant God gives Himself freely and absolutely to the elect, requiring of them no condition of obedience to the Law, but justifying them of His own good pleasure and receiving them to be His sons by adoption. While God promises to be a Father to those whom He thus chooses for glory, the Elect promise obedience to

2. Ibid., pp. 33, 34.
3. Cotton, Covenant of...Free Grace, II Sam. 23.5, pp. 11ff.
4. Ibid., pp. 26ff.
His Will. But such a promise on man's part is too often broken, and so the elect ask of God assurance that their weakness will not abrogate the Covenant. Surety is given them by God in the person of Jesus Christ who takes upon himself the sins of the Elect and leaves with them his righteousness. So is the Covenant kept.

True, they that doe make a Covenant with God often break, even as often as there is a thought, or word, or action that was not from God's Word, or mouth, or counsel, but this is our hope, we have Christ for our surety of this Covenant...and he will make up all breaches... (1)

we...offer our selves, soules and bodies to bee obedient to God to the death; onely we require this back againe of God, that as we give up our selves a sacrifice to him, so that the Lord Jesus Christ might be imputed unto us; and the blood of Christ, and the life of Christ might be communicated to us; his life of righteousness, and holiness, and of eternal glory, all that life that is in Christ might become ours, this doth God require of them, and this is to make a Covenant with God by way of sacrifice. (2)

God, who gives Himself to the Elect in the Covenant of Grace, is a three-fold God. As the Father, so-called because He is the Father of Jesus Christ and of the Elect, God gives His only Son for the redemption of His chosen ones, and so convinces them of His love and power. He prostrates the souls of His Elect, drawing them into fellowship with Jesus Christ, and bringing them into subjection to Himself. He adopts them into Sonship with Christ, forgiving them their sins and reconciling them to Himself. (3)

2. Cotton, Christ the Fountaine, p. 32.
As the Son, God is the Word: the wisdom of God begotten and made man, the living image of God 'like a seal stampt in wax',\(^1\) the revelation of God's Will, God's Promise become manifest.\(^2\) Because He is both God and Man, He stands between the Father and the world, a Mediator, faithful to God and compassionate to men, who releases souls from bondage to sin and the Law and leads them back to the light of God's goodness, grace, and love.\(^3\)

God received Jesus Christ the Son of the Virgin Mary to be one Person with the second in Trinity, hereby laying a ground of a firm Mediation between God and us: for Jesus Christ being of Gods Nature, therefore he will be faithful unto God; and being of our Nature, therefore he will be compassionate towards us. And here is the root of all the life and power of this Mediation, to wit, this Personal Union of the Son of man, with the second Person in Trinity... (4)

Because He was born in the flesh to live under the Law, to suffer, and to die because of man's sin, He is able to work all things needful for man's redemption. Throughout His life He gave Himself in voluntary obedience to the Will of God, and by His death on the Cross He paid the ransom - for He was the ransom - for the souls of men, that through Him the Elect might become new and sinless creatures, acceptable to God.\(^5\)

Look at all our sins, as so many nailes that fastned him to the crosse, as so many venomous darts in his soule, as so many vials of the fierce wrath of the Lord; had not he born the insupportable burden of the wrath of God for our sins, we had every soule of us perished everlastingly. (6)

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5. Ibid., p. 147f.
One further work the Son does in the Covenant. To Him the Father has given the care of the Elect.\(^1\) By His prayers and by His ruling providence, He preserves them in their state of preparedness for salvation, keeping them anhungered and athirst for God until the Spirit can enter upon its work.\(^2\)

\[
\text{this is the \textit{eternal} efficacy of the Son, whereby every believing soul is kept until he do finde fulness of accomplishment of his spiritual desires... (3)}
\]

Throughout his discussions on the nature and work of the Son Cotton uses Calvin's three divisions of prophet, priest, and king to describe the offices through which Christ brings to men the blessings of God. As Prophet Jesus Christ is foreshadowed in the Old Testament and brings a full revelation of God in the New. As Priest He intercedes with God for us and is Himself the sacrifice which wipes away our sins. As King He is governor, ruler, and Lord of all, and works for the good and the happiness of all who will accept His command. Cotton goes on to say that the Christian who has received God the Son bears the likeness of these offices in his own life: he understands the nature of his faith and instructs the members of his family in it; he offers up sacrifices of prayer and praise, and makes willing sacrifice of body and soul to God; and he rules over his heart and his tongue, and - a good Puritan - over his family.\(^4\)

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1. Cotton, \textit{A Treatise...Concerning Predestination}, p. 8f.
3. Ibid., p. 146.
As the Holy Spirit, God takes possession of the Elect, entering into their souls, and there accomplishing effectually the work of the three Persons of the Trinity. The first action of the Holy Spirit is to kindle within the soul a saving faith.

All the works of creation though they may convince my judgement that there is a God, yet they cannot beget lively faith in me, unless the Holy Ghost set in with them... (1)

By this faith the will is subdued, and the Christian becomes convinced of his sin and of the goodness of the promises given in the Gospel. Spiritual union with Christ follows, and the regenerate man, freed from all sin by reason of Christ's having assumed the burden of sin Himself, is brought to justification. ²

We conclude that a man is justified by faith, so that when the conscience is struck with remorse for sin, and the heart deeply distressed, and thereupon he looks at himself as an undone man, then by this, (faith helping to draw a poor soul near to Christ, to seek peace and pardon from him) he finds that indeed God hath discharged him of all his sins, and this is the life of our Justification. (3)

Over and over again Cotton emphasises his belief that faith is initiated by God the Spirit, and that only after faith has brought union with Christ and adoption by the Father does the Christian become Christ-like. Then, "as soon as we receive him, we of his fulness receive grace for grace...there is a conformity between Christ and us; one and the same Image

2. Ibid., p. 17f, and p. 154f.
stamped upon us both”.  

While the Spirit is working within to quicken faith and to bring about adoption and justification, the soul is merely passive and receptive. But the Spirit next moves the soul to sanctification, stirring it to the performance of holy duties. By means of the power which it gives, the Elect reorient their lives, choosing to live in Christ and to let Christ direct their ways.

we cannot better explain it then thus; A wind-mill moves not onely by the wind, but in the wind; so a water-mill hath its motion, not onely from the water, but in the water; so a Christian lives, as having his life from Christ, and in Christ, and further then Christ breathes and assists, he stirs not... (3)

They turn to prayer, to the examination of sermons, and to other like duties with a deep sense of their spiritual need. They pluck from themselves the sins of doubt, presumption, fear, self-confidence, pride, and all else hurtful to Christ and to their fellow-men.

An Apple is sometimes grown to full growth upon a tree, yet grows not sweet till a good time after, but in time it will: So a Christian, though it may be he shall never get more knowledge than he hath, or more ability, but though the case so stand, that you are like to grow no further; yet you may grow to more sweetnesse, and mellownesse, to more love to your brethren, and be more ready to deny your selves of that arrogancy of spirit, and pride he is now addicted to. (4)

In their active lives they also become pleasing to God. They are obedient to the commandments of the Law. They perform

good works, serving God in their families, in their churches, and in the Commonwealth. And they are diligent and serviceable in their everyday occupation.

be busie like Antes, morning and evening, early and late, and labour diligently... (2)

But if you live with Christ you may so buy as if you bought not, and so use the world, as though you used it not. That what you doe you do it not as worldlings, as if that were your Soveraign good that you set your hearts upon, but you buy and sel by the rules of Christ, to the praise and glory of Christ, and the good of the church where you live, and such buying and selling will never darken the sight of Christ: You will see him cleere enough for all your businesss for ther's no calling God sets a man in, that hinders him from Christ, but the more just and diligent we are in our calling, the more we shall see Christ. (3)

Cotton admits that the life of a graceless hypocrite may resemble in outward appearance the life of the true servant of God.

to distinguish in men between that Sanctification which floweth from the Law, and that which is of the Gospel, is a matter so narrow, that the Angels in Heaven have beene much ado to discern who differ: a work fitter for Angels to cut the scantling in it, than for the Ministers of the Gospel. (4)

But there are certain differences between the Christian and the hypocrite which can, with close attention, be discerned. Within the Christian one can find a 'variety of graces'. Unlike the man in whom the Holy Spirit does not dwell, he holds within his heart both joy and grief, comfort and fear, patience and impatience, gentleness and austerity, love and

2. Cotton, Christ the Fountaine, p. 120.
hatred. These are sanctified affections, made possible only by the presence of Christ. Corrupt nature could not shelter them.\(^1\) Then too, the Christian has his mind stayed on Christ, knowing that of himself he can do nothing. His confidence is in God. He acknowledges that everything good which he does is done by Christ through him. By nature he is a stranger and an enemy to God.

Look at us as we are by nature, all of us without Christ cannot put forth one act of spiritual life, not one good motion to be found in such a condition.\(^2\)

For though we do never so much, yet we cannot reach unto the accomplishment of any good thing; not by might, nor by strength, but by my Spirit: the Lord therefore by his Spirit must work all our works for us.\(^3\)

And finally, the Christian, by fastening his hope upon God, is enabled to move upward toward the life of glory which will be his after death. Growth is assured, for God Himself gives the Christian the necessary care and sustenance.

As a fruitful Tree, the more it sticks his root downward into the ground, the faster it grows, so a Christian, the more he sticks his root on Christ, the faster he grows. And so the Husband-man will have more care of a fruitful Tree to prune it, he hath no such care of a sour barren Tree, but if a Tree be fruitful, he cuts off all superfluous Boughs that hinder the increase of such a Tree; so a man that is fruitful in Gods Commandments, he doth not only stick his root, his faith and hope deeper in Christ, but the Lord himself is willing to cut down all those noysome Lusts that suck away the sap of grace.\(^4\)

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1. Cotton, First Epistle of John, p. 398f. Also Christ the Fountaine, p. 110f. This seems to be a development from Calvin's paragraph on 'The contrarie affections which are in godly afflicted minds.' III, 8, 10.


Two other things God the Holy Spirit works in the Elect. Having awakened within them a desire to know God, it then enlightens their understanding so that they discern the truths revealed in Nature and in the Scriptures. It casts aside, as it were, the bandage with which corrupt nature blindfolds man. And secondly, having effected within them a real and overpowering sorrow because of the great sins committed against Christ, it brings to the mourners comfort and consolation, confirming the promises of God and declaring His Love. This last work of consolation is the chief work of the Spirit, although God the Father and God the Son comfort and console also.

He doth so clearly reveal our acceptance through the righteousness of Christ, that from thence springeth peace unto the soul; which groweth up until it passeth understanding, and bringeth us unto joy unspeakable, and full of glory,...therefore he is called by way of eminency, The Comforter... (3)

Thus the Trinity is completed - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Making constant use in his sermons and his treatises of these designations for God, Cotton clearly and emphatically taught that each Person within the Trinity assumes specific functions. Although the functions sometimes appear to overlap, still the activities of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit each make up a separate strand in the cord which binds the soul to God. Cotton never permits his pen to lose the figures of the Trinity in a haze of metaphysical speculation, nor does

2. Ibid., pp. 181ff.
he fall into, or even approach, the fallacy of identifying Jesus Christ with the Jesus of history, and the Holy Spirit with the infrequent breath of inspiration or with the troubled conscience. He identifies all three Persons as spiritual realities.

...the Father from eternity considering and understanding himself, from this conceiving of the Father resulted the Image of himself, that was his Son; from them both resulteth the holy Ghost. (1)

three precious stones (hold) forth the three persons in Trinity: A Jasper having (as they say) a white circle round about it, representing the Eternity of the Father; a Sardine stone, of a fleshy colour, representing Jesus Christ, who took our flesh upon him. An Emerald being of a green colour, refreshing the eyes of those that look upon it, representing the Spirit, who is (as the Rainbow) a token of faire weather, and is a comfortable refresher wheresoever he cometh. (2)

Yet as he speaks of each in turn the one who reads can not fail to recognise that he speaks of God, Eternal, Omnipotent, Sovereign, One.

there are three Persons, yet but one God, that doe bear witness to the divinity of Christ, and of the plenteous salvation wrought by him. (3)

God is thus the centre of Cotton's theology. All else, from Christ to the smallest created thing, falls into order within His shadow. God made the world and causes all that happens within it. God gave men free will and works to make the choice of good seem desirable to all sinners. God chose to elect to future glory certain of His people, and bestows

His grace upon them, drawing them into fellowship with Christ, and so into fellowship with Himself. God is the initiator of all good, the source of all life. Man is subordinate, dependent, inconsiderable. But Cotton did not ignore men, nor depreciate their good qualities, their talents, their skills. Addressing those who had for the most part been saved, he said comparatively little about evil, hell, and damnation — which all too frequently are thought to be the central themes of Puritan Divines. He preached a doctrine that brought God down to work among men, and stirred men up to work with God. He urged the settlers to build forts and walls, and at the same time begged them to let God be their Tower and their Defence.\(^1\) He admonished them to instruct and reform their families before tackling kingdoms and nations, and at the same time suggested that

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\text{if we would speak and talk lesse, and pray more, we might comfortably expect yet God had some further blessing in store, and that not for our selves onely, but for others also.} \quad (2)
\]

He pointed out to them that it was essential to live upright lives, to take "a wise care reaching to the outmost corner of all our affairs",\(^3\) to be "bountiful, dispensing the talents we receive to the public good of others",\(^4\) and at the same time he explained the necessity of yielding their lives to God.

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\text{if we so look at Christ as we can prefer ten thousand other things before him, and can sit downe quietly}
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3. Cotton, A Briefe Exposition of... Ecclesiastes, p. 18.
4. Ibid.
without him, if we looke at Christ as a refuse commodity, not worth the cheapening, and we looke at our selves as the great Omegae of the world, and we would not have our names blemished with seeking after Christ, but have greater businesse then that to looke after, and we will be our owne carvers; if so, then we do not worship Christ, and then we have him not, and so no redemption by him. (1)

His theology soars high to the glory of God, and is grounded in the needs of men. It was formulated as much from the experience of breaking ground in a new country, as from the study of Scripture and the books of the Fathers, the Schoolmen, and Calvin.

B. Attacks upon Cotton's Orthodoxy.

It has been said that the New England Puritan "looked upon discoverable truth as already discovered, set down in black and white, once and for all, by the supreme wisdom". 2. It is not difficult to picture Master Cotton hard at work before a desk, trying to pigeon-hole these truths. With his Bible for ready reference standing open at one side, and a sheaf of notes waiting to be put in order at the other, he carefully reads each statement, locates and checks it in his source book, and places it in that section of the desk to which it should be assigned. Everything seems to belong somewhere, the system seems to be entirely adequate, but at

the end of hours of effort there are a few slips of paper carefully pushed to one side on which question marks have been scribbled. Again and again these slips are referred to, and only after considerable thought does Cotton finally assign them to a place in the desk. Then, having made the decision, he turns away only to find a clerk from another desk calling into question his move.

1. The Charge of Arminianism.

The first such attack made upon Cotton concerned the contents of the pigeon-hole marked 'Reprobation'. As early as 1618, in answer to a letter from a neighbouring minister, Mr. Pell, Cotton had written a discourse "plain and popular, and therefore too large, and withal empty of variety of reading"\(^1\) on the doctrine of Predestination. Several years later he was told by Mr. Wood, another minister who lived near by, that James Usher, the Archbishop of Armagh, wanted to hear from him concerning "the way of God's eternal Predestination and the Execution of it".\(^2\) Under cover of a letter written on May 31st, 1626, he forwarded the discourse to Usher, explaining to him that it had been written some time before and adding:

I trust you shall find me conscious of mine own Slenderness, and glad to receive such Light, as God shall be pleased to impart to me by you. \(^3\)

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3. Ibid., p. 339.
Before 1633 a copy of the discourse had also reached the hands of Dr. William Twisse, pastor of Newbury. At the request of a minister, Mr. Bets, who was living at Broughton Castle, the home of Lord Saye and Seal, this prominent Divine, who was later to become the Prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly, wrote an answer to Cotton's treatise which was delivered to Cotton before he left the country for New England by Lord Saye and Seal. Some thirteen or more years later, in 1646, this answer was published in London under the title *A Treatise of Mr. Cottons, Clearing certaine Doubts Concerning Predestination. Together with an Examination Thereof; written by William Twisse, D.D., Pastor of Newbury.* Cotton was unable to write a reply to Dr. Twisse. In his treatise *The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, published in 1648, he indicated his desire to do so but went on to say:

"...since my coming hither have found such constant diversion from such Contemplative Controversies, to attend Practicall, that I have not to this day been able to perpend the Doctors Answer, which I see is now Printed: I hope, God will give me opportunity ere long (after two or three other Treatises perused) to consider of this his labor of Love. (2)"

The accusation brought against Cotton was that of having so explained predestination that many, influenced by his point of view, were being led astray into the errors of Arminianism. Twisse, in the epistle which serves as a

1. Twisse, *A Treatise of Mr. Cottons...*, Epistle to the Reader, A3, verso.
2. P. 34.
preface to his examination of Cotton's treatise, hesitates
to make a direct charge of Arminianism, and somewhat softens
his attack by stating that, according to report, Cotton is
orthodox in the point of Election, and has proved himself a
learned and pious Divine. But the condemnation, though
veiled, was clearly apparent.

I have been given to understand...that Mr. Cotton
upon the receiving and perusing this treatise of mine,
seemed to be moved therewith not a little; and that
in such a way, as not to be provoked thereby, but
rather to incline to the receiving of satisfaction.
Mr. Cotton is a Divine whom I never saw; but so much
I have heard of his piety and parts of learning, that
his name shall ever be of reverend remembrance with me.
Nevertheless, because this discourse of his, whereunto
I address my answer, is in the hands of many, and some
of them may be strengthened in their erroneous ways, by
this writing of his; and I have heard, that certaine
Arminians have taken advantage, to justify them in
their ways, from some passages in this very discourse
of Mr. Cottons:...This danger I desire to prevent... (1)

To this Cotton, in a treatise on another matter, made flattering
but firm reply:

I bless the Lord, who has taught me to be willing to
be taught, of a far meaner Disciple, than such a Doctor,
whose Scholastical Acuteness, Pregnancy of Wit, Solidity
of Judgment, and Dexterity of Argument, all Orthodox
Divines do highly honour, and whom all Arminians and
Jesuites do fall down before, with Silence. God
forbid I should shut my Eyes against any Light brought
to me by him. Only I desire I may not be condemned as
a Pelagina, or Arminian, before I be heard. (2)

Robert Baillie of Glasgow, another important Presbyterian
Divine who held Cotton to be a 'man of very excellent parts',
but was convinced that he led others into gross doctrinal and

1. P. A4, recto.
2. Mather, op. cit., III, p. 29. Cotton, The Way...Cleared,
p. 34f.
ecclesiastical errors, also accused Cotton of Arminianism, including that heresy in a list of several heresies of which he believed the New England Divine to be guilty. Baillie, however, was more concerned about Cotton's polity than his theology, and passed quickly over the charge of Arminianism in a way that seems to indicate that his understanding of Cotton's views was derived from Dr. Twisse.¹

Needless to say Cotton's sermons and treatises evidence as decided an antagonism to Arminianism as any that the most orthodox of English or Scottish theologians displayed. And there is every reason to believe that from the time of his acceptance of the call to Boston in Lincolnshire, until the time of his death, he considered himself to be an active opponent of that particular heresy. Assuming his first parish only a few years after the death of Arminius, and after the drawing up of the Remonstrance by the Dutch theologians, he fought Arminianism successfully, defeating his opponent, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, by lecturing brilliantly on orthodox Calvinism. In the years that followed he frequently attempted to expose the fallacies behind certain doctrines known to be Arminian, and again and again tried to demonstrate how sound doctrine could refute these errors.² Shortly after his death his friend and successor, John Norton,

¹ Baillie, A Dissuasive from the Errors Of the Time, pp. 56, 57.
² Examples are to be found in The Covenant of Grace, The First Epistle of John, and elsewhere. See The Covenant of Grace, p. 49f, for one example.
felt justified in asserting that Cotton had found Arminianism “contrary to the tenor of the Covenant of Grace”. But let us examine the chief tenets of Arminianism and see if there was good reason for the accusations made by Twisse and by Baillie.

Briefly stated, the five main articles of Arminianism as given in the Remonstrance, were as follows: predestination is conditional, Christ died for all men, God's grace is needed for the obtaining of saving faith, this grace may be resisted, and true believers may by negligence fall away from God. Within eight years after their appearance these articles were combated by Dutch theologians of a more severe turn of mind than Arminius and his disciples. These men countered with five articles which were enthusiastically accepted by orthodox Calvinists as the heart and centre of their creed: namely, predestination is absolute, Christ died for the Elect, saving faith can only be obtained through God's grace, this grace is irresistible, and all true believers persevere to salvation.

On the matter of the perseverance of true believers Cotton unquestionably remained orthodox. His whole interpretation of the Covenant of Grace was based upon his belief

2. The Remonstrance was drawn up on January 14th, 1610, in Gouda by forty-six ministers of the Reformed Church of Holland who sympathised with Arminius. Jacobus Arminius died in 1609.
3. These were the canons of the Synod of Dort, of which mention was made in the first chapter.
that God, having chosen to give salvation to His Elect, and having breathed into the Elect the Spirit by which they are enabled to come to Christ in faith, to be justified, and to be sanctified, God, having done these things without respect to any condition fulfilled by the Elect, will not depart from those whom He has chosen but will commit them into the care of Christ, who, through His life, death, and resurrection, obtained and holds for them God's gift of eternal life.

...for as the Covenant is free, so the Lord will freely maintain, and preserve all his Elect, and all from the immutable Nature of God. (1)

He hath chosen us in Christ, Christ is the first fruits of all that life that we enjoy, he loved Christ, and in him loved us, he first gave him eternal life, that he might give it to whom he would...he poured this life first on his head, and from him this life runs down to the lowest skirt of his garment, to the meanest member that belongs to him, he poured on him the oyl of grace, and from him it drops down upon us; he hath crowned him with glory, that he might glorifie us. (2)

Because God gives Himself to them and works within them, the Elect will persevere in faith and in the keeping of God's Commandments. Cotton also carefully pointed out, in a long section on the differences between true believers and those hypocrites who seem to be justified, adopted, and sanctified but in reality are only acting under the Covenant of Works, that those who fall away from God were never among His Chosen.

Hypocrites are greatly different from the sheep of Christ...And in their best sanctification they fall far short of a sheeplike frame of spirit, diligently to hear the voice of the shepherd; this will not be

found in the sanctification of the best hypocrite under heaven; they may go far, and yet at length fall away: this is no Arminianism, but if you search the Scriptures diligently, you will find these things to be true. But such instances deceive the Arminians.

As regards the fourth of the articles mentioned above, Cotton also remained orthodox, holding that the grace of God was irresistible. He made it clear, in his consideration of the nature of predestination, that he accepted the basic assumption of other theologians that that which God wills comes to pass.

Doth God command this or that good duty to be done, which is not done? (2)

He used such phrases as 'unchangeable decree', 'effectual redemption', and 'invincible drawing' in his descriptions of the consummation of Election, and concluded that "all who were given to Christ doe, in fulnesse of time, come unto him." (2)

He explained the method by which God prepares those whom He has chosen for the reception of His grace, and in that explanation allowed absolutely no room for the possibility that should one of the Elect wish to avoid salvation he could do so.

But there are those whom the Lord doth carry further, unto a spirit of burning, even unto a sensible feeling of God's wrath, burning against whatsoever is as stubble, (and such is a man's own gifts, and parts, and worth) so that now the poor soul findeth that he hath no Root, not any sure mercy of the Covenant of Grace, that he can rest upon: no green branch of righteousness

2. Cotton, A Treatise...Concerning Predestination, p. 94.
3. Ibid., p. 42.
remaining, but all is blasted and broken in pieces... and so the Lord cometh to leave a man neither Root nor Branch: For by a spirit of Bondage the Lord blasteth all flesh, that is consumed by a spirit of Burning...As God thus prepareth us for himself: so he doth give himself unto us, and taketh possession of us by his blessed Spirit. (1)

Yet it must be mentioned here, and it will be further explained later, that Cotton believed that it is possible for those who are not chosen, for those who are under the Covenant of Works rather than the Covenant of Grace, it is possible for them to resist the measure of God's grace which is given them. Like Calvin, Cotton distinguished between general election and special election, between common grace and efficacious grace. Those who are of the world are given the means by which they may come to know God, but they choose rather "to cleave to their sinfull estates and wayes of darkness, than to follow the light of the meanes of grace, which might have brought them on forward to beleive in Christ".  

That faith is only obtained by the grace of God was also an important part of Cotton's doctrine. Man, he believed, is by nature empty of grace, corrupt, unable to do anything but to sin. Although he has been granted freedom of will, that freedom is only exercised in the voluntary choice of evil. But to those whom He has chosen for future glory, God gives the gift of efficacious grace whereby the Holy Spirit enters

2. Calvin, Institutes, III, 21, 6-7.
3. Cotton, A Treatise...Concerning Predestination, p. 74.
a man’s soul and kindles therein the flame of faith. By this act a man’s will is changed and he is set free to do good.

How comest thou by faith in Jesus Christ? Why? Thou tookest it up of thy own accord, thou thoughtest, All thy gifts and duties were in vain, and therefore now thou wilt believe in Jesus Christ; Is it so easie a matter? Can any man come unto Christ, except the Father draw him?...Nature is fully possessed, that what God commandeth, I am able to do it: nature will not be perswaded to the contrary: If I hear God command any thing, I will do it, (saith a carnal heart) and if I cannot do it, I will believe; and if I cannot believe, I will wait that I may believe: this is still but nature. (1)

Man can not grasp salvation by his own efforts. God alone is responsible for faith and for good works. He giveth himself first, before he giveth any thing else accompanying salvation: he gave us Christ in his eternal Counsel, before Election; and so doth he also in our Effectual calling; not Faith before Christ, to enable us to choose whether we will have him or not have him: but he is God, and first giveth himself, and with himself, Faith, and so worketh our wills unto himself, not otherwise; leaving it to us to choose whether we will have him to be our God or no. Many things in Popery and Arminianism, come to be confuted from hence; For in truth they hold forth no more but a Covenant of Works: and if we will not grant Faith and good Works to be the cause of all the blessed gifts of God, they will take it marvellously unkindly... (2)

It is when we come to the first two articles drawn up by the Arminians and refuted by orthodox Calvinists, that we find some justification for Dr. Twisse’s attack. For though Cotton held that Election is absolute, he firmly believed that condemnation is an act of justice carried out by God

2. Ibid., p. 33.
upon presupposal or condition of sin and disobedience. And though he was sure that the Elect only are given into the care of Christ through whom they obtain eternal life, still he was of the opinion that the life, death, and resurrection of Christ are a revelation of God by means of which salvation can be realised by all men.

In his discourse on the nature of predestination, Cotton first examined the question of the place of the incarnation of Christ in God's ordering of the universe. In the planning of His work, he argued, God purposed first the glorifying of Himself, next the glorifying of Christ, thirdly, the glorifying of the Elect, and fourthly, the judgment of the world. Because each of these purposes is subordinate to the purpose preceding it, the execution of God's plan has to proceed in reverse order. Consequently, God first created the world. For the purposes mentioned above He permitted man to fall, and thus made way for the incarnation of Christ, which had been planned before the Fall, but in the light of sin foreseen, as the means by which to accomplish the glorification of the Elect, of Christ, and of God Himself. Only after the Fall did God undertake to condemn those whom He did not elect and to bring to salvation those whom He chose. The judgment of the world points to the saving of the few: the saving of the few, made possible by the coming of Christ in the flesh, points to the glory of Christ: and the glory of Christ, fully achieved through the advancement of Christ-man, that is, the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity, points to the
glory of God. Christ was not created for the Elect: they were created for the purpose of His glorification.

If God should have had no thought of the advancement of Christ man to the fellowship of the second person to become man, till upon the presupposal of the fall of Adam; then were we not created for Christ, but Christ for us, contrary to that of the Apostle... (1)

It is true, in fulness of time Christ was first humbled, that he might be glorified; but yet in God's counsell (wherein the end in order is first purposed, before the means leading to that end) the glorious advancement of Christ was first purposed, before the presupposal of his humiliation, which made way for it. (2)

Through a labyrinth of logic Twisse attempted to prove that this reasoning was fallacious. He argued that God had but one end in mind in the planning of His world, namely, His own glorification. All other intentions on His part, such as the incarnation, the permission of man's fall, the humiliation of Christ, are means to that end. Twisse did not see a single chain of cause and effect stretching from time into eternity, each link fastening securely into the links just above and below. Rather, he saw all of God's decrees as lights in a darkened world making plain the glory of God. They are co-ordinate with, not subordinate to, one another,

if not as joynt meanes tending to one and the same end throughout, yet as different meanes tending to different ends; or partly the one, partly the other: Still holding up this truth, that no order is to be found in intention between any but such as have the reference of end and meanes amongst themselves. (3)

1. Cotton, A Treatise...Concerning Predestination, p. llf.
2. Ibid., p. 16.
3. Ibid., Examination by Twisse, p. 4.
Twisse went on to question Cotton's contention that God orders the incarnation of Christ before He determined to permit the fall of Adam, or willed Christ's humiliation. Working according to the rule whereby these things last intended by God are first in execution, he said,

if the incarnation of the Son of God were in God's intention, before the permission of the sins of the world, it would follow, that the permission of the sinnes of the world, even in crucifying Christ, should be first in execution, that is, Christ should be crucified before he was incarnate. (2)

This, of course, is preposterous. Forgetting, it seems, his approval of Cotton's statement that God does not purpose one thing before another in time, he continued his derision of Cotton's position, by saying among other things:

Again, if the glorifying of Christ were first in intention, then was it the end, and the generation of all mankind should be as the means tending to the furthering of that end; but what, I pray, doth the generation of a little child of mind tend to the furtherance of the glory of Christ, wherewith he was crowned above 1500 years agoe? (4)

Christ's pre-eminence consists not in having been predestined as God-man before the Elect, but rather in the fact that as the second person of the Trinity He is one with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Even His glory does not precede the

1. It is interesting to note here that both Cotton and Twisse departed from the full supralapsarian position of the early Calvinists who held that the Fall of Man was decreed by God as a means for the carrying out of the decree of election. They learned, rather, toward the sublapsarian position, first applied to the Remonstrants, which asserts that God can not be the author of sin, and so did not ordain the Fall, but foresaw and permitted sin.

2. Cotton, A Treatise...Concerning Predestination, p. 11.
3. Ibid., p. 1.
4. Ibid., p. 25.
glory of the Elect, in God's intention, for He has already received glory. He was incarnated for the salvation of the Elect, and the Elect were created for Him: His predestination neither goes before nor follows theirs for God did "at once think of Christ and his elect". ¹

I have endeavoured in briefe to shew here (as elsewhere more at large) that the predestination of Christ is neither prior nor posterior to the predestination of the elect. And indeed most are so pusled about devising a right place for the predestination of Christ amongst the decrees of God, that usually that is left quite out, because they know not where to finde a fit place for it: and all because they presume he must be predestinate either before the decree of creation and permission of sinne, or after; neither of which can hold water, but they are both equally removed from the truth. ²

From all this argument there comes the impression that both Twisse and Cotton were struggling beyond the help of Calvinistic dogma, adrift in the midst of the sea of the Mystery of God. Cotton sought safely in casting his anchor, depending upon its chain, the chain of God's decrees, to hold him secure. Twisse attempted to steer toward the beacon lights along the shore, choosing first one and then another to guide him in to harbour. Both were caught in the cross currents of these controversies wherein man tries to translate God's eternal will into time, and to comprehend the fullness of the nature and purpose of Christ.

Before going on to a consideration of the way in which

¹. Ibid., p. 14.
². Cotton, A Treatise...Concerning Predestination, Examination by Twisse, pp. 14, 15.
he differed from the Church's interpretation of the decree of predestination. Cotton first explained his understanding of God's primary intention in this decree. God's first aim, he said, is to show to men His grace and His justice. Because power and wisdom are found in unworthy rulers, and grace and justice are not, these latter attributes are God's most outstanding attributes: they are the attributes that chiefly manifest His glory.

Now at the last judgment, as likewise in the course of his providence in this world, God doth chiefly manifest the glory of his grace to the elect, and the glory of his justice upon the world... Since then, all the ways of God doe finally worke to this issue, the setting forth of his grace, and justice; surely we are so to conceive it, as his primary aime and intent to be to glorifie rather his grace and justice, than his power and soveraignty. (2)

Cotton went so far as to infer that God's power is channelled through grace and justice. It is not true, he declared, that grace and power are opposed to one another.

God sheweth as much power, freedome, and dominion over the creature, in his grace toward the elect, as in his justice toward the world: The Apostle sets forth the like power and sovereign will of God, as well in shewing mercy on whom hee will, as hardening whom hee pleaseth. (3)

Twisse, in refutation, argued that power is the attribute of chief importance to a ruler since virtue is common to all

1. Cotton was differing from the Church of England, which at that time it must be remembered was still Calvinist in doctrine. Later the Church of England was to become Arminian. Twisse remained orthodox and became Presbyterian.
2. Cotton, A Treatise...Concerning Predestination, pp. 36, 37.
3. Ibid., p. 33.
people. Although God's grace and His justice are continually made manifest in His dealings with the elect and with the non-elect, still it is not evident that these attributes rather than others were first in intention. Surely all the 'variety of God's glory', all His attributes, were intended at once; and a consideration of God's grace leads one to marvel at the display of His sovereignty in choosing those to be saved just as a consideration of His justice leads one to tremble at "the power of God in executing such judgements, maintaining the creature, in the suffering of eternall sorrows". "...wee are not able to conceive (this power), and therefore the glory hereof is farre more admirable than the other."¹

The consequences of these two positions as regards God's power, grace, and justice, are reflected in the conclusions to which Cotton and Twisse came on the matter of predestination. Like Twisse, Cotton accepted the orthodox interpretation of the decree of election, holding that it is absolute and unconditional, and that it shows forth the power of God's mercy and grace. "In the doctrine of election," he said, "I consent wholly with Augustine, Calvin, Beza, Martyr, Zanchy, Perkins, Paraeus, and others."² God chose "the elect by name, by an unchangeable decree, unto grace and glory in Christ Jesus",³ He sent the Lord Jesus into the world to redeem them, He calls each of them in the fulness of time unto life eternal, and He

¹. Ibid., Examination by Twisse, p. 38.
². Cotton, A Treatise...Concerning Predestination, p. 39.
³. Ibid., p. 39.
keeps those whom He calls from falling from His grace. On the more or less minor question of where in the order of things the decree of election was placed, Cotton disagreed with the decision of the Synod of Dort, maintaining, as we have seen above, that those chosen by God for salvation were chosen in Christ their head "before the world, or themselves were, and not in massa corrupta".\(^1\) Of those who disapproved of this last position (and Twisse was among them), he said: "For though herein they follow Augustine, and Zanchy, and some others; yet have they dissented from the chief instruments, of the reformation of our Religion."\(^2\)

With respect to the decree of reprobation, however, Cotton differed, and acknowledged that he differed, from the expressed doctrine of orthodox Divines, and so drew to himself the criticisms of those who accused him of Arminianism. He agreed that there is on God's part a double act of reprobation, namely, a negative act which is non-election, and a positive act which is condemnation. The negative act is absolute in that God, by the power of His will, rather than because of sin foreseen, determines not to choose the non-elect. The positive act is conditional, for God can only condemn the non-elect if they are guilty of sin and disobedience.

But because Cotton believed that God "delighteth chiefly to glorifie himselfe...in the exercise of loving kindnesse, and righteousnesse, and judgement",\(^3\) he concluded that in His

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Cotton, A Treatise...Concerning Predestination, p. 34.
decree of reprobation God did not plan to forsake those whom He did not elect, excluding them "from glory and from sufficient means of grace in Christ, before all respect of sinne". Rather He has expressed His willingness to reward the men of this world, the non-elect, with life upon condition of obedience and penitence, and with death upon condition of disobedience and impenitence. God's good pleasure is that all men shall be saved, but because the non-elect voluntarily choose to neglect the means of salvation they must be punished for their sins.

Perhaps the intricacies of these acts of God in predestination can best be clarified by a homely illustration. A farmer has in his barn a basket of apples, all of which are equally ripe and attractive, and without blemish. Some of these apples he sets on one side to take into the house. The remaining apples he puts into a barrel. Some days later he returns to the barrel and discovers that the apples left there have decayed. He immediately throws them out. The apples which were carried to the house also show signs of decay, but because he has separated them from the rest, the farmer cuts away the decay and makes use of them. Like the farmer with his apples, God wishes that all men shall be saved. Some among them, however, He chooses to set apart for a particular purpose. They are saved despite defects. The others, left to themselves, fall into sin and have to be

1. Ibid., p. 42.
2. Ibid., pp. 38, 39, 42, 43.
destroyed.

With painstaking care Cotton gives support for his interpretation of the negative and positive acts of repro­bation. In proof of his thesis that God's good will is that all shall be saved, he turns to Scripture, to the nature of the Covenant of Works, and to history. God, he said, has taken oath that He desires not the wicked man's death. In His Covenant of Works He has promised "to give life to Adam and all his posterity, if they continue in obedience of his Law; or if, breaking this Law, they return again to him by repentance". From the beginning of the world He offered all men the means to a knowledge of Himself and of themselves, "to repentance, to the seeking after God, to the purging of themselves from sinne, and to peace". Creation, Providence, the Law of Nature, the Gospel, the Covenant, the Prophets, afflictions and deliverances, the gift of the Holy Spirit, all have been given by God for the salvation of Gentiles and Jews.

Finally, God sent his Spirit into the world, to con­vince it of sin; because they beleeved not in Christ: Which argueth, that the Spirit did not onely perswade them to beleevie in Christ; but did convince them also that it was their sin, that they did not attaine to beleevie on him. Now, the Spirit of God moveth to nothing, but what hee knoweth to bee according to the will of God: And therefore the Spirit beares witnesse, the will of God is, the world of unbelieuers shall not

1. Cotton, A Treatise...Concerning Predestination, p. 57. As I live (saith the Lord) I have no pleasure in the wicked mans death; but rather that hee should turne from his wickednesse and live.
2. Ibid., p. 62.
3. Ibid., p. 73.
bee shut out from Christ, if they shut not out themselves through unbeleefe. (1)

To illustrate his theory Cotton then gives the following parable. 2

The father of the family hath both his son and servant dangerously sick of the stone; to heale them both, the father useth sundry medicines, even all that art prescribeth, except cutting: when hee seeth no other remedy, he persuades them both to suffer cutting, to save their lives: they both refuse it; yet his sonne hee taketh, and bindeth him hand and foot, and causeth him to endure it, and so saveth his life. His servant also hee urgeth with many behement inducements, to submit himselfe to the same remedy; but if a servant obstinately refuse, hee will not always strive with him, nor enforce him to such breaking and renting of his body. But yet, did not his Master seriously desire his healing and life, though hee did not proceed to the cutting asunder of his flesh, which hee saw his servant would not abide to heare of? So in this case, both the elect and men of this world are dangerously sicke of a stony heart; to heale both sorts the Lord useth sundry meanes; promises, judgements, threatnings, and mercies: when all faile, hee persuades them to breake their hearts and the stone thereof, with cutting and wounding of their consciences: when they refuse, hee draweth them both; the one with his almighty power, the other with the cords of man, (viz. such as are resistible) to this cutting and wounding, that their soules might live: and the elect are brought to yeeld; and the men of this world break all cords asunder, and cast away such bonds from them. Shall we now say, God did not seriously desire the healing of such mens hearts, because hee procured not to bind them with strong cords, to breake them with such wounding as they will not abide to heare of?

Cotten substantiates his position on positive reprobation by references to Old and New Testament passages in which men who are not of the Elect are offered the means of salvation, and of their own free will refuse to accept those means.

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1. Cotton, A Treatise...Concerning Predestination, p. 74.
2. Ibid., 101. I quote the parable because it points up the problems which arise from Cotton's theory. They will be discussed further on.
When did God reject all further care of purging the people from their filthinesse any more? Not till after hee had used meanes to purge them, and they were not purged. When doth the Sonne of God, under the name of wisdome, reject the wicked? Not till after he had called upon them earnestly to return, & stretched out his hands unto them, & offered to pour out his spirit upon them; and they after all this, had set at nought his counsell... (1)

"Before the world was, God then ordained the men of this world to judgment according to their works." 2 God rejects the non-elect from future glory, condemning them to destruction, because they do not fulfil the condition of obedience.

To all this Twisse makes reply in orthodox fashion. God wills damnation to those whom He does not elect. It was His first intention to deny glory to all except His Chosen, and He has made it impossible for any under the Covenant of Works to achieve salvation. Thus both His Covenant of Grace and His Covenant of Works are absolute and unconditional. For the Elect He planned a direct route to eternal life; for the non-elect a direct route to death. This is the manner in which He demonstrates His power and His glory.

Two particular problems, clearly evident in Cotton's parable, catch the attention of Dr. Twisse. If God wishes that the non-elect be saved, why does He not save them? And if He really offers them the means of salvation, why does He at the same time make it impossible for them to attain it? Cotton's attempt to answer these questions seemed to confuse

1. Cotton, A Treatise...Concerning Predestination, p. 118.
2. Ibid., p. 127.
rather than to clear his position. To the first question he replied that God intends the salvation of the non-elect only upon condition of obedience. Because of disobedience He justly condemns them, even though He saves the Elect who are also guilty of sin. He does this because it is His absolute will and good pleasure so to do.

To will a thing absolutely, and yet to will it on this or that condition, may well stand together in many a voluntary agent, when the condition is such, as that the will might easily help, if it so pleased. As if a man should cast off a servant for some disease he hath, which he might easily heale if it pleased him: or break his vessell for some such uncleannesse which hee could easily rinse out; Both these may well bee said of him at once, that hee cast off his servant for his disease, and brake his vessell for its uncleannesse, and yet might hee cast out his servant and break his vessell, and both out of his good pleasure, and out of his absolute, and his free will. (1)

Against this, Twisse argued that that which God intends from the beginning He brings to pass. If He so willed, He could, through His power, cause obedience, and if He does not cause it it follows that He does not intend it. If however, God does intend salvation for all, and if man is able to frustrate this intention by disobedience, it argues that God is not omnipotent.

This is the foule blemish of your opinion; plainly denying Gods omnipotency, as Austin long agoe discoursed: and yet you swallow this with facility, though a bit as great as a Camel. I know full well Arminius his shifts to ease himselfe of this imputation... (2)

Even further confusion appears in Cotton's answer to the

2. Ibid., Examination by Twisse, pp. 76, 77.
second question. He asserted that God does offer to the non-elect "helps and means, either of the knowledge of God in Nature, or of grace in Christ: and that to this end, to lead them to Repentance and Salvation." Whether or not these means are sufficient unto salvation proved a question difficult of decision. Realizing that they can not be, for only God's grace has power to draw a man from sin into life eternal, be made a qualified and guarded statement.

...the means God useth for these good ends, are in some measure sufficient (if they bee not hindered by men) to bring them to the attainment of these ends: for when God saith himself, hee useth these means for these ends; for us to say, these means are not sufficient for these ends, seemeth to mee to derogate from the wisdom and sufficiency of God, whose works are all of them perfect, ...and so sufficient for the ends for which hee wrought them. Yet God forbid I should doubt of that which our Saviour telleth the Jews, No man can come to Christ, except the Father draw him,...by the same Almighty power and authority, whereby hee sent Christ into the world. (2)

A little further on in his discourse Cotton drew the following conclusion:

I think it safe to say, these means are sufficient, ex parte Dei, on Gods behalf, to manifest the will of God, rather to desire repentance and life, then the hardning and destruction of the Creature. And ex parte hominum, in regard of men, sufficient to enable them to the performance of such duties, in which their naturall consciences would excuse them, and in which way they might the sooner finde mercy, mercy vouch-safing more powerfull and more effectuall helps, whilest they walk according to the knowledge and helps, which they have received, and sin not against conscience but only out of ignorance in the state of unbelief. (3)

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1. Cotton, A Treatise...Concerning Predestination, p. 207.
2. Ibid., p. 208.
In case of obedience further help unto salvation will be forthcoming from God. Since the non-elect do not use the means given them, and are not obedient, God denies them efficacious grace.

But the question is really not answered. Why does God give grace to the elect without condition of obedience, and deny it to the non-elect except on condition of obedience? Twisse gives the only answer fully consistent with the orthodox doctrine of predestination. God has no intention of saving those whom He did not elect, but from everlasting has ordained them to condemnation. The means and helps which He offers all men in the Word are sufficient "to those ends whereunto God hath given it, which is to instruct in all points of Faith and duties of life; and to admonish us to give obedience unto it, and reprove them that do not; and consequently to take away all excuse for want of any of these gracious operations". ¹ God's will is done, and His justice is demonstrated. The non-elect are destroyed.

Yet Cotton took the better part in the debate. While still upholding the orthodox doctrine of predestination, he sought to clear it "from such harsh consequences, as are wonted to be derived from absolute Reprobation". ² By his emphasis on God's mercy and loving kindness, and his insistence that God, in His justice, would reward obedience even

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¹. Ibid., Examination by Twisse, p. 232.
as He punishes disobedience, he helped to make more intelligible the Covenant relationship between God and man. By his constant concern for the people of the world who struggle unceasingly to live the Christian life and yet never reach assurance of their justification, he indicated his belief that Christianity offers hope to the non-elect as well as to the Elect. By his suggestions for the practical application of the theories which he expounded he demonstrated the fact that his theology was based as much upon experience as upon logic and speculation. He felt that his modification of the orthodox position was the answer to the needs of the people and the problems of Arminianism, Lutheranism, and the other so-called heresies. As Miller points out in his book, *The New England Mind:*

Cotton, stern Puritan though he is popularly imagined to have been, spoke for the more humane side of the seventeenth century, which would no longer bow abjectly before God in fear and trembling. So he was driven, even while remaining officially loyal to the theology of election and reprobation, to soften it, to smuggle into it the elements of abstract justice, at least a partial reassurance that the award of life or death was not given with an utter disregard of moral endeavors. (2)

1. In his discourse Cotton frequently refers to these heresies. "To the Lutheran and Arminian, who refuse the excellent and heavenly benefit of the sound and comfortable doctrine of Election, by reason of some hard saying which they observed in the usual manner of handling the opposite decree of Reprobation; to them this doctrine removeth such stumbling blocks out of the way, as have hitherto turned them out of the way of truth and peace." Concerning Predestination, pp. 135, 136.

2. P. 405.
2. The Charge of Antinomianism.

The second attack made upon Cotton's theological position was a consequence of the Hutchinsonian controversy, which took place in the Massachusetts Bay Colony during the years from 1636 to 1638. The facts about this controversy, and a statement concerning Cotton's part in it, have been given elsewhere. But no detailed account of the theological issues involved was included.

The heresy for which Mrs. Hutchinson was tried and sentenced was that of Antinomianism. Although following the consideration of the matter by the Newtown Synod and the General Court at Cambridge nothing further was said by the New England Divines concerning Mr. Cotton's theological position at the time of the dispute, some seven years later, in 1645, Robert Baillie, a Glasgow minister who was prominent at the Westminster Assembly, published an account of the 'Errors of the Time' in which he accused Cotton of guiding New England Independents into several heresies, the most outstanding of which was Antinomianism. Baillie's attack was based almost entirely upon a pamphlet entitled A Short Story of the Rise, reign, and ruine of the Antinomians, Familists & Libertines, that infected the Churches of New England. This pamphlet had been prepared by John Winthrop during the

1. Above, p. 70ff.
2. Baillie, A Dissasive from the Erroors of the Time, Chapter III.
Hutchinsonian controversy, and had been published in London in 1644 by Thomas Welde, a returned New Englander who had had a small part in the struggle. Both Winthrop and Welde had strongly opposed Mrs. Hutchinson and her brother-in-law John Wheelwright, and although sympathetic to a degree with Cotton's difficult position, included within their report biased comments and fantastic stories that make the Short Story unreliable. Unfortunately, with the exception of one other very small pamphlet which was also published in 1644 and contained Cotton's answers to the questions asked him by the elders of New England during the controversy, this was the only first hand account of the happenings in the Colony then available to English theologians.

In The Way of Congregational Churches cleared, published in 1648, Cotton replied to Baillie's charges, making clear his position as he conceived it to have been. His reply was in turn answered by Baillie, who, in 1655, published The Dissuasive from the Errors of the Time, Vindicated from the Exceptions of Mr. Cotton, and Mr. Tombes. The preface to this latter pamphlet reveals the high esteem in which Baillie held Cotton. In giving his reasons for not having published a reply to Cotton more quickly, he wrote: "I had a particular unwillingness to enter the lists of strife, with that reverent, famous, most able, and tight Writer." ¹ And in explaining why he directed his reply first to Mr. Cotton, he

said:

I do not deny that Mr. Cotton hath, and ever hath had, since first I heard of his way, so high an estimation in my mind, that I do preferre him to all my Opposites, and heartily wish all differences betwixt me and him were so fairly composed, that with him I might stand no more in terms of any considerable opposition. (1)

On the other hand, he believed Cotton to have been largely responsible for the appearance of errors within Independency both in England and in New England, and in his second pamphlet gave in even fuller detail, support for the charge of Antinomianism. Although Samuel Rutherford of the University of St. Andrews, in his chapters on Antinomianism in New England, 2 gave only passing mention, and that favourable, of Cotton's connection with Mrs. Hutchinson, other Divines took up Baillie's point of view. John Hoornbeek, Professor of Divinity at Leyden, who in 1651 had published a refutation of two of Cotton's book s on church polity, was directly influenced by Baillie when he wrote concerning Cotton in his Summa Controversiarum Religionis: 3

Cottonus iste primum in Anglia alterius longe sententiae fuerat, unde & plurimorum errorum haeresiumque reus, maximus ordinis vel quaeque istius quaquaversal promoter extitit; atque ad se ex Anglia attraxit Thomam Goodwin, aliosque, quos suis opinionibus diligentem imbuit; havuitque secum, quemadmodum Montanus olim Maximillam, Hutchinsonam, de quo varia & prodigiosa referunt. (4)

1. Ibid.
2. Rutherford, A Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist, Chapters XV, XVI.
3. Published in 1658.
4. P. 777. Cotton, who had been at first, while in England of a far different mind, appeared as the defender of many errors and heresies, and as the greatest promoter of this order or rather confusion; and he attracted to his side out of England Thomas Goodwin, and others, whom he carefully imbued with his own opinions; he also had with him, just as Montanus once had Maximilla, the woman Hutchinson concerning whom they bring back various and ominous reports.
Early in the eighteenth century, William Nichols, writing *A Defence of the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England*, made use of the same paragraph in Baillie's *Vindication* when he mentioned Cotton's work in New England. Unwittingly he also displayed a serious lack of knowledge concerning the churches in the Colony.

The first Pastor which they had was one Mr. Cotton, who about the Year 1630 founded a Congregation, upon the foot of the Brownists' Principles, at New-Plymouth; afterwards setting up others. In which work he was much assisted by one Mrs. Hutchinson, a Woman (as they tell of her) famous for Revelations, and who was the constant Companion of Mr. Cotton, as formerly Maximilla was to Montanus. (1)

It is difficult to say which questions were of outstanding importance in the Hutchinsonian controversy. In October 1636, five months after Wheelwright's arrival in the colony, Winthrop made his first entry in his Journal concerning Mrs. Hutchinson. He noted that she had "brought over with her two dangerous errours: 1. That the person of the Holy Ghost dwells in a justified person; 2. That no sanctification can help to evidence to us our justification." During the months that followed these 'errours' multiplied and divided rapidly. Before the end of the year some of the elders of New England, perturbed by the growing rupture in the Boston church, presented a list of sixteen questions to Cotton for his consideration. These questions, which largely concerned the

1. P. 53.
Winthrop, i. 200.
witness of the Holy Spirit, justification, sanctification, and faith, Cotton answered carefully: and it was found that whereas some of his answers were satisfactory to the elders, several of them were not. Like a snowball the dispute grew. More and more points of doctrine were brought into question. More and more opinions were rashly and thoughtlessly expressed. And when ministers, delegates, and magistrates finally convened in synod in August 1637, there were eighty-two so-called erroneous opinions to be discussed. The majority of these Cotton condemned as willingly as did his opponents. But he would not attach his signature to the official list drawn up at the Synod because on five matters concerning faith, justification, and sanctification he believed the other elders to be in error.

Apart from the great number of opinions expressed at the time of the trouble, one further difficulty precludes a clear understanding of Cotton's position. With the exception of his defence of himself in The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared — the largest part of which book has to do with polity rather than doctrine, there remains no account of the controversy from Cotton's own pen. At the time of his death, he ordered that all papers in his possession concerning the Hutchinson affair be destroyed. And despite his son's concern as to the value of such papers, this last request of John Cotton's was carried out.

In my opinion, Cotton, during the controversy, was mainly interested in clarifying four points of doctrine.
The least disputed of these concerned the matter of revelation. While the New England Divines held to the belief that God revealed Himself to the Elect through the ministry of the word, Mrs. Hutchinson and her disciples expressed the opinion that they experienced the immediate revelation of the Spirit. These two positions were brought to the attention of the Court during Mrs. Hutchinson's examination, and Cotton was questioned as to whether he accepted the one or the other. In reply to a direct question from Governor Winthrop, Cotton said:

> there be two sorts of Revelations, some are without or besides Scripture, those I looke at as Satanicall, and tending to much danger, others are such as the Apostle speakes of, Ephes. 1. where he praieth for a spirit of revelation to be given them. (1)

those are such as are breathed by the spirit of God and are never dispensed but in a word of God and according to a word of God,...and usually he doth express it in the ministry of the word and doth accompany it by his spirit, or else it is in the reading of the word in some chapter or verse and whenever it comes it comes flying upon the wings of the spirit. (2)

That the word 'usually' can be accepted as being an important part of Cotton's statement is confirmed by another statement of his occurring elsewhere in a discussion of the ways in which God touches man's hearts: "Sometimes indeed where ordinary meanes faile, God his Spirit can do it alone, without

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1. Welde, A Short Story, p. 50.
2. Hutchinson, The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts-Bay, Volume II, Edited by L.S. Mayo, Appendix II, p. 386. The first part of his answer is here defaced, and so I used the answer as reported by Winthrop and Welde in part.
the breath of the word, but this is the ordinary way." \(^1\) It seems evident, then, that Cotton believed that revelation is something other than the word of God, that it is ordinarily received through the word of God, and that in the exceptional case when it is immediate, it is to be verified according to the word of God. One further quotation clarifies the position. 

for I do believe, and dare confidently affirm, that if there were no revelation but the word, there would be no spiritual grace revealed to the soul; for it is more than the Letter of the Word that is required to it; not that I look for any other matter besides the word. But there is need of greater light, then the word of itself is able to give; for it is not all the promises in Scripture, that have at any time wrought any gracious change in any soul, or are able to beget the faith of Gods elect: true it is indeed, whether the Father, Son, or Spirit reveal any thing, it is in and according to the word; but without the work of the Spirit there is no faith begotten by any promise... \(^2\)

Cotton carefully chose to take a middle path. He would not deny that Mrs. Hutchinson and others like her do receive direct assurance of their justification through the witness of the Holy Spirit working within their souls. On the other hand he saw the danger in accepting as revelation any and every inner emotion or worldly idea, and was convinced that Scripture must remain the final authority. He could condemn the opinion as drawn up in the list of errors: "This witness of the Spirit is meerly immediate without any respect to the Word, or any concurrence with it." \(^3\) But he felt that Mrs.

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3. Given as error number seven in the list included by A.H. Newman in the New Schaff-Herzog article on Antinomianism.
Hutchinson herself held his own view, for he said during her trial: "...revelation without the word that I do not assent to, but look at it as a delusion, and I think so doth she too as I understand her."¹

A second point of doctrine with which Cotton, Mrs. Hutchinson, and the opposition became entangled was that of the union of the Holy Ghost and of Christ with believers. Although Baillie did not accuse Cotton of actually holding that

grossest errour of Montanus...(who) conceived the very person of the holy Ghost to dwell personally in himself and all his followers, and so to act all their spiritual works, that the faculties of their soules did act none of them; but that the holy ghost immediately without all cooperation of their spirit did all their workes; yea that themselves and the holy ghost were personally one, (2)

yet he held him responsible for the rapidity with which this error won approval from the members of his church. Unlike his colleague, John Wilson, who had the support of most of the ministers in New England, Cotton believed that "the person of the Holy Ghost dwells in a justified person".³ In contradiction to Wheelwright's claim that this union is a personal union in which the graces of the Holy Spirit are communicated to the believer, Cotton further explained his position.

...we say these gifts of grace are in-dwelling, and abiding in every child of God, effectually called and united unto Christ; in as much as they are neither mortified and extinguished in us...by our union with Christ...neither are these gifts of grace transient

² Baillie, A Dissuasive...Vindicated, p. 23.
³ See above, p. 140.
and passing away, as they would be, if they were mere actions of the Spirit, proceeding and passing from us: Nor are they abiding in the Holy Ghost, (though he abideth in us) because no created gifts or qualities abide in him (whatsoever is in him is himself:) but they are preserved in us by the Holy Ghost (as they were wrought by him) and are also by him increased and perfected in us, against the day of our dissolution...(1)

He did not believe that personal union means identification with Christ or with the Holy Spirit.

In all union, the things united are distinct from the bond by which they are united; Christ is one thing, the soul is another, the Spirit of God that uniteth them is distinct from both. (2)

The believer does not lose his individuality in the experience of regeneration: but the Holy Spirit enters him to sustain him and to bring him into fellowship with Christ, and having Christ within he is justified and adopted into sonship by God. It is interesting to note that the elders and magistrates in New England decided not to use the word 'personal' in describing the working of the Holy Spirit within a believer, on the grounds that such a term was not used "in the scriptures nor the primitive church, for the first 300 years". Baillie also discredited 'personall inhabitation', but he clearly stated in his discussion of Cotton's Montanism that "the inhabitation of all the three persons of the trinity in all the members of Christ was never to my knowledge questioned by any". The crux of the trouble seems to have been the

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2. Ibid., p. 30.
different definitions of the words 'union' and 'personal'. Cotton felt that both words had a valid use in the description of the experience of God's grace. But Mrs. Hutchinson misinterpreted him to the point of saying that Christ is the new creature, and Christ and the believer are one.

The questions with which the elders plied Cotton were for the most part concerned with the nature of saving faith, and its relation to justification and sanctification. This was the third point of doctrine which Cotton attempted to clarify. Believing implicitly in the doctrine of justification by faith, the elders were dismayed to discover that Mrs. Hutchinson understood Cotton to say that a man is justified before all acts of faith, and his justification is evidenced not by sanctification or good works but by the witness of the Spirit. After long discussion and debate, the elders and Mr. Cotton came to agreement on all but five of the issues involved. And although these five issues were considered to be important at the time, and were chosen by Baillie as the basis for the accusation of Antinomianism which he levelled at Cotton, Cotton himself felt that the differences of doctrine therein discovered were very slight.

A summary of the five issues will clarify the different positions. To the question of whether or not union with Christ is complete before and without faith, Cotton replied that there are two forms of faith, the one passive and the other active. Passive faith may be described as the faith which God works in the believer while He is preparing him to
receive Christ. In this faith the recipient remains passive. Active faith is the faith with which the believer responds to the breath of the Holy Spirit within him, such response taking the form of acts of faith such as prayer and praise. Union with Christ, said Cotton, is not complete before God's gift of faith, but it is complete before the work of faith.¹

"...the Spirit of God taking possession in our hearts, and working this Faith in us, thereby we submit unto the Lord; and this is Faith in Jesus Christ, that maketh us one with Christ."² But to this the elders of New England and the orthodox British Divines as represented by Baillie could not consent. No one can be completely united to Christ by the habit without the act of faith. By the act of believing in Christ we receive him,

and however in the act of regeneration and infusion of habits, the soul be but a passive subject; yet before our union with Christ be compleat, we by an act of our faith apprehend him who apprehended us, and we by his grace love him next who loved us first. And to compleat this union without all acts of our faith or love, we with the hereticks of Bostone do make the soul even united to Christ the fountain of life, to be but a dead and lifelesse Organe. (3)

The second question upon which they could not agree concerned a further detail of the nature of saving faith. In keeping with his reply to the first problem, Cotton understood faith to be a means rather than a cause of receiving "the righteousness of Christ applied to us of God for our

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justification". 1 Baillie with the others held firmly to the doctrine of justification because of faith, and rejected as unsatisfactory Cotton's theory of passive faith.

Yea, though before justification, Mr. Cotton makes faith operative, and the habit of faith to put out all acts requisite for the emptying of the vessel, and preparing the soul to receive Christ and his righteousness, yet in the act of justification he will have faith to act nothing at all, but to be meerly passive, a receiving vessel which acts nought, not so much as to apprehend or apply Christ's righteousness. (2)

The third and fourth questions involved the relationship between justification and sanctification. According to Thomas Shepherd, who preached a conciliatory sermon on the day of election in 1637, the disputants agreed on these particulars: "1. that justification and sanctification were both together in time; 2. that a man must know himself to be justified, before he can know himself to be sanctified; 3. that the spirit never witnesseth justification without a word and a work."3 Cotton, however, insisted that the Spirit witnesses to justification with an absolute promise of grace the immediate consequence of which is sanctification. That is, the Spirit does not confirm justification upon condition of faith or holiness. It first gives assurance of election, and then works the works of righteousness in the believer. Sanctification is not the first evidence of justification, though it is evidence, for the Spirit of God applying God's

1. Hubbard, op. cit., p. 300.
free grace in an absolute promise is the Christian's first assurance. Cotton's opponents, on the other hand, held that the Spirit witnesses in a conditional promise, the condition or qualification being the ground of the believer's assurance; and that faith, hope, and love, and other such qualities are the first evidence of justification. They were intent upon avoiding in every possible way a doctrinal position which would allow entrance to the dangerous opinion that a person may know himself to be saved by direct illumination whether or not his justification is witnessed to by good works. Baillie agreed that certain effects and signs are evidence of justification but declined to argue as to whether or not they are first in order of appearance.

And whatever we speak of grounds or argument, signs or evidences, yet the true foundation and cause whereupon the faith of the believer doth rest in all his assurance, must be the formal object of this faith, even the promise of free grace holden out by the spirit to be apprehended by faith... (2)

The last question debated by Cotton and the elders pertained to the means by which Christ offers Himself to men, whether it be through a Covenant of Works or not. Cotton, as noted above, believed that Christ is given to the elect through the Covenant of Grace, and that a taste of Him is given to all others through the Covenant of Works. With a fine distinction of words, the conservative group suggested

2. Baillie, A Dissuasive...Vindicated, p. 27.
that Christ is not offered by a Covenant of Works but may be revealed to men who are under a Covenant of Works.¹

The word antinomianism denotes the belief that the moral law is not obligatory for those who are under the gospel dispensation. Mrs. Hutchinson and those who were under her influence again and again expressed this belief. Because they were convinced that they, the elect, were under the Covenant of Grace rather than the Covenant of Works, they publicly declared that "the Law is no rule of life to a Christian,"² that "God loves a man never the better for any holiness in him, and never the lesse be he never so unholy,"³ and that "Sinne in a childe of God must never trouble him".⁴ To all such statements Cotton made firm reply:

If any therefore shall accuse the Doctrine of the Covenant of free Grace of Antinomianism, and say, it teacheth man freedome from the Law of Moses; and if they commit any sin, they plead they are not bound unto the Law; we see how false such an aspersion would be; for all the people of God know, that the Lord is an avenger of every such wickedness. There is none under a Covenant of Grace that dare allow himself in any sin; for if a man should negligently commit any sin, the Lord will school him throughly, and make him sadly to apprehend how he hath made bold with the treasures of the grace of God. (5)

If a man is under the Covenant of Grace rather than the Covenant of Works, he is still not free from the commandment of the Law, but rather is under obligation to live a life in

¹ Hubbard, op. cit., p. 300f.
² Rutherford, A Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist, p. 179.
³ In summary given in New Schaff-Herzog, Article on Antinomianism, p. 200.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Cotton, Covenant of Grace, Acts 7:8, p. 87.
obedience to it. For Christ gives the Law, and to those who believe on Him He gives strength to fulfil it. The Covenant of Grace only gives freedom from the fear of the consequences of sin. No man is without sin, but for the elect, ransom has long since been paid. A rigorous Puritan so far as his personal habits were concerned, Cotton would condone no lapse from the moral standards and the social customs of the day.

Again it must be stressed that Cotton struggled to serve his generation in the capacity of a mediating theologian. Accused of Arminianism and of Antinomianism, he yet faced the orthodox Divines of his day with the firm conviction that he was interpreting correctly the doctrine of the Reformed Religion. Surrounded by the growing discontent of those who found orthodoxy too narrow in outlook, he still strove to push the boundaries of Calvinism back into a position, justified by Scripture and by Calvin himself, which would allow for wider vision. Because the struggle seems so often to have involved matters as inconsequential as the old problem of the number of angels who can dance on the point of a needle, it is easy to make the judgment that Cotton's contribution to the development of Congregational doctrine was negligible. Yet among the early New England Divines, he alone stands out as one who explained orthodox doctrine in the light of the growing consciousness of the power of God's love and the complex nature of man's contact with the Divine.
CHAPTER IV.
The Church Polity.

For many people of the seventeenth century the reformation of the Church in England had stopped short of completion. Authority in matters religious and secular had been wrested from the Pope, transferred to the Crown, and gradually was being given to the archbishops and the bishops. The liturgy had been purified of much that was Roman, and the Book of Common Prayer, giving in English the Acts of Worship prescribed by the King and his clergy, was in use throughout the land. Translations of the Bible, among them the one authorized by King James I, were to be found in churches and in homes, and young and old alike enthusiastically observed the reading of the Word of God. Calvin's theology was acknowledged to be the doctrine of the Church: treatises and commentaries written by Calvinists made popular appeal. But despite all these reforms there was growing dissatisfaction.

Many within the Church were content to remain faithful to the government as established by the bishops but were determined that the church should be purified of every vestige of Romanism. Not only vestments came within the compass of their disapproval. The sign of the cross in baptism, the use of organs, the practice of kneeling for the receiving of communion, the arrangement of the communion table as an altar
against the east end of a church, and the reading of set forms of prayer, all were held to be remnants of Catholicism. The calendar of Saints’ Days was looked upon with disfavour, and even the use of the ring in marriage was discountenanced. By doing away with such practices as these the Puritans thought to complete the reform which had been begun in the preceding century.

A second group within the Church struggled to carry the process of reform even further than the abolishing of church ceremonies. In addition to purifying church worship, they wished to introduce changes in church polity. Much influenced by Calvin’s treatise on church order and discipline, they aimed at the establishment of a National Church governed by Presbytery rather than by Bishop. They felt that the authority which was vested in the bishops ought to be given into the hands of ministers and presbyters who were chosen by the people and ordained by the imposition of hands in the Scots fashion. These men, meeting in provincial and national synods, would decide on doctrine, order worship, supervise public morals, administer discipline, have the power of excommunication, and command the civil rulers. Such Presbyterianism became the core of the Puritan movement. Gradually its partisans secured positions in the civil

1. The word Puritans is here used restrictively, to signify only those who sought to purify the worship of the Church. Loosely used the word includes all who remained within the Church but worked for its further reformation.
government and won the support of both people and clergy. Eventually the reform was accomplished and for a few years the Church of England was nominally modelled after the Church of Geneva.

Whereas the Puritans and the Presbyterians remained within the fold of the Church advocating a policy of slow change and upholding the theory of national religious uniformity, a third group found it necessary to separate from the Church and to establish themselves as independent congregations, meeting in private homes, worshipping as they pleased, and organizing themselves in the way which they thought best. Some of these people broke away from the Church only because they felt that further reformation was impossible and that the Church of England was not a true Church. Others believed that the New Testament offered no support for the theory of a national church, and that Christians should be free to develop a system answerable to their needs. Together with the others who were striving for reform, these men and women, devout, sincere, and eager, were trying to express in concrete form their belief in the universal priesthood of all believers. But as Independents, they directed their attention away from uniformity and subservience to religious superiors, toward the principle of freedom of religious expression within a church whose only head was Jesus Christ. They felt that

The true order of things was that Christ Himself should, through the individual members of His Church, bring about whatever system was required: every association of Christians was, in immediate contact
with Christ, to receive its instructions directly from His lips. (1)

Congregationalism derived not from any one of these three groups, but from them all. And it is in a study of Cotton's nonconformity that we can see the interweaving of the three strands that gave rise to its development.

A. The Growth of Cotton's Nonconformity.

We have seen that Cotton's first step toward nonconformity was taken within a few years following his acceptance of the appointment to the parish church in Boston, Lincolnshire. (2) By 1615 he had begun to ponder upon the relative importance and unimportance of the ceremonies (3) of which he was in charge, and to question the high value put upon them by the Book of Common Prayer. He also could not agree that it was within the power of the bishops to require "indifferent decent things in the Administration of God's Worship". (4) In the years that followed, this attitude developed. He conferred with the bishop of his diocese upon the matter of the ceremonies of the Church, indicating his disapproval of

2. See above, pp. 51ff.
3. Cotton uses the word ceremonies to refer not to the service of worship but to its accompanying ritual. In describing the service of Baptism he said (The Way, p. 68): "Ceremonies wee use none, but are farefull to administer all things according to the primitive institutions."
certain of the church regulations. He brought his services of worship into line with his growing convictions. He administered the Communion to parishioners who would not kneel. And at last, because of nonconformity of this kind, he was forced to leave England.

Although it was reported that at the time of his departure for Massachusetts Bay he "had nothing to say, but against the Ceremonies the Liturgy offended him not," by 1635 he wrote to some of his former parishioners:

"Some other things there be, which were I again with you, I durst not take that liberty which some times I have taken: I durst not joyn in your Book-Prayers ... I durst not now partake in the Sacraments with you, though the Ceremonies were removed. I know not how you can be excused from Fellowship of their sins, if you continue in your place. While you and some of my other friends continue with them I fear the rest will settle upon their Lees with more security. The wise-hearted that left their Stations in Israel, I doubt not, were some of them, if not all, useful and serviceable men in their places; yet they did themselves and their Brethren more good service in going before their Brethren, as the Goats before the Flocks, ... then if they had tarried with them to the corrupting of their own ways. (2)

Thus he argued the course which he himself had taken. His experiences in the colony confirmed his experiences in England. He became more and more convinced that church worship and all that it entailed should be based upon New Testament practice and ordered to fit the needs of the people. He urged that the commandments given by Christ concerning

1. Edwards, Antapologia, p. 17. Also used by Baillie, Dissasive, p. 66.
worship be kept in all purity and simplicity, with nothing added which was of man's own invention. He set a fine example for the other ministers in the colony in the way in which he conducted the services in the Boston church. His sermons were direct and clear and applicable to life in the Bay area, and his prayers were formed with attention given to the needs of his congregation.\(^1\) As time allowed he wrote treatises upon the various aspects of public worship in New England which had evoked favourable and unfavourable comment abroad. These treatises together with other short essays and paragraphs indicate that Cotton continued throughout his life to recommend procedures in church ceremony and worship which were strikingly different from those used within the Church of England.

One of the first of such treatises was written in 1638, just after the Hutchinsonian controversy, in answer to a discourse by J. Ball which argued the lawful use of set forms of prayer. Forwarded to England, this treatise was published in London in 1642 under the title A Modest and Cleare Answer to Mr. Balls Discourse of set formes of Prayer, and with such a recommendation of the author and his work, as would indicate that it had been well received and eagerly read prior to printing.

Wee thinke it not meet, to fall a commending the Author of this worke, Who hath beene so long pretious in the hearts of all the Saints, and for his learning, paines

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and piety so famous in the Churches of Christ; that his owne workes may praise him in the Gate, though wee be silent...thou wilt discerne (as some other godly learned, who have perused it before also have done) such a cleare judgement, dexterous aptnesse, and pithy plainnesse in a moderate and brotherly stile in all his Answers, that thou wilt think thou seest the very spirit of the Author breathing in every page and line. (1)

Cotton opened his argument against prescribed prayer with a short preface in which he defined lawful prayer as a lifting up (or powring out) of the desires of the heart unto God, for Divine blessings, according to his will in the name of Jesus Christ, by the helpe of the spirit of Grace. (2)

Having thus emphazised the intimate and personal nature of prayer, he proceeded to a consideration of the nine reasons given by Ball in support of his allegation that the liturgy and set forms of prayer are permissible in public and in private worship. To each of these reasons he gave answer, reiterating again and again the principles upon which he based his rejection of the Book of Common Prayer.

Prescribed prayer, he said, is unlawful not for lack of intrinsic worth and reverent reading, but rather because it does not fulfile the external requirements demanded of satisfactory prayer.

a prescript forme of prayer may consist of lawfull fit petitions, and be delivered with a faithfull holy humble spirit, and so be truely and properly prayer, and yet fall short of some rule requisite to be attended to make it a lawfull worship of God. (3)

2. Ibid., p. 1.
It was not ordained by God, for nowhere in the Bible is a set form of prayer prescribed as necessary for either Jew or Christian. Man himself has invented it, and in so doing has broken the second commandment which forbids the making of both material and spiritual images.

God hath plainly expressed his allowance of prayer conceived in the heart, and of prayer uttered, and pronounced by words, both in our owne words, and in the words of others, whom God calleth to be our mouthes in the present assembly: But of set formes of read prayer devised by men of another Congregation, and prescribed and imposed upon others; it may justly be damanded, when did God speake one word of them? (1)

Then, too, prescribed prayer is the instrument of a power assumed by the Church, by magistrates, and by certain ministers, but not given by God. Authority to enforce details of worship other than those commanded by Christ was not delegated to the Apostles, and if not to them, certainly not to any others.

A set forme of prayer, as it is set by one Congregation for another, can finde no rule of direction, nor any footstep thereof in the word of truth. (2)

Consequently, the compulsory use of this kind of prayer is a betrayal of Christian liberty. God devised no ritual of prayer for men to follow, not did He order the repetition of a given confession and the study of a particular catechism. He left men free to compose their own prayers, make their own confessions, formulate their own catechisms, using as helps the prayers and meditations contained in Scripture as

1. Ibid., p. 39.
2. Cotton, A Modest and Cleare Answer to Mr. Balls Discourse, p. 16.
well as those written by other men.

what God hath left free in his worship, let no man limit... (1)

Gods Service is perfect Freedome, but the reading of a set forme of prayer devised, and prescribed by others is not perfect freedome (for many would be right glad to be freed from it) therefore such reading of prayers is not Gods service. (2)

Cotton thus admitted that written prayers have a certain value. He agreed that ministers and private Christians alike can find help in the use of set forms of prayer which they themselves have written. But he warned against confining prayer to such compositions, for a Christian knoweth not what farther occasion may be given him of inlarging his Petitions, by new occurrences of matters from Gods providence, and by the inlargement of the help of Gods spirit: not so to limit himselfe as to stick long in any set forme of Prayer least it turne into a customarie, and empty forme, contrary to the watchfulness unto Prayer, which must be Religiously kept of all growing Christians. (3)

He acknowledged that one Christian can help another by giving him directions and rules for prayer, and also by supplying him with examples of prayers. He insisted, however, that the one giving assistance has no right to prescribe the regular use of such helps in the prayer life of his pupil. Prayers contained in books, he granted, are also of value, so long as they awake a natural response on the part of the one reading them, and are used for 'present', and not for habitual prayer. Parts of set prayers are certainly

1. Ibid., p. 27.
2. Ibid., p. 40.
3. Ibid., p. 4.
permissible aids provided they are inserted into private prayers with thought and without affectation.

But in the reading of set prayers there are grave dangers. Not the least of these is the danger that the prayer life of the one using written prayers may become automatic, artificial, empty of real meaning.

Though we do not deny it to be altogether unlawfull to seeke common blessings of God dayly in a set forme of words, yet we would not encourage men to rest and content themselves in so doing, much lesse to binde themselves so to do: For besides that, a dayly set forme will easily degenerate to a formallity, how can a Christian be said to watch unto prayer...if wee content our selves with the same set forme of prayer, this yeare, as the last. (1)

The reading of prayers serves as a crutch which may seem to be necessary yet when used overmuch tends to the weakening of the 'inward affections of the heart in prayer'. It is far wiser to discard such an aid, for it "will prove a cudgell to break the bones of the spirit in prayer, and force him to halt in worshipping God after the precepts of men". 2

The Christian should employ the helps which have been sanctified by God. The reading of prayers also makes it difficult for the one who worships to lift his eyes 'stedfastly to Heaven'.

God hath ingraffed it in the hearts of all men, and even put some kinde of instinct into all living creatures, to lift up their eyes to heaven for what they want...Now, if the lifting up of the eyes to heaven in prayer be expressly mentioned in the Word,

2. Ibid., p. 37.
then how can it be truely said, that God never speake word of prayer without Book; for they that lift up their eyes steadfastly to Heaven in prayer, cannot (without some distractions) cast them downe in prayer upon a booke... (1)

Because of the use of the liturgy in public worship it is possible for ignorant and incapable ministers who can read well yet have not the spirit of prayer, to secure parishes. This is a further danger arising from set forms of prayer. It would be preferable to expose rather than to conceal behind the Book of Common Prayer the minister who is unable to pray in his own words, for he is no minister at all.

To those whom He calls to His service God gives the abilitie to expresse his desires in prayer in fit and significant termes: no man is called of God to be a Minister of his Church, but he is as well apt to pray as apt to preach. (2)

But experience had taught Cotton that prayer does not always come easily even to those most surely called of God; and he added:

It is true that every good Minister is not able at all times to open his heart to God in prayer, but neither is hee able at all times to open the minde of God in preaching, but if he be not able to doe both without booke, neither will hee be able to doe either upon a booke prescribed to him. (3)

Silence in the pulpit, he concluded, is of greater value than the reading of prescribed prayers!

To those Christians trained in the use of set forms, who

2. Ibid., p. 35.
3. Cotton, A Modest and Cleare Answer to Mr. Balls Discourse, p. 28.
were finding it difficult to compose their own prayers, Cotton, as was his wont, directed words of comfort and of sympathy. He did not condemn as worthless the prayers of those who continued to use the Book of Common Prayer. Every prayer sincerely made is acceptable to God, although it is to be expected that God prefers the prayer that comes directly from the heart of the one who worships. Gestures, postures such as kneeling, prepared meditations, Scriptural passages, and all other helps to prayer which are mentioned in the Testaments, are authorised by God, and may be freely used to eradicate the defects of ignorance and bashfulness.

besides the spirit of God...who supplieth both the ignorant with knowledge of what, and how to pray, and the bashfull with power; hee hath also ordained instruction to helpe the ignorant, and frequent exercise, and diligent Catechising of a mans owne family, to helpe his bashfulnesse in praying before them; and if strangers come in (and they fit to partake in such an ordinance) God then offered him the help of a Christian friend to supply his necessity before strangers... (1)

And Cotton gave assurance to all who lacked self-confidence, that no matter how uncouth and incoherent their prayers, if they were addressed to God in the name of Jesus Christ, they would by Him be made acceptable.

As if an elder brother should set a child one of his younger brethren to get his father a posie of flowers, and the child out of ignorance, should gather some weeds and put in it: And the elder brother gathers out the weeds, and sprinkles the flowers, and then presents them in the childs name to the father. So doth Christ to us, while we gather up Petitions here and there, and as we thinke for the best, and some truth and work of grace there is in them, yet some

1. Ibid., p. 18.
weeds of a sinfull folly, then Christ takes them out of our hands, and pulls out the weeds, and sprinkles them with the blood of his crosse, and the merit of his sufferings, what he hath done and suffered for us. (1)

In his treatise on prayer Cotton again demonstrated his ability to consider fairly both sides of an argument and to suggest an answer consistent with his principles and at the same time inclusive of the best of his opponents' convictions. He was unquestionably Puritan in his delineation of public and private worship. But he could not be a radical, denouncing in stentorion tone those who would not accept his point of view. Nor did he allow himself to be non-committal, nodding agreement first with one opinion and then with another. He was convinced of his position, but he remained humble, tactful, and sympathetic.

A second treatise of Cotton's on the matter of worship concerned the music to be used in the church service. By 1644 the Puritans in England had passed laws forbidding the use of instrumental music in the churches, and limiting vocal music to the singing of metrical Psalms which were to be lined out for the congregation by a minister or elder. This practice was already the custom in New England, and Cotton's treatise - Singing of Psalms: A Gospel-Ordinance - was well-received in England where it was published in 1647 and again in 1650.

The material in this treatise is arranged under four

l. Cotton, Christ the Fountaine, p. 223f.
headings: the duty of singing, the matter to be sung, the singers, and the manner of singing. Cotton believed that the singing of Psalms was 'an holy Duty of Gods Worship', and he was careful to point out that such singing should be done with a 'lively voyce' as well as with a joyful heart. After presenting proofs for this view taken from words of Paul, of Christ, and of the Prophets, and after explaining that the use of instruments had ceased to be a duty because it had been a ceremonial and an external rather than a moral and a natural duty, he went on to consider what songs should be sung. Of primary importance, he said, are the Psalms of David and the other songs recorded in Scripture. Among the latter he included the songs of Moses, Solomon, Hannah, Mary, and Elizabeth. On special occasions of public worship, he agreed, a Psalm composed by a gifted church member may be sung by him before the congregation, and the congregation, approving of the music, may "goe along with him in Spirit, and say Amen to it". But this practice should be infrequent for

such gifts now are not ordinarily bestowed, (which were at first given chiefly for admiration and conviction of Infidels...) so we would not call upon men now, to preferre their ordinary common gift, as more fit for the publique edifying of the Church, before the extraordinary gifts of the holy men of God in Scripture. (3)

And with the above exception no songs written by private

1. Cotton, Singing of Psalms, p. 5f.
2. Ibid., 15.
3. Cotton, Singing of Psalms, p. 16.
Christians should be sung in public. They are suitable only for private worship.

Wee grant also, that any private Christian, who hath a gift to frame a spirituall Song, may both frame it, and sing it privately, for his own private comfort, and remembrance of some speciall benefit, or deliverance: Nor doe we forbid the private use of an Instrument of Musick therewithall; So that attention to the Instrument, doe not divert the heart from attention to the matter of the Song. (1)

Concerning the singers, Cotton wrote that everyone in the Congregation was to join in the singing of the Psalms. From both Old and New Testaments he drew examples of whole congregations, praising God in song. He denied that such group singing tended toward confusion, for do we not "reade of a multitude of an heavenly hoast of Angells, praising God, and saying, Glory be to God on High, &c. without any confusion". 2 Only in the event of the special service was one member to sing alone, and no evidence in support of a choir can be found in the New Testament.

If God had reserved this Dutie to some select Choristers, he would have given some direction in the New Testament for their Qualification and Election: But since he speaketh nothing of any such select Musitians, he commendeth this Dutie to the whole Church. (3)

Women, too should join 'in singing together with men the Praises of the Lord', even though they may not teach or question while in church, and should, for the most part, maintain a discreet silence. And although the duty of

1. Ibid., p. 15.
2. Ibid., p. 40.
3. Ibid.
singing Psalms is incumbent more especially upon church members and those upright who have not as yet been received into the fellowship of a particular church, still, as a moral duty, it is obligatory for all the sons of men.

...sundry of the grounds and end of Singing are common to all the sons of men, and therefore none of them to be exempted from this service... The end of singing is to praise the Lord for his goodnesse, and to stirre up our selves and others to serve the Lord with cheerfulness & glad hearts. And therefore Travellers, Prisoners, Sick-men, Seamen, being saved from severall distresses by the good hand of God, they are all of them commanded to praise the Lord... (1)

Cotton's discussion of the manner in which the singing was to be done concerned the use of metres and tunes, and the practice of reading each line of the Psalm before singing it. With regard to the metres and the tunes Cotton held

That it is lawful to sing Psalms in English verses (which runne in number, measure, and meeter) and in such grave and melodious tunes, as doe well befit both the holinesse and gravity of the matter, and the capacity of the Singers. (2)

In order that all English Christians may read the Bible it is necessary that it first be translated into the English language. It is only consistent that prose should be translated into prose, and verse into verse. Since English verse is comprised of measured syllables which prompt memory and suggest melody, it is desirable that the poetry of the Testaments be expressed in 'number, measure, and meeter of syllables'. With other New Englanders, Cotton held that

2. Ibid., p. 54.
all previous translations of the Psalms had varied from the original meanings, had more often been paraphrases than accurate translations, and had various other defects. He proudly said, in The Way of the Churches of Christ:

wee have endeavoured a new translation of the Psalmes into English metre, as neere the originall as wee could expresse it in our English tongue, so farre as for the present the Lord hath been pleased to helpe us, and those Psalmes wee sing, both in our publike Churches, and in private. (1)

Concerning the music itself, Cotton argued that since it is commanded that the sons of men sing Psalms, and since the original tunes for the Psalms disappeared a long time ago, it

must needs be that the Lord alloweth us to sing them in any such grave, and solemne, and plaine Tunes, as doe fitly suite the gravitie of the matter, the solemnitie of Gods worship, and the capacitie of a plaine People. (2)

In concluding his chapter on metres and tunes, he answered the charge that only men of sin compose melodies for the Psalms by directing the reader's attention to the custom of the unreformed churches:

For neither the man of sinne, (by whom I suppose you meane Antichrist) nor any Antichristian Church have had any hand in turning Davids Psalmes into English Songs and Tunes, or are wont to make any Melody in the Singing of them, yea they reject them as Genevah Gigs; And they be Cathedrall Priests of an Antichristian spirit, that have scoffed at Puritan- Ministers, as calling the People to sing one of Hopkins Jiggs, and so hop into the Pulpit. God keepe all Anti-Psalmists from the like Anti-christian Spirit. They that have been in Antichristian

1. P. 67.
2. Cotton, Singing of Psalms, p. 56.
Churches can tell you, that Popish Churches are not wont to sing Davids Psalms translated into verse in their own Countrey Meeter, but they onely sing the Prose of Davids Psalms in Cathedrall Notes. (1)

The practice of lining the Psalms Cotton recommended very briefly in a short chapter. Because many of the congregation could not read, and because many of those who could read had no books, it was necessary that the words of the Psalms be

openly read before hand, line after line, or two lines together, that so they may know what is to be sung, and joyne with the rest in the dutie of singing. (2)

As a guide in matters of convenience such as this, Cotton laid down the general principle that those practices are acceptable which help the congregation to hear, to worship, and to understand.

In this second treatise Cotton again displayed his talent for even-tempered debate, and his inclination to recognise the value of practices which he could not acknowledge as altogether suitable for the church service. His common-sense and his practicability were evidenced by his suggestions that the music should be such that the congregation could sing, and that every help toward better singing should be used. His dependence upon Scripture for direction in decisions regarding worship was proved on every page. And his knowledge of the customs regulating church music down through history added weight to his argument. Nothing is more certain than that

2. Ibid., p. 62.
Cotton appreciated the importance of music in public and private worship, and had experienced some of the difficulties involved in making it a truly valuable part of the church service. He followed the best Puritan policy: simplicity and intelligibility were the standards he set each Psalm, and total participation, and the edification of each and every singer were his goals.

One other aspect of Cotton's continuing disagreement with the customs of worship prevailing in the Church of England remains to be considered. From The Way of the Churches of Christ it is clear that Cotton administered the Sacraments, or 'seals of the Covenant', according to the Puritan manner of celebration. The Lord's Supper was solemnised at least once a month. All those who were members of the particular church or had brought letters testifying to their membership in other like churches were admitted to the Table. No ceremonies and no set forms of prayer were used during the celebration. Following the example of Christ, the minister first blessed the bread, and after commanding the people to partake of it, gave it to the deacons who then distributed it to the people who remained

1. Pocklington, author of Altara Christianum, believed that Cotton was the probable author of a letter written to the Vicar of Grantham against the practice of turning the Communion Table into an altar. Pocklington used the letter as a basis for his treatise, and mentioned Cotton several times in the refutation. Dexter holds that J. Williams was the author of the letter. No mention of a letter concerning the use of altars, and written by Cotton, is made by any of his biographers.
sitting in their places as did the Disciples when served by Jesus. Rising from his place at the Table, the minister next blessed the wine which was distributed by the deacons in the same way. After the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, a Psalm was sung and the Church was dismissed with a blessing.¹

The sacrament of Baptism, according to Cotton, is only to be administered to ‘Disciples’, that is, to those who are trained for church membership, and to the children of church members. Such restriction caused argument between the New England Divines and the Puritan Divines in England, for it meant that children of parents who could not or did not take communion for reason of excommunication, sin, or lack of faith were not received into the fold of the Church. Cotton held that the Sacrament is an outward sign of the Covenant which God has made with men, and that without the help of the particular church and the care of parents who are Christian, a child can not enter into the Covenant. He did concede that children who are not of Christian parentage but are reared in a Christian home may be allowed the privilege of Baptism.

But we know not any ground at all to allow a faithful man liberty to entitle another mans childe to Baptisme, onely upon a pretence of his owne promise to have an eie to his education, unlesse the child be either born in his house, or resigned to him to be brought up as his own. (2)

The celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism was simple

¹. P. 67f.
and unadorned. Again, no ceremonies and no set forms of prayer were used. The father presented his own child as being baptized by the right of his Covenant, and not of the Covenant unto God-fathers and god-mothers, (for there is no such covenant of God unto them and their god-sons) and therefore we have no use of them, but omit them in Baptisme... (1)

And great emphasis was placed upon the pledge taken by the parents to bring the child up in the knowledge, love, and obedience of God.

The Truth is, in administering...Baptisme to the Infants of believing Christians, a respect is not had to the voluntary subjection of the Infants, but to the free and voluntary subjection of their Parents. (2)

Cotton's convictions concerning the Sacrament of Baptism were expounded at greater length in a treatise - The Grounds and Ends of the Baptisme of the Children of the Faithfull - which was published in 1647. This treatise, written shortly after the General Court in the Massachusetts Bay Colony had passed a law banishing those who condemned or opposed infant baptism, was mainly concerned with proving that the baptism of children can be "drawn out of the Scripture by just consequence and deduction", and so is justified. God's Covenant, so Cotton argued, was given to Abraham and to all of his seed, and as circumcision represented the participation of the child in the Covenant of the Law, so Baptism represents the participation of the child in the Covenant of Grace.

1. Ibid., p. 68.
3. Ibid., p. 4.
Not all children will be saved; but some of them are subjects of God's election and to those who can be trained in the Christian religion it is necessary to give the means of salvation. Then too, Baptism is a sign of God's grace, given to confirm our faith that God will give Faith and Repentance to our Children, and turn their hearts both to the Lord and to us. And therefore hee powreth the water of Baptisme upon our Children, that hee may confirme this promise of Grace. (1)

Through a maze of intricate argument Cotton threaded his way. Baillie wrote concerning the treatise: "M. Cotton in his latest, learnedly and zealously maintain(s) this truth against the Anabaptists." But the statement most deserving of attention in the many pages would seem to be this reiteration of the practical significance of the rite:

the Baptisme of a mans children, doth not allow him to keep them in blindnes and error, but rather bind and charge him to traine up his children in the knowledge, and faith, and obedience of the Father, Sonne, and holy Ghost, in whose name they have been baptized. (2)

That Cotton's early nonconformity was more than just a matter of purifying the church of Romish ceremonies and customs of worship, we have already seen. In addition to questioning the right of the bishops to command the practice of 'indifferent things', he denied their right to rule a diocese larger than a particular congregation. With other

1. Ibid., p. 143.
2. Baillie, Anabaptism, p. 132.
nonconformists he believed that the keys of the government of the Church are delivered by Christ into the hands of the officers and of the members of each small church. And although no treatise containing his views on church polity was written by him before he left England, it is known from a statement made by John Davenport, and from a treatise written many years later by Cotton himself, that at the conference in London which took place just before Cotton's departure from England, this matter of the office of the bishop and the power of the particular church was discussed by Cotton, Davenport, Thomas Goodwin, and others, and, as a result, Cotton's friends were convinced of the genuineness and the validity of his position in opposition to the episcopacy. Even before this conference, Cotton, in a letter to Samuel Skelton, minister of the group of colonists settling in Salem, had defined a church as

a flock of saints, (1) called by God into the fellowship of Christ, (2) meeting together in one place, (3) to call upon the name of the Lord, (4) and to edify themselves in communicating spiritual gifts, (5) and partaking of the ordinances of the Lord (6). (2)

Thus it would seem that Cotton went a certain distance along the way taken by the Presbyterians before he decided to separate from the Church of England. He urged changes in church polity. He stressed the importance of the local church. And, more deserving of note than these, he deplored

1. Above, Chapter II, pp. 44ff.
2. In Harris, Memorials of the First Church in Dorchester, p. 56.
separation from the National Church.

The change in Cotton's attitude toward separation seems not to have taken place until after he reached the Bay Colony. In the two commentaries which he is purported to have delivered as series of sermons or lectures in Boston, Lincolnshire, there are recorded outspoken condemnations of those who wished to break away from the Church. In the course of demonstrating the use of a point made in his study of the First Epistle of John, he said:

It may refute an Errour of some, that say, As Anabaptism sprang from Luther and Dibertanism from Calvin, so Separation from Puritanism; but this cannot be, for no Lye is of the truth, therefore these could not spring from any truth of Luther, or Calvin, or Puritanism. (1)

Similarly, in his exposition of the Canticles, he explained that he wished to "refute the arrogancy or ignorance of the Separatists, who refuse to keep fellowship with reformed churches, whom Christ yet keeps fellowship with". 2 In this same commentary he declared confidently, after presenting a list of dangerous errors: "These things were found in Rome, from whence we departed; not in England, (blessed be the Lord,) from whom the Separatists would have us to depart." 3 And with enthusiasm he cried out: "As long as Christ is here in England, let us not go away." 4

It has been supposed by some historians that Cotton gave

2. Cotton, Canticles, p. 45.
3. Ibid., p. 32.
4. Ibid.
indication of his approval of Independence in the sermon which he preached in the April of 1630 to those who were leaving England with John Winthrop. Later in that same year, Samuel Fuller, the Physician and deacon of Plymouth who had given his services to the people in Salem, and was at the time attending those of Winthrop's company who were ill, wrote to Governor Bradford from Charlestown:

Here is a gentleman, one Mr. Cottington, (a Boston man,) who told me, that Mr. Cotton's charge at Hampton was, that they should take advice of them at Plimoth, and should do nothing to offend them. (2)

That Cotton, in the giving of such advice, intended that Winthrop and those with him should organise a church according "to the model set by Plymouth", as Walker suggests, seems questionable. Perhaps Cottington and Fuller thought that such was the case. Certainly it is true that some of the Massachusetts Bay colonists quickly asked help from the Separatists of Plymouth in the setting up of their churches. But in the sermon referred to, Cotton charged those who were leaving the country to be "present in spirit with us, though absent in body..." And on the same occasion Winthrop declared that he and those with him "esteem it our honour to

4. William Coddington (Cottington) was a Lincolnshire man. He sided with Vane and Cotton in the Hutchinsonian controversy. In 1638 he left the colony for Rhode Island of which colony he became Governor several times.
5. Cotton, God's Promise to his Plantation, p. 18.
call the Church of England from whence wee rise, our deare mother.\(^1\) There was no intention on the part of either man that the adventurers should separate from the English Church. It is probable that Cotton was only giving the very general advice of a man who realized that those experienced in establishing a 'plantation' in the wilderness could make helpful suggestions and would prove valuable friends.

Such an interpretation of Cotton's advice is further substantiated by his letter to Skelton, written on October 2nd of the same year. Skelton, Cotton had discovered, had refused to administer communion to Winthrop, Johnson, Dudley, and Coddington, and had declined to baptise Coddington's child, because the men were not members of 'reformed' churches. This was an open denial of the validity of the churches in England, and Cotton, much disturbed, wrote in grave admonition:

> Two things I conceive herein to be erroneus; first, that you think no man may be admitted to the Sacrament though a member of a Catholic Church, unless he be a member of some particular Reformed Church. Secondly, that none of the congregations in England are particular Reformed Churches but Mr. Lathrop's and such as his. (2)

After proving from the New Testament that baptism is to be given upon confession of faith regardless of the particular church, he continued:

> Your other error requires a book rather than a letter, to answer it. You went hence of another judgment, and I am afraid your change hath sprung from New Plymouth men, whom, though I much esteem as godly and loving Christians, yet their grounds which they have

\(^1\) Quoted in Dexter, The Congregationalism of the last Three Hundred Years, p. 416.

\(^2\) In Harris, Memorials of the First Church in Dorchester, p. 54.
received for this tenant from Mr. Robinson, do not justify me, though the man I reverence as godly and learned. (1)

In the remainder of the letter Cotton argued in behalf of the churches of England, making clear his conviction that these churches, in which the colonists of New England had become Christians, were still true churches despite the presence of scandal and the lack of discipline. "Till Christ give us a bill of divorcement," he pled, "do not you divorce yourselves from us." 2

One further proof of Cotton's disapproval of the Separatists is found in the letter which he wrote as a foreword to Hildersham's Commentary upon John, published in 1632.

yea, and that one Letter of his (Hildersham's) to a Gentlewoman against the separation; which without his consent a Separatist printed and refuted, hath so strongly and clearly convinced the iniquity of that way, that I could not but acknowledge in it both the wisdome of God, and the weaknesse of the Separatist. (3)

Perhaps Robert Baillie, in his Dissasive from the Errours of the Time, made the best contemporary summary of Cotton's position prior to his departure for New England.

The first who appeared in any displeasure at it, i.e. separation was Mr. Cotton; for this reverend man, howsoever he had fain off from the practise of som, & but of som of the Ceremonies, & was distasted with Episcopal Government, Yet so long as he abode in England, minded no more then the old non-conformity: In all his opposition to the Episcopal corruptions, he went not beyond Cartwright, and the Presbyterians... he wrote over to the Ministers who had been the chief instruments of bringing these Churches under that yoke,

1. In Harris, Memorials of the First Church in Dorchester, p. 54.
2. Ibid. Also quoted in: Felt, Ecclesiastical History, p. 144.
admonishing them freely of their falling from their former judgement, and that their new Reformation was no other but the old way wherein the Separatists had walked, to the grief and offence of the Anti-Episcopal party in England, and of the whole Protestant Churches. (1)

When Cotton's first step toward separation from the churches of England was taken, it is not possible to tell. Dexter, in his brief mention of Cotton's arrival in New England, wrote:

he had largely changed his mind since he wrote to Skelton, inasmuch as he would not baptize in the ship the baby which was added to his family on the passage over. (2)

However, Cotton's position seems entirely consistent with the definition which he had given Skelton in 1630; namely, that a church was "a flock of saints...partaking of the ordinances of the Lord". 3 It seems consistent also with his whole argument regarding the baptism of Coddington's child. He explained to the congregation in Boston on the Sunday after his arrival that his son had not been baptized on board the Griffin, "(1) because they had no settled congregation there; (2) because a minister hath no power to give the seals but in his own congregation." 4 He believed, then, that a child must be baptized where there is a congregation and by the minister in charge. These conditions were perfectly fulfilled in the situation which confronted Skelton in Salem. He was the

1. P. 55.
2. Dexter, The Congregationalism of the last Three Hundred Years, p. 422.
3. In Harris, op. cit., p. 56.
minister of a fully recognised church. But the question in point there was neither the minister nor the church, but the church membership of the father. Whereas Skelton insisted that the baptism could not be administered because Coddington was not a member of the Salem church or of a reformed church, Cotton insisted that the baptism should be performed for Coddington was a member of a church which should be considered to be in full communion with the church in the colony.¹

It might also appear that Cotton was openly renouncing the Church of England when, on October 10th, 1633, he was chosen by the members of the Boston Congregation to be their teacher, and received ordination at the hands of the elders. But with one exception all the ministers in the colony who had been ordained before leaving England agreed that their second ordination was not a repudiation of a former ordination but an act of consecration whereby they as ministers assumed the charge of a particular church.²

On December 3rd, 1634, Cotton wrote to a friend in England giving his reasons for leaving his native land and venturing into the wilderness. Again he made no suggestion of having denied the validity of the churches in England, for instead of recommending separation from those churches, he gave the following advice to the ministers remaining behind:

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¹ See the letter, quoted in Harris, op. cit.
Witness is to be borne against corruptions, 1. By keeping a man's own garments clean; I mean his own outward practice. 2. By declaring the whole counsel of God to his people, not shunning any part of it, as reasonable occasion is offered, to prevent sin in them. 3. By avoiding appearances of evil, as well as evil itself. 4. By contending for the truth in a holy manner, when others contend with us against it. 5. By giving account of our faith before magistrates, if they call us to do it publicly, requiring to be informed of our doctrine and manner of life. Otherwise, if they call us to know our opinions in private (intending to bring us into trouble,) or publicly, rather as captious questionists than judicial governors, in such a case I suppose we may conceal our minds... (1)

Cotton still, it would seem, was fighting for reform within the Church of England, even though we judge from the tone of the letter he did not consider the situation too hopeful.

In less than two months following the writing of this letter, Cotton had ready the manuscript of a discussion concerning church life and order, which was to be published in 1642, 1643, and 1644, as The Doctrine of the Church, to which are committed the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. The contents of this treatise we shall shortly consider. Here it is only pertinent to point out that in a little over a year's time Cotton had become the spokesman for the New England Way, preparing for the colony its first outline of church polity. (2) Eight months later he wrote again to friends in England explaining the ways in which his views on ecclesiastical matters had altered. Baillie used this letter as a basis for his charge that Cotton had, upon reaching New

1. In Young, Chronicles, p. 442f.
2. Dexter, op. cit., p. 422.
England, become a Separatist.

For Master Cotton, a man of very excellent parts, contrary much to his former judgement, having fain into a liking of it, and by his great wit and learning, having refined it, without the impediment of any opposition, became the great instrument of drawing to it, not only the thousands of those who left England, but also by his Letters to his friends who abode in their Country, made it become lovely to many who never before had appeared in the least degree of affection toward it.

Before his departure from England, by conferences in London, he had brought off Master Davenport and Master Goodwin, from some of the English Ceremonies; but neither of these two, nor himself at that time, did minde the least degree of Separation; yet so soon as he did taste of the New-English air, he fell into so passionate an affection with the Religion he found there, that incontinent he began to perswade it, with a great deal more zeal and successe then before he had opposed it. (1)

To this Cotton later replied:

Two whole years and more giveth a man more than a taste of New English air; nor is that act done incontinently, which is done upon two years' deliberation. (2)

Finally Cotton took the definite step which was to mark him as no longer a member of the Church of England. In a sermon delivered in Salem in 1636, he retracted the opinions which he had given in his letter to Skelton six years before. No longer, he confessed, could be believe that members of the Church of England should be permitted to commune with New England churches. 3

From that time onward his full attention was devoted to the development of a plan of government for the churches.

2. Quoted in Felt, op. cit., p. 235.
3. Ibid., p. 144.
which were independent of external authority. Alike in England and in New England he won the reputation of being the principal projector of that way which "was called the middle way between brownism and presbyterianism;" the way to which he himself gave the name 'Congregational'.

if there must needs be some note of difference to decipher our estate, and to distinguish our way from a National Church-way, I know none fitter, then to denominate theirs Classicall and ours Congregationall. (3)

B. The Congregational Way.

Of the several treatises which Cotton wrote concerning church polity, the two of greatest importance are: The Doctrine of the Church, to which are committed the Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, and The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, and Power thereof. The former, already mentioned as the earliest treatise on the New England Way, is a fourteen-page summary of the organisation of the New England church. It is principally concerned with the functions of the officers and members of a church, with the order of church worship and the administration of the ordinances, and with church government; and in one edition was given the more appropriate

2. M'Clure, op. cit., p. 134. M'Clure is the only author who makes even a guarded statement concerning Cotton's early usage of this term. Nothing I have found would seem to contradict his suggestion. Perhaps research on the question has been done. If not, it would prove an interesting field of inquiry.
title of *The True Constitution of a Particular Visible Church*. Presumably it was the manuscript of this treatise that Cotton sent to the Westminster Assembly when he refused the invitation to attend that Assembly in person.¹ The other treatise, first published in 1644, is a much fuller presentation of church polity based upon the doctrine that the keys of church order which were given to Peter were, in fact, given to church members and officers. This treatise was the "standard book" of New England church discipline, till the Cambridge Platform was brought forth in 1646."² It was the treatise which led John Owen to become an Independent.³ And it has remained the most important of Cotton's published writings.

A third treatise - *The Way of the Churches of Christ in New England* - was published in 1645. This was printed from a copy of a manuscript which Cotton had written earlier than *The Keyes*. It had been carried to England by a well-intentioned friend, and was published without correction and without Cotton's approval. Although it is almost twice the length of *The Keyes*, it contains little that is not in the other two treatises. But it was of considerable importance in the years following its publication, for it served as the butt for several attacks made upon the New England Way.

Cotton's foremost treatise on church polity was, then,

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1. Dale, History of English Congregationalism, p. 372. Dale, however, holds, wrongly I think, that this treatise was the one which converted Owen to Congregationalism.
3. Owen, A Review of the True Nature of Schism, chapter II.
The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, and it is to this that we turn our attention, holding in mind the fact that it is the doctrinal counterpart of the earlier Doctrine of the Church, to which are committed the Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The treatise is introduced by a long epistle, To the Reader, which was written by the publishers, Thomas Goodwin and Philip Nye. These two men, leaders in English Independency and active disputants at the Westminster Assembly, gave warm approbation of the polity defined by Cotton.

As for our selves, we are yet, neither afraid, nor ashamed to make profession (in the midst of all the high waves on both sides dashing on us) that the substance of this briefe Extract from the Authors large Discourse, is, That very Middle-way (which in our Apologie we did in the general intimate and intend) between that which is called Brownisme, and the Presbyteriall-government, as it is practised... (1)

In comparatively few pages they presented a masterly résumé of the treatise, indicated the few minor points with which they could not agree, and delivered The Keyes into the hands of the many who awaited it with a blessing.

The God of Peace and Truth, sanctifie all the truths in it, to all those holy ends (and through his Grace much more) which the holy and peaceable spirit of the Author did intend. (2)

In his first chapter, Cotton explained the title which he gave the treatise. "The Keys of the Kingdome of Heaven are promised by the Lord Jesus (the Head and King of his Church) unto Peter..."3 The Kingdom of Heaven Cotton inter-

1. P. A4, recto.
2. P. A6, verso.
prets as meaning the Kingdom of earth, which is the Church, and the Kingdom in the highest heaven, the Kingdom of Christ. The keys of this Heaven are the ordinances of the Church which include preaching, and the administering of the sacraments, and censures. Such keys are spiritual keys, and are neither Sword nor Scepter; No Sword, for they convey not civill power of bodily life and death; nor Scepter, for they convey not Soveraigne or Legislative power over the Church, but stewardly and ministerial.

As ordinary keys open or close doors, these keys remit or retain sins, and pardon or censure those who have committed them. They are not to be used for the binding or loosing of oathes, or covenants, or contracts, or counsels, or laws; as if whatsoever oaths of allegiance, covenants of lease or marriage, &c. the Pope ratifieth or dissolveth on earth, should be ratified or dissolved in heaven.

But when used in the event of sin, they are effective in heaven and upon earth, in the conscience of the sinner and within the society of the church. The power to use these keys is given not to the clergy alone, nor to the Presbytery of a church, but to the Elders and the Believers, or to the Presbytery and the body of the church. According to Matthew 16, verse 19, Christ Himself gave the keys to Peter, who was Apostle, Elder, and Believer, and "stood in the roome and name of all such, as have received any part of the power of the Keys, whether Apostles or Elders, or Churches".

1. Ibid., p. 2.
2. Cotton, The Keyes, p. 3.
3. Ibid., p. 5.
other passages of Scripture also, it is evident that
the Presbyterie of each Church received, ... the power
belonging to their office: and in like sort each
Church or Congregation of professed Believers,
received that portion also of Church-power which
belonged to them. (1)

After pointing out four things which he found defective
in the customary explanation of the distribution of the keys,
Cotton classified the keys as being of two kinds: the Key of
Faith, and the Key of Order. The first of these keys, also
called the Key of Knowledge, is common to all believers, who,
having it, have

power by it to enter into the kingdom of heaven them­selves, and it may be, to open the doore to others,
to enter also. (2)

A faithfull soule knowing the Scriptures, and Christ
in them, receiveth Christ, and entreteth through him
into a state of grace through faith: and by the pro­fession of his faith, he entreteth also into the
fellowship of the Church (which is the kingdom of
heaven upon earth:) and by the same faith, as he
believeth to justification, so he maketh confession
to salvation, which is perfected in the kingdom of
glory... (3)

Believers holding the Key of Faith are not necessarily
members of a church. But the Key of Order is common only
to church members. This key Cotton defines as "the power
whereby every member of the Church walketh orderly himself,
according to his place in the Church, and helpeth his brethren
to walk orderly also". (4) It is in reality two keys, one of

1. Ibid., p. 5.
2. Ibid., p. 7.
4. Ibid.
liberty, and one of authority. All children of God are given freedom from "Satan, hell, bondage of sin, curse of the Morall Law, and service of the Ceremoniall Law", and freedom as sons of God and heirs of glory; but those who become members of a church have another, external, liberty, a liberty in ordering church affairs. This is their Key of Order. The other Key of Order, the key of authority, is given to the elders, or officers, of a church. They are "called to feed and rule the Church of God, as the Apostles had done before them".

As the health and safety of a nation depend upon the right ordering and balancing of the privileges of the people and the authority of the rulers, so likewise the welfare of a church. Cotton carefully outlined the powers accorded the Brethren and the Elders. There are seven liberties belonging to the members of a church. In the first place, they have the right to choose and to ordain their elders and their deacons. Secondly, they may "send forth one or more of their Elders, as the publick service of Christ and of the Church may require". That is, they themselves may choose the delegates who are to attend synods and other such meetings and consultations. Thirdly, they have the privilege of refusing church membership or admission to communion or baptism to those whom for just reason they judge unworthy. Fourthly, they have the

1. Ibid., p. 8.
2. Ibid., p. 10.
power of "inquiring, hearing, judging of publick scandals; so as to binde notorious offenders and impenitents under censure, and to forgive the repentant". This privilege, seriously questioned by all opponents of the New England Way, was vigorously supported by Cotton, both with citations from the New Testament, and with an example from civil law.

All judgement is not an act of authoritie or rule; for there is a judgement of discretion, by way of privilege, as well as of authoritie by way of sentence: That of discretion is common to all the Brethren, as well as that of authority belongeth to the Presbytery of that Church. In England, the Jury by their verdict, as well as the Judge by his sentence, doe both of them judge the same malefactor; yet in the Jury their verdict is but an act of their popular liberty: In the Judge it is an act of his judicall authoritie. (2)

He explained further, how the elders and the church members work together in the event of a problem of discipline within the church: the one examining the offender and his offence in private, preparing the case for the church-meeting, presenting it to the church, and giving prior and subsequent judgment upon it; the other listening to the report of the elders upon the case, giving their assent to the censure, and "rejecting the offender censured from their wonted Communion". This fourth privilege also extends to the censure of offensive elders. But "whether the Church hath power or libertie for proceeding to the utmost censure of their whole Presbytery, is a Question of more difficultie".  

1. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 15.
Cotton did not feel it was very probable that all the church members would stand in opposition to all the elders at any one time. If such an occasion did arise, the Presbytery could not be thrust out of the church, for excommunication can not be performed by church members apart from the elders.

As therefore the Presbytery cannot excommunicate the whole Church, (though Apostate) for they must tell the Church, and joyn with the Church in that Censure: so neither can the Church excommunicate the whole Presbytery, because they have not received from Christ an office of rule, without their Officers. (1)

However, the church is at liberty to withdraw from the Presbytery, and to establish themselves, if the civil authorities are willing, as another church.

In the event of serious dissension within a church, the church has the privilege of consulting the Synod. This is the fifth privilege. And the sixth is that mentioned above, the liberty of withdrawing "from the communion of those, whom they want authority to excommunicate". 2

For as they set up the Presbyterie, by professing their subjection to them in the Lord: so they avoid them by professed withdrawing their subjection from them according to God. (3)

The seventh privilege that church members enjoy is communion with other churches.

Communion we say: for it is a great Libertie, that no particular church standeth in subjection to another particular church, no, not to a Cathedrall church; but that all the Churches injoy mutuall brotherly communion amongst themselves... (4)

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1. Ibid., p. 16.
2. Ibid., p. 17.
4. Ibid.
Communion can be exercised in seven different ways. Worthy members of one church may participate in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper in another church. One church may, by letter, commend to the care of another church, any member "who by occasion of business, is for a time to reside amongst them", or any member who is "to take up his settled habitation in another church". ¹

And if the other church have no just cause to refuse him, they of his owne church do by those letters wholly dismisse him from themselves; whereupon the letters (for distinction sake) are called letters of dismission; which indeed doe not differ from the other, but in the durance of the recommendation, the one recommending him for a time, the other for ever. (2)

Thirdly, one church may ask advice of another in matters concerning which the second church is more fully informed. Fourthly, the churches may gather in Synod, each church choosing and sending delegates to take part in debates and in decisions on problems that are of concern to all. Fifthly, the churches may give and receive help, both material and spiritual, among themselves. Again, the churches may reprove one another in matters of public offence.

one Church hath liberty to admonish another, though they be both of them of equall authority; seeing one Church hath as much interest in another, as one Apostle in another. And if by the royall law of love, one Brother hath liberty to admonish his Brother in the same Church,...then by the same rule of brotherly love, and mutual watchfulnes, one Church hath power to admonish another, in faithfullnesse to the Lord, and unto them. (3)

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., p. 18.
And lastly, churches that are too large may divide, "as an Hive full of Bees swarmeth forth"; and people that wish, may move to another country and there form themselves into a church.

Though the Apostles be dead, whose office it was to plant, and gather, and multiply Churches; yet the work is not dead, but the same power of the keyes is left with the Churches in common, and with each particular Church for her part, according to their measure, to propagate and enlarge the Kingdom of Christ (as God shall give opportunity) throughout all generations. (2)

The powers accorded the elders are many. I present them in the order set down by Cotton. Those elders who are teachers and pastors have as their chief privilege and duty the preaching of the Word and the administering of the Sacraments. Private church members having 'extraordinary gifts of prophesie', and those who are in training for the ministry may also speak before the congregation: but no persons other than the ministers are to officiate at Baptisme and the Lord's Supper.  All the elders have power to call the church together whenever they deem it necessary. They are to examine those desiring church membership, and to ordain those persons whom the church members have chosen to be elders and deacons. They preside at church meetings, and so "open the doores of Speech and Silence in the Assembly".  They are expected to have prepared the business which is to be

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 21.
taken up by the church, having everything in order so that all things transacted before the Church, be carried along with most expedition and best edification. In which respect they have power to reject causless and disorderly complaints, as well as to propound and handle just complaints before the congregation. (1)

When the case of an offending member is being considered by the church, the elders have power to interpret the 'Law of Christ' with regard to the offence, and, if the church members approve, to give sentence. They have the privilege of dismissing the church and of pronouncing the benediction. They may privately rebuke church members who live irregular, indolent, or disreputable lives. They have authority to make decisions when in Synod. If the church members as a group become irreverent and profane, taking no heed to the Gospel which is preached to them, the elders, provided no help is given them by a Synod, have power to withdraw from the church, taking the ordinances with them, "and therewithall sadly to denounce the just judgment of God against them". 2

Yet with all these powers, the elders remain the servants of the church. Cotton closed this section of his polity with another of his simple yet illuminating similes.

The Elders to be both Servants and Rulers of the Church, may both of them stand well together. For their Rule is not lordly, as if they ruled of themselves, or for themselves, but stewardly and ministerial, as ruling the Church from Christ, and also from their call: and withall, ruling the Church for Christ; and for the Church, even for their spirituall everlasting good.

1. Ibid., p. 22.
2. Ibid., p. 23.
A Queen may call her servants, her Mariners, to pilot and conduct her over the Sea to such an Haven: yet they being called by her to such an office, shee must not rule them in steering their course, but must submit her self to be ruled by them, till they have brought her to her desired Haven. So is the case between the Church and her Elders. (1)

Cotton next considered the matter of the power and authority given to Synods. He found that there are three situations which justify the calling of a Synod. Because of internal dissension, a church may wish the concerted advice of several churches, believing that, together, their delegates and elders will be able to search out "the truth in an ordinary way of free disputation". 2 A second situation arises when one church, guilty of corruption in its doctrine and practice, fails to heed the warnings given it by neighbouring churches. Such a church may be brought to task before the representatives of all the churches, "that the offence may be orderly heard, and judged and removed". 3 In the third situation there is evidence of corruption in all the churches, and all agree to seek counsel together in assembly, that

so meeting and conferring together, (they) may renew their covenant with God, and conclude and determine upon a course, that may tend to the publike healing, and salvation of them all. (4)

Having thus determined that the assembly of delegates and elders in Synod is a valuable and a necessary part of church

2. Ibid., p. 24.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
Cotton proceeded to define the powers of such a gathering. A Synod, he said, has as much power as is necessary to obtain the ends for which it is assembled. It has power to advise, where advice is the thing sought: it has power to admonish, and even to withdraw communion from, a church which is proved corrupt: it has power to determine points of doctrine and discipline concerning which church members disagree. A Synod, properly called and properly ordered, is an ordinance of God.¹

As they meet to minister light and peace to such churches, as through want of light and peace lie in error (or doubt at least) and variance; so they have power by the grace of Christ, not only to give light and counsel in matter of Truth and Practice; but also to command and enjoin the things to be believed and done. (2)

As in the particular churches the church members have the power of liberty and the elders the power of authority, so in the Synod. The delegates are free to argue the questions in hand, to give assent to the decisions voiced by the elders, and to join with the latter in choosing and sending the messengers, and writing the letters that proclaim the findings of the Synod. On the other hand, the elders retain the power of authority, and may, provided they work in accordance with 'the Truth and Peace of the Gospel', and win the assent of the church delegates, make their conclusions binding upon the churches. But the Synod, delegates and

¹. Cotton, The Keyes, p. 23.
². Ibid., p. 25.
elders together, do not have the power to force upon the churches which they represent the practice of indifferent things: they may only insist upon those things which are necessary, and for which Christ gave command. And, contrary to the practice in England, they do not have the power of ordination and excommunication.

the administration of both these acts we should refer to the Presbytery of the severall Churches, whereto the person to be ordained is called, and whereof the person to bee excommunicate is a member: and both acts to bee performed in the presence, and with the consent of the severall Churches, to whom the matter appertaineth. (1)

Cotton closed his treatise with a long chapter explaining further the foundation upon which his entire polity was builded. The particular church, with its membership of true believers professing faith in Christ, and gathering together in one place every Lord's Day for the administration of the ordinances of God, is the Church Visible to which the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven has been given. The nature of this power is twofold: sovereign, and ministerial. To Christ belongs the sovereign power, for He is the head of the Church. He has established its laws and ordinances; He has fixed its pattern; He has prescribed the offices therein that must be filled, and defined the powers belonging to them; He has given the gifts necessary for the carrying out of church duties; and from His sovereign power comes that spiritual power which alone can effect the gathering

The good pleasure of the Father, the personall union of the humane nature with the eternall Son of God, his purchase of his Church with his own blood, and his deep humiliation of himselfe unto the death of the Crosse, have all of them obtained to him this his highest exaltation, to be head over all things unto the Church, and to injoy as king thereof this soveraigne power. (2)

Ministerial power is given directly to each church and to its elders and members, and, in case of scandal within a particular church, to the Synod which sits in judgment upon the error. Such power is delegated to these groups in the ways hitherto described. And although in the history of the Church it would seem to have been given by one group of Christians to another, by the Apostles to Bishops, and by Bishops to those whom they ordained, in truth it is given immediately by Christ into the hands of those who hold it.

When the church of a particular congregation walketh together in the truth and peace, the Brethren of the church are the first subject of church-liberty, and the Elders thereof of church-authority; and both of them together are the first subject of all church-power needfull to be exercised within themselves, whether in the election and ordination of officers, or in the censure of offenders in their own body. (3)

In case a particular Church be disturbed with error or scandal, and the same maintained by a faction amongst them. Now a Synod of Churches, or of their messengers, is the first subject of that power and authoritie, whereby error is judicially convinced and condemned, the truth searched out, and determined, and the way of truth and peace declared and imposed upon the Churches. (4)

2. Ibid., p. 30f.
3. Ibid., p. 33.
4. Ibid., p. 47.
It then follows that there can be no national church, nor any national church officers, holding an authority greater than that held by the particular church and its elders and members. Nor can there be any neighbouring church, nor even any Synod of churches having powers beyond those of the individual congregation. Each church is, in this way, independent.

But only in this way, only in the use of its ministerial power, is the particular church independent. In other ways it is dependent. It is dependent for all church power upon Christ, the head of the church. It is also dependent upon the State "in matters which concern the civill peace".¹ Of such matters Cotton designates four sorts: firstly, those which concern the disposal of "mens goods, or lands, lives, or liberties, tributes, customs, worldly honours, and inheritances";² secondly, those which effect the establishment of a religion pure in doctrine, worship, and government, or the reformation of corruption in any of these; thirdly, those which pertain to public spiritual administrations such as will "advance and help forward the publick good of Civill State according to God";³ and fourthly, those which involve persecution of the Church by the civil magistrate. With these matters, and with the corresponding relationship of the State to the Church, we shall be concerned in the following chapter.

In the event of its becoming corrupt in any way, the

¹. Cotton, The Keyes, p. 50.
². Ibid., p. 50.
³. Ibid., p. 51.
particular church loses its independence, falling subject "both to the admonition of any other Church, and to the determination and judicial sentence of a Synod for direction into a way of truth and peace". And even though at all times it maintains its independence of other churches, still

it is a safe, and wholesome, and holy Ordinance of Christ, for such particular Churches to join together in holy Covenant or communion, and consolation amongst themselves, to administer all their Church-affaires, (which are of weighty, and difficult and common concernment) not without common consultation and consent of other Churches about them. (2)

This consolation of churches, Cotton pointed out, facilitates the handling of problems such as the election and ordination of elders, the excommunication of persons of importance to the church, and the moving of ministers from one church to another. It also helps to "maintain brotherly love, and soundness of doctrine in Churches", and gives encouragement to those who are struggling to serve God through ministering to His people.

Realising that, in the Congregational way, the relationship of the particular church to the consociation of churches, and to the Synod is impossible of exact and detailed definition, Cotton tried to secure his position concerning the three with the following caution in which he re-emphasised the importance of the individual congregation:

Let Synods have their just authority in all Churches,

2. Ibid., p. 54.
3. Ibid., p. 55.
how pure soever, in determining such διακήρυξες, as are requisite for the edification of all Christ's Churches according to God. But in the Election and Ordination of Officers, and Censure of offenders, let it suffice the Churches consociate, to assist one another, with their counsell, and right hand of fellowship, when they see a particular Church use their liberty and power aright. But let them not put forth the power of their community, either to take such Church acts out of their hands, or to hinder them in their lawfull course, unless they see them (through ignorance or weaknesse) to abuse their liberty and authority in the Gospel. All the liberties of Churches were purchased to them by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus: and therefore neither may the Churches give them away, nor many Churches take them out of the hands of one. (1)

And, in the closing paragraph of The Keyes, in defence of the practice of placing church power into the hands of each church, rather than into the hands of a Synod of Presbyters, he wrote:

For a mother to bear her young daughter in her arms, and not to suffer it to go on its own feet, whilst it is in infancie, is kindly and comely: but when the Demessell is grown up to riper yeers, for the mother still to bear her in her arms, for fear of stumbling, it were an unnecessary burthen to the mother, and a reproach to the Virgin; Such is the case here: The communitie of Churches...is as the Mother; each particular Church is as the Daughter. (2)

Such was the outline and such the main emphases of Cotton's church polity, a polity which was the first fruit of English Puritanism, Presbyterianism, and Separatism transplanted to New England shores. Of this polity we can not claim Cotton to have been the author. Nor was he its only expositor. But he was certainly the first to clearly define it; and no doubt, left more than a trace of his own thought

2. Ibid., p. 58.
within the text of the several treatises which he prepared concerning it. Although there is no means by which to measure the particular contribution which Cotton made to the polity itself, it is possible to measure the importance of his work as an exponent of the Congregational way by an examination of the works of those who wrote in support of, or in opposition to, him.

C. Support and Opposition.

There is no question but that Cotton in his work on church polity had the support of all those in New England who were actively interested in the defining of the New England church way. As has been previously stated, his treatise, The Keyes, was unanimously accepted by the elders as the colony's standard text on polity for the years preceding the Synod of 1646; and the platform of church discipline which was drawn up by that Synod echoed phrase after phrase from his pen.¹ Thomas Hooker, whose extensive Survey of the Summe of Church-Discipline was published in 1648, sought and received help from Cotton in the preparation of his masterpiece. Richard Mather asked his approval of the manuscript of a treatise he had written in answer to the thirty-two questions sent the New England Elders by ministers.

¹. See Mather, Magnalia, V, A Platform of Church-Discipline. Note pp. 27, 36, etc. Expressions such as "To order the season of Speech and Silence", "As Bees, when the Hive is too full, issue out by Swarms..."
in England. And even though these and other elders wrote valuable treatises in defence of Congregational polity, Cotton's works continued to have a very wide appeal.

In England support was also given to Cotton and his work. Those who took care of the publishing of the treatises that were sent across the Atlantic were warm in their approval of the New England way as defined by the teacher of New Boston. Thomas Goodwin and Philip Nye we have already mentioned as the authors of the long preface to The Keyes, a preface in which they recommended the "Middle-way", the way which Cotton defined and which they accepted for their own, to English Independents. These two men, and others of the group that signed their names to the famous Apologetical Narration, were well known as having a deep interest in all treatises on church polity coming from the colonies. In his Antapologia, or Answer to the Apologetical Narration, Thomas Edwards said of them:

But supposing you had wholly forborne printing any thing of your own, you might well have done it out of policie, and yet your way not have suffered by it; so many books, and little Pamphlets having been printed, and reprinted since this Parliament for the Church-way, as amounts to the number (I thinke) of almost one hundred: And I aske of you, whether one or more of you, have not had a hand in perusing and examining some books of others, or in counselling and consenting to the printing of them, (especially some books from out of New-England, and particularly of Mr. Cottons). (2)

In the Epistle to the Reader which serves as an introduction

2. P. 220.
to The Way of the Churches of Christ in New England, Nathanael Homes and his assistant, possibly a brother, listed The Keyes as one of the important treatises on the Independent way. Concerning the treatise which they then had in their hands, they went on to say:

And wee doe in this Epistle certifie our assent thereunto, saving that wee doe not yet fully close with some expressions passim in the Book, before some of which wee minded it to note a in the Margin. (1)

Here is a Booke so grave and solid, that it cannot be justly despised by ingenuous learned men. So full of necessary cases and truths, that it cannot but bee desired of those that would be knowing men. And so milde and gentle, that it cannot but be causely quarrelled, if quarrelled by Cholerick men. Had wee not been perswaded, that it would prove a wellcome Tract on all hands, for the reasons afore intimated, wee could with our injoyment of the written Copie, well have saved this great travell. (2)

Upon examination, the passages marked with the asterisk are found to be few in number and for the most part concerned with New Testament passages used to substantiate Cotton’s theories of Baptism. Nathanael Homes also wrote the Pacificatory Epistle which appears in Cotton’s Way of Congregational Churches Cleared.

Among the several men who returned from New England to work among English Independents, was Thomas Welde, the first minister of the church in Roxbury. Welde, while in New England; had written a short account of the churches there to someone in England desiring such information, and his

1. P. A 2 verso.
2. Ibid., p. A 3 verso.
manuscript was published in London in 1645, and again in 1647. This pamphlet, only eighteen pages in length, contains ten or more references to Cotton's treatise, *The Way of the Churches of Christ in New England*; and Welde seems to have taken Cotton's explanations of the church covenant, church censures, and the communion of churches as authoritative. In one instance he wrote that he quoted from "Mr. Cotton's late booke of the way of the Churches in New-England, that this narration might be compleat".1

In 1658, John Owen, mentioned earlier as having been won to Congregationalism by the power of Cotton's *Keyes*, published a pamphlet written by Cotton just before his death as a defence of himself against charges of self-contradiction brought by Daniel Cawdrey. With this pamphlet, Owen also published an answer of his own to a treatise by Cawdrey on the nature of schism, and in this answer he again affirmed his dependence upon Cotton for insight into the truths of the Congregational way. Since Owen had become the Dean of Christ Church College, and the Vice Chancellor of Oxford, and was an important representative at the Congregational Synod which met at the Savoy in 1658, his recommendation of Cotton's treatise and of the polity it described must have considerably increased the number of those reading the works of the New England Divine.

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A passing reference to The Keyes in a treatise by W. Bartlet entitled *A Model of The Primitive Congregational way*,\(^1\) indicates that still another English minister, one who appears to have been an excellent scholar, gave manifest support to the New England way as defined by Cotton. But, for the most part, those who wrote in behalf of Congregationalism, both in England and in New England, did not acknowledge their indebtedness to the men whose works they studied; and it is necessary to look at the treatises of those who wrote in opposition to Cotton before judgment of his importance can be made.

One of the first of those to write against the New England way was William Rathband, who, in 1644, published *A Briefe Narration of Some Church Courses Held in Opinion and Practise in the Churches lately erected in New England*. In this treatise Rathband attempted to set down "such things onely or for the most part, wherein there lies some difference betweene them and us, or other the best Reformed Churches".\(^2\) He used as one of his chief sources of information a document which he called *Cott. Cat.* and which he described as "that Treatise printed under Mr. Cottons name of Church constitution by way of question and answer".\(^3\) The first peculiarity in the church polity of New England upon which he commented was

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1. See p. 49.
2. P. A 3 recto.
the conviction that the visible church of Christ is the particular church. He could not agree that so small a number as seven, eight, or nine persons should hold the power of censure in their hands, and he argued that such a small congregation could not maintain the number of church officers necessary for the regular administration of the ordinances. In criticism of Cotton's definition of the particular church, he said that no minimum number of members had been set nor had any mention been made of church officers. And he asked:

But how can this be a compleat organickall body, fitted for exercise of all functions of the body, where there are not some to be tongues and eyes as well as others to be hands and feet thereto... (1)

He questioned the practicability of the requirement that all church members be sincere believers, and to the suggestion that such members should be of one mind and of one heart he replied:

This is very good, & comfortable, when it may be had, but suppose some differ from us in opinion, in points inferior? may they not be admitted and tollerated in that, so long as they be not turbulent or infectious? (2)

He protested against the giving of so much power to church members, holding that Christ had commissioned only the ministers to preach, and that in all other matters such as admission of members, admonition, excommunication, and ordination, the firm leadership of church officers was necessary. 3

1. Rathband, A Briefe Narration, p. 5.
2. Ibid., p. 11.
3. Ibid., p. 23f.
He also was convinced that power to make rules conducive to the better ordering of the church and its worship should be allowed to the church, and he found the New England Divines guilty of denying this but at the same time taking "libertie to appoint some humane observances, or which is worse, to impose them on mens consciences for divine Ordinances".¹

Other points on which Rathband disagreed with Cotton include the admission of none but church members to the Sacraments, the consociation of churches, the voluntary support of ministers and the poor, the independence of each congregation, and the practice of withdrawing from communion with any church that is corrupt.² These were considered in precisely the same order as Cotton had presented them in The True Constitution; and although criticisms of other customs and comments upon other sources are included in the treatise, the general outline indicates a careful study of Cotton's earliest outline of polity.

In 1645 there was published a ninety page treatise, the full title of which was

Vindiciae Clavium: Or, A Vindication of the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven into the Hands of the Right Owners. Being some Animadversions upon a Tract of Mr. J.C. called 'The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven'; as also upon another Tract of his called 'The Way of the Churches of New England': Manifesting, 1. The Weakness of his Proofs; 2. The Contradictions to himself and others; 3. The Middle-Way - so called - of Independents, to be the Extreme or By-Way of the Brownists.

1. Rathband, A Briefe Narration, p. 28.
2. Ibid., pp. 35, 37, 45, 47, 48.
The author of this vainglorious work identified himself only as 'an Earnest Wellwisher of the Truth'. He declared that

Never was there so little charity, so much scorn and contempt of all not in their own way, as is found in them that profess themselves the only people, that have found the way of Christ... (1)

Yet throughout the treatise he spoke with scorn of those in New England who could not agree among themselves, and of those in England who were giving support, yet not full support, to the work of a man whom they did not know. And in open contempt he wrote:

I pray, Sir, tell us next time you write over, how many churches have you multiplied amongst the Indians in New England? Not one, that I ever heard of. You have divided churches, indeed, from Old England; but propagated none. And our 'Brethren' at home, how many churches have they divided and distracted since their return, but have multiplied none! If some new Teachers arise in New England and gather - or rather steal - some members out of every of your congregations, would you call this 'multiplication of churches'; or rather division? (2)

But despite the tone of the author's comments, Vindiciae Clavium is of importance. It is concerned with the problems of polity uppermost in the author's mind after a study of two of Cotton's treatises, and so gives some indication of the points of contention which Cotton's publications raised in the minds of English Presbyterians. The definition of the Church Visible as the particular church rather than the church universal is roundly criticised. The practice of having a minister ordained for service in only one particular

1. Vindiciae Clavium, p. 27.
2. Ibid., p. 44.
church, and forbidding him recognition as a minister in all other churches is condemned. Disapproval is shown of the manner in which church members are confined to services within their own churches except when granted letters of recommendation, thus being refused the freedom of worshipping where they please. And the weaknesses inherent in Cotton’s explanation of the powers granted to Synods and to church members and elders are considered. The treatise is also important because it reveals an eagerness on the part of the author to attack Cotton and the New England church polity which could only have been the result of an awareness of the influence that Cotton’s treatises were having upon the English people. One who makes ready an attack only does so when he has a foeman worthy of his steel.

A third treatise written with a view to the discrediting of the work of Cotton was published in 1651 as the first of three discourses included under the title The Inconsistencie of the Independent way. It was the work of Daniel Cawdrey, who had been a member of the Westminster Assembly and a minister at Martin’s in the Fields, and it was given the separate title of Vindiciae Vindiciarum because, as the name suggests, it was written as a vindication of Vindiciae Clavium, as well as a refutation of The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared, the treatise in which Cotton undertook to clear himself of the charges laid against him by 'an Earnest
Wellwisher of the Truth'.

In his Epistle to the Dissenting Brethren, Cawdrey explained that after waiting in vain for Mr. Baillie and Mr. Rutherford to publish their replies to Cotton's last treatise on the New England way, he finally wrote his own reply for

I perceived that this and other Books of that Way published, were highly esteemed as unanswered, and very taking with weak and unsetled mindes, to the disturbance of the peace of the Church. (1)

Before starting the main body of his book, which is a meticulous examination of the words and phrases used by Cotton in his answer to Vindiciæ Clavium, Cawdrey also presented the three arguments which had been effective in persuading him that the New England way "is not the way of Christ". 2 His first argument was that he had found inconsistencies between the Scriptures and the way as explained in sundry treatises. He had also discovered, he claimed, contradictions within the explanations of church polity given by New England Divines, 3 and those which had been gleaned from The Keyes, The Way, and The Way Cleared he arranged in parallel columns in a few pages at the close of his essay. Twenty-one such contradictions are there listed, and in answer to them Cotton wrote the treatise which was mentioned earlier as being published posthumously by John Owen.

1. P. A 2 recto.
3. Ibid.
Cawdrey's second argument was that those Congregational principles which differ from the Presbyterian polity lead "to separation, and to the worst of Schism". He gave, as example, six dangerous tenets: that the Church Visible is the particular congregation, that the power of the Keys is given each church, that the church may choose and ordain its own officers, that a minister is minister only to his own congregation, that churches may be gathered from churches in England, and that only church members "have right to Ordinances". The third argument was derived from

The many mischievous consequences of those principles, and sad effects, of the practice of the Independent way, in Old England, fully manifested in these few last years. (3)

Of these consequences, Cawdrey listed the following: the rise of sectaries and the securing of power therein by Romanism, the condemnation of the English ministry as Antichristian because of the Independents' renunciation of former ordination, the liberty taken by men and women to hear any speaker regardless of lack of ordination, the impossibility of correcting an unjust censure because power of censure lies in the hands of the church members, the dependence of the minister upon the congregation, the fall of many into Anabaptism, Familism, and Rantism, and the bitterness of feeling shown by followers of the new way to others differing in opinion. (4)

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., p. A 3 verso.
3. Ibid., p. A 3 verso and A 4 recto.
4. Ibid., p. A 4 following.
The remaining pages of Cawdrey's diatribe are too niggling to be deserving of attention. He concluded his treatise on the same note with which he began, insisting on the seriousness of Cotton's self-contradictions.

And I can sincerely profess, I consulted with none, or very few books of this controversie, but comparing your books one with another, my own reason and judgement suggested to me those contradictions in them, that left me altogether unsatisfied in your way, and at this day, I am left so still... (1)

And the importance of all his work rests mainly in the fact that, like Vindiciae Clavium, it emphasises the points of contention, and indicates the influence of John Cotton. Although the suggestion is not made by any students of the seventeenth century whose volumes I have read, it seems evident to me that Cawdrey was the earnest wellwisher responsible for Vindiciae Clavium. In the opening of his third section he wrote:

I now expected, you should have gone on, with Vind. Clav. and have vindicated your book and self, from those other many wickednesses and contradictions, charged (I still think) justly upon you: But you fairly (if you doe not rather in way of Revenge,) shake hands with me, or rather slightly shake me off, and never meet again. (2)

So the importance of the one tract is the importance of the other, and together they give us the reaction of a successful English Divine to the writings of the Teacher of Boston.

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1. Ibid., p. 39.
2. Ibid., p. 37. The whole section concerns Cotton's failure to consider more of Vindiciae Clavium in his reply, and Cawdrey mentions himself over and over again.
Two other treatises in which opposition to Cotton was strongly expressed came from the pen of Robert Baillie, mentioned previously as a minister at Glasgow, and one of the Scottish representatives at the Westminster Assembly. Of the first of these, A Dissasive from the Errours of the Time, published in 1645, Cotton Mather wrote:

However, the Report given of Mr. Cotton...by one Baily, a Scotchman, in a most scandalous Pamphlet, called, A Dissasive, written to cast an Odium on the churches of New England, by vilifying him, that was one of their most eminent Servants, are most horrid Injuries... (1)

The treatise actually contains a study of Brownism and Chiliasm, as well as its chapters on the Independents, but the latter form the larger part of the volume, and among the followers of the Independent way therein mentioned, Cotton bears the brunt of Baillie's attack. After giving a brief history of the rise of Independency in New England, Holland, and London, Baillie proceeded to list the many tenets or 'errours' which the Independents were known to affirm. He declared that these errors are for the most part the errors of the Brownists.

Of their owne accord the Independents take upon them openly the halfe of the thing we alledge, professing themselves to lie halfway off us, towards Brownisme, avowing the truth to consist in this their middle way: But whosoever considers better of the matter, will find, that however in some things they incline to a middle way; yet in the chiefe and most, they come up close to the outmost line of Brownisme, and in many things doe expatiate...much beyond it... (2)

2. Baillie, A Dissasive, p. 103.
Like the Brownists, they support separation from the churches of England, the requirement that church members be 'saints', the use of a church covenant as the basis for government, the placing of power into the hands of the ordinary church members, the restriction placed upon the size of a church, voluntary contribution to church support, the banishing of marriage from the church to the 'town-house', and differences in customs of worship.¹

Chief among the errors "whereby they have disturb'd the Church",² are those which concern church membership and the powers granted to the particular church; and to a study of these Baillie devoted three chapters. He held that the requirements for church membership set by the Independents were far too high, and that great danger lies in the practise of giving power to "every member of the Church to keep out all others with whom they are not satisfied in the truth of their grace".³ The principle question with regard to membership is, he claimed, "whether it be necessary to separate from a Church, wherein wee get no satisfaction of the true grace of every Member at their first admission".⁴ And arguing from Scripture and from experience which would indicate that no church has ever been composed entirely of saints, he concluded that such separation cannot be justified. With care he con-

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1. Ibid., Chapter VI.
2. Ibid., p. 154.
3. Ibid., p. 156.
4. Ibid., p. 156, margin.
sidered each of Cotton's arguments in favour of true grace as a necessary qualification for church membership, saying:

we will only consider what is brought by Mr. Cotton in his way of the Churches; for there, the best of the Brownists arguments are brought in the greatest lustre and strength which Mr. Cotton thought meet to put upon them. Also what there is brought by Mr. Cotton, is acknowledged by our Brethren as their judgement... (1)

He discredited each of the arguments in turn, finding that not one of them spoke to the problem of separation from a church, already formed, in which members are not true believers, and that those taken from Scripture had been misapplied. Regardless of theory, he said, the churches of New England number hypocrites among their members and have excluded from membership many of those who will be saved.

...in none of (the Reformed Churches) these hard conditions of satisfactory evidences of regeneration before persons can be admitted members, were ever so much as required; and among the Independents where these conditions have been required, they were never found, nor possibly can be found as they doe require them. (2)

In his chapter Concerning the right of Prophecying, Baillie admitted that in New England the practice of permitting members of the congregation to speak in public was evidently more controlled than was the case in Holland and in London.

Mr Cotton and his Brethren in New-England, did follow for a long time the Brownists in this practise; yet of late feeling as it would seem, the great inconvenience of this liberty of prophecyng, they are either gone or going from it; for in their two last books, The way of their Churches, and the Keyes, they

1. Ibid., p. 163.
2. Ibid., p. 173f.
not only passe this popular Prophesying in silence, but also do evert the chiefe grounds whereupon before they did build it. (1)

And in his discussion of the many powers granted by Independents to church members, a discussion in which he indicated his disapproval of many of the things permitted in New England, he made it clear that Cotton and others in the Bay Colony were themselves questioning the practice of giving greater power to the members than to the elders.

Mr Cotton and some others feeling to their small contentment the great and intolerable power of the people over the Eldership, have begun to fall from Ainsworth to Johnson, and to plead the Authority of the Eldership above the Brotherhood, and the necessity of their subjection by divine right to the Elders as to their Superiours; yet to salve all, and to please both parties, he maketh the concurrence of the Eldership and Brotherhood to be both necessary, to be both sine quo non: whatever Authority he gives to the Eldership, he maketh it all vain and frustaneous without the consent of the people: and notwithstanding all the obedience and subjection he putteth upon the people, yet he giveth to them such a power of Liberty, that their concurrence with the Eldership in every act of power is not only necessary but authoritative. (2)

This realisation on Baillie's part of the changing and developing polity of New England Independency is probably his most valuable contribution to a knowledge of the New England church way. Although he was intolerant of apparent inconsistencies, and of the 'many Schole distinctions' used by Cotton in his disputations, although he was misinformed concerning many of the facts of colonial history and sometimes judged the New England Independents for the very errors which

2. Ibid., p. 110. See also p. 181ff.
they themselves were in process of condemning, and although his own arguments seem more often to have been guided by prejudice than by sound reasoning, he none the less revealed quite clearly the struggle which Cotton and others were having in New England to establish a truly 'Middle-way' in the matter of delegation of church power. And again and again he pointed out the influence of the man John Cotton upon the continued growth of Independency in England and in New England.

...when the yoke of Episcopal persecution in England became so heavy on the necks of the most of the godly, that many thousands of them did flee away, and Master Cotton among the rest, to joyn themselves to these American Churches. Here it was when that new way began first to be dangerous to the rest of the world. For Master Cotton, a man of very excellent parts... became the great instrument of drawing to it, not only the thousands of those who left England, but also by his Letters to his friends who abode in their Countrey, made it become lovely to many who never before had appeared in the least degree of affection toward it. (1)

Master Cotton (was), if not the Author, yet the greatest promoter and patron of Independency. (2)

Baillie's second treatise in opposition to Cotton was published in 1655 as A Dissuasive from the Errors of the Times Vindicated from the Exceptions of Mr Cotton and Mr Tombes. In this treatise he again covered the ground over which he had gone in his earlier work, adding a detail here and there, and pointing out the strengths and the weaknesses of The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared, Cotton's refutation of

1. Baillie, 'A Dissuasive, pp. 55, 56.
2. Ibid., p. 58.
the Dissuasive. In a four page postscript he also commented upon Cotton’s treatise Of the Holinesse of Church-members, a further answer from the New England Divine to the writings of Baillie and of Rutherfurd. Except as the last in a series of published refutations, the vindication is of little importance. Baillie’s final comment upon New England is, however, interesting.

...what ever good has been or shall be in New England, I take it to have another root then that of Independency: yea, if that weed were plucked up from among them, I am so charitable as to hope that their good fruits would quickly much increase, and their evil diminish. (1)

Samuel Rutherfurd, the well-known Professor of Divinity at St. Andrews, was the author of two more treatises which expressed vigorous opposition to the New England way. In his earlier work, published in 1644 and bearing the title The Due right of Presbyteries or, A Peaceable Plea for the Government of the Church of Scotland, Rutherfurd made constant use of Cotton’s Way of the Churches of Christ in New England. He reproduced on his first page the title page of Cotton’s treatise, he divided his chapters and sections as did Cotton, and he quoted freely from The Way in order to give direction to his criticism.

Rutherfurd’s manner of handling his material reveals exhaustive research and the trained mind of a competent scholar. Starting from a statement of polity taken directly from The Way,

1. Baillie, A Dissuasive...Vindicated, p. 51.
he moved from one leading question to another, pointing out matters that required consideration and drawing conclusions consistent with his understanding of the Scriptures, of the Church Fathers, and of the outstanding men of the Continental and the English Reformations. Following a thorough study of one statement, he turned his attention to another, sometimes finding in the works of Independent Divines other than Cotton, material for further controversy, but always returning to that section of The Way next in order to the one which he had last considered. So he went from point to point in Cotton's outline of church polity, weighing each and every suggestion concerning the organisation and the government of a congregation.

It is difficult to tell what Rutherfurd judged to be the principal errors of the New England way. Like the other men whose works we have examined he took exception to Cotton's definition of the Visible Church, to the idea of a church covenant, to the requirements for church membership imposed upon the colonists, to the handling of censures by the members of the particular church, and to the communion of churches as described in The Way. Like all Presbyterians he stressed the importance of the Presbytery and the authority of the Synod. But he made no list of dangerous tenets, he expressed no deep-seated personal prejudice against any of the Congrega-

1. Rutherfurd, Due Right of Presbyteries, pp. 1ff, 33ff, 73ff, 83ff, 241ff, 266ff, etc.
tional procedures, he condemned one thing no more than another. He made a straightforward, objective, thorough criticism, from the point of view of a convinced and fair-minded Presbyterian. Of his purpose in making such a close analysis Rutherfurd wrote:

But I heartily desire not to appear as an adversary to the holy, revered, and learned Brethren who are sufferers for the truth, for there be wide marches betwixt striving, and disputing. Why should we strive? for we be Brethren, the Sonnes of one father, the born Citizens of one mother Jerusalem. To dispute is not to contend. We strive as we are carnall, we dispute as we are men, we war from our lusts, we dispute from diversity of star-light, and day-light. (1)

And he described his opponents not as 'Ringleaders' and 'Seducers', but as sailors who, deceived by the wind, and lacking a knowledge of the sea, strive to keep a straight course and miss the harbour.

Unlike Baillie, Rutherfurd said nothing about Cotton himself. He was intent upon criticising the work and not the man. He referred to Cotton as 'the Author' or 'our Author', and only indirectly, in the letter To the Reader, did he ascribe to him a position of influence.

It is a great evil under the Sun, and the sickness of mens vanity, that the name of holy men should be a web to make garments of for new opinions, but the errors of holy men have no whitenesse, nor holiness from men. And it is a wrong that mens praise should be truths prejudice, and mens gaine, truths losse. (3)

Rutherfurd's second treatise, A Survey of the Survey of

1. Rutherfurd, Due Right of Presbyteries, A 3 verso f.
2. Baillie, A Dissvasive, pp. 56, 58.
that Summe of Church-Discipline Penned by Mr. Thomas Hooker, was published in 1658. Although written in direct refutation of Hooker's great work, it contains many references to The Keyes and The Way, and is a further indication of the importance which Rutherfurd attached to these two works as delineations of New England church polity. The problems of church organisation and government argued in The Due Right of Presbyteries are again considered, and the positions taken in the earlier volume are vindicated.

Although Baillie feared that, through the work of ardent Independents, Cotton's Keyes would be accepted by Voetius, a Calvinist, and a professor at Utrecht, "as consonant to truth, and the discipline of Holland", 1 Cotton's treatises won disapproval at Utrecht, and were severely criticised in a book written by "one of the most famous divines, who appeared in Holland in the XVIIth century", 2 John Hoornbeek, Professor of Divinity. This volume De Independentismo, Epistola. Cum Independentium, seu Congregationalium in Anglia, nuper edita Confessione, published in 1661, contains at least thirty-seven carefully-noted references to writings of Cotton's which Hoornbeek clearly had read and among which are included The Keyes, The Way, Singing of Psalms, The First Epistle of John, and an introductory letter to one of John Norton's

treatises. Each reference is accompanied by a quotation or by a brief résumé of Cotton's position concerning the matter under discussion, and in the compass of his study of Independency, Hoornbeek considers the name given the group, the organisation of congregations, the power granted the members, the elders, and the synods, the requirements for church membership, the administering of the ordinances and the ordering of the service of worship, and the methods of censure.¹

A quotation from another treatise by Hoornbeek, Summa Controversiarum Religionis, has been used above to indicate the Dutch theologian's dependence upon Robert Baillie's treatises for his knowledge of Cotton's life and his work in New England.² In that same volume, Hoornbeek wrote:

In Belgio nostro Ecclesia Anglica Roterdamensis hactenus fuerat sub ordine presbyteriali, cum nostra Belgica, usque ad adventum Hugonis Petri, qui Cottoni, ut creditur, litteris ex nova Anglia instructus, illam formavit ad typum Independentiam, sed quam ipse non diu post deseruit, etque confluxit quoque in Novam Angliam. (3)

It is evident then, that be believed Cotton to have been responsible for the development of Independency in at least

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¹ Hoornbeek, De Independentismo, pp. 8f, 35f, 47f, 136f, 139, 142, 147ff, 156, 185ff, 241, 251, 258ff, 278, 296, 305, 311f, 321ff, etc.
² See above, p. 139.
³ P. 177. In our Belgium, the English Church of Rotterdam had thus far been of the Presbyterian way, with our Belgian Church, until the arrival of Hugo Peter, who, it is believed, instructed by letters of Cotton from New England, organised it according to the Independent pattern; but not long after he gave it up and also joined the group in New England.
one church in Holland. In *De Independentismo* he accepted
the judgment of G. Hornius, another Dutch scholar, who
conferred upon Cotton the questionable (in his mind) honour
of being John Robinson's complement and perfecter.¹ Hoorn-
beek also said of Cotton that he was a man of excellent
judgment.² And so we may conclude that like other
adversaries, Hoornbeek held Cotton in high esteem, and judged
him, because of his treatises and his influence upon English
Divines, deserving of strenuous opposition.

The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared, and Of the
Holiness of Church-Members have been mentioned as the two
treatises which Cotton wrote in refutation of the works of
his principal opponents. In the first of these works, he
summarised the points of difference between Presbyterianism
and the New England way as follows:

For two things chiefly there be wherein such as are
for a Congregational way, do seem to differ from
Presbyterians: 1. In the matter of their churches;
they would have none allowed but visible Saints.
2. In the exercise of Church-censure, they leave that
power to the Elders and Brethren of the same Church
whereof the delinquent is a member. (3)

With regard to the first difference, Cotton continued to hold
that anyone wishing to become a member of a particular con-
gregation must first be examined by the elders of the church
so that "if any of them be found ignorant, and graceles, or

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1. P. 35f: *Atque originem Independentium retulit quoque ad
Joh. Robinsonum; uti ejus complementum & ultimam quasi
manum assignavit Johanni Cottono.*
2. P. 136. *Cottonus, eximii judicii vir...*
scandalous, he may not be presently presented to the Church, till these evils were removed. Following such examination, the applicant must appear before the church, making confession of sin and profession of faith, after which, testimonies in his behalf are given by friends, and, if no objections are raised, the vote is cast and he is received into membership. Cotton acknowledged that everyone so received is not a true believer, and that some who are saved are not members of a church. But in support of the restrictions he argued:

He that in shooting aimeth at the top of a mountain, though he do not always reach it, yet he shall shoot higher, than he that aimeth at a molehill: so they that aim at receiving no members into the Church, but such as in judgement of charity are Saints, and faithfull brethren; they shall keep their Churches more pure, then they that indifferently accept carnall persons... (2)

Representative of his opponents' point of view is this statement of Rutherfurd's:

We...do teach, that the scandalously wicked are to be cast out of the Church by excommunication, and these of approved piety are undoubtedly members of the visible Church, so these of the middle sort are to be acknowledged members of the Church, though the Church have not a positive certainty of the judgement of charity, that they are regenerated, so they be known 1. To be Baptized. 2. That they be free of grosse scandals. 3. And professe that they be willing hearers of the Doctrine of the Gospell. Such a profession, as giveth evidences to the positive certainty of the judgement of charity, of sound conversion, is not required to make and constitute a true visible Church.

(3)

2. Cotton, Of the Holinesse of Church Members, p. 44.
Surely, they said, Christ calls everyone into the fellowship of the visible church, giving all people into the care of pastors and teachers that they may be converted. Only through the ministry can sinners become regenerate. How then can church membership be restricted to those who are already saved?

In explanation of the Congregational position on matters of censure, Cotton returned again and again to the proposition that is basic in Congregational polity: namely, that

the Church which Christ in his Gospel hath instituted, and to which he hath committed the keys of his kingdom, the power of binding and loosing, the tables and seals of the Covenant, the Officers and censures of his Church, the administration of all his publick Worship and Ordinances, is...a particular visible Church. (1)

For the opposition Rutherfurd replied:

The invisible and not the visible Church is the principal, prime, and onely proper subject, with whom the covenant of grace is made, to whom all the promises doe belong, and to whom all Titles, Stiles, Properties and privileg'd of speciall note, in the Mediator doe belong. If our reverend Brethren would be pleased to see this, they would forsake their Doctrine of a visible constituted Church, of separation, of popular government, of independency, of parochial Churches, which they conceive to be the only visible Churches under the New Testament. (2)

There is an authoritative power in Synods, whereby they may and doe command in the Lord the visible Churches, in their bounds; the whole Churches are subject to the ordinance and decree of the Church... (3)

Although several people undertook to show how small was

2. Rutherfurd, The Due Right of Presbyteries, p. 244.
3. Ibid., p. 336 (the second page of that number in the book).
the difference between the New England way and Presbyterianism, for Cotton and his opponents no compromise was possible: they differed on a fundamental point of polity, the definition of the visible church. Because of political and geographical circumstance, neither side could afford to forfeit its premise. And indeed, for each its premise remained its particular strength.

The polity which Cotton defined was the inevitable outcome of the thought and experience of those Puritans and Pilgrims who were forced to leave England for New England shores. As an active and capable member of this group of men Cotton made his contribution to its content. But his great importance as a churchman rests in his method of handling the material which lay ready to his grasp. He clearly and succinctly interpreted the Congregational way to the world, eliciting response from able and outstanding men. To that response he made firm reply, and, in the words of Cotton Mather, "turned the Books which his Adversaries had written against him into a Crown".

1. Herle, The Independency on Scriptures, p. A 1 verso: "for the difference between us and our brethren that are for Independency, 'tis nothing so great as you seemed to conceive it...etc." The English Presbyterian and Independent Reconciled. Setting forth the small ground of Difference between them Both...by an English Gentleman. London, 1651.
2. Mather, Magnalia, III, p. 29.
CHAPTER V.

CHURCH AND STATE.

The name Patriarch of the Massachusetts Theocracy was given to John Cotton by those who, in the early part of this century, erected a memorial to him in the First Church of Boston. This public recognition of the part which Cotton played in the early government of the Bay Colony draws attention to the problem which, in the seventeenth century, was beginning to come to the fore, the problem of the relationship of Church and State.

As Puritans, the men who fled English shores and crossed the North Atlantic to found a colony on the new continent, were outspoken in their objection to the dominance of the State over the Church. Apart from wanting to build their homes in a land where it was possible to worship God and to rule their churches in the way that they thought right, they desired to organise a government in which both citizens and magistrates should work together to bring about the Kingdom of God upon earth. To accomplish the 'work of the Lord' was the goal which they set themselves. And they were convinced that there was only one way in which this could be done. They must establish a commonwealth based upon the eternal laws of God as revealed in the Bible, and defined as a covenant between rulers and ruled similar to the covenant which God had made with Abraham.

In his excellent chapter in The New England Mind in which

1. Erected October 10, 1907, on the 274th Anniversary of Cotton’s installation as teacher of the church.
he describes the idea of the social covenant as held by the New England Puritans, Miller writes:

"To Puritan thinking, limitation of tyrants and the protection of unalienable rights were not the end-all and be-all of the state; it had a positive as well as a negative function, and the covenant theology endeavoured to designate both with equal clarity. Puritan theorists were not yet prepared to see the state as wholly secular, divorced from the church, unconcerned with righteousness; they would have won nothing worthwhile by proving that voluntarism might flourish in earthly covenants if the covenants were devoted to none but earthly ends. Therefore, after establishing society upon a covenant, with rights and equitable terms, they were obliged not to leave it to itself, but to identify the covenant of the people with the Covenant of Grace, to insert the terms of salvation into the political incorporation and to unite the duties of civil obedience with the duties of Christian worship. (1)

In so far as the early colonists of Massachusetts held the social and the religious covenants to be identical, and agreed that the magistrates and the clergy were agents of God, the government which they developed might be said to have been a theocracy. Certainly it was an attempt to form a society as nearly like the commonwealth of the Hebrew people as possible; and the pattern which was followed by that of the Old Testament. However, the very definition of the visible church in the Congregational way precluded government by the clergy, and in the Massachusetts Bay Colony the ministers never held supreme power. 2 Those who did hold office in the civil government, although church members and close friends of the church elders,  

2. Ellis, The Puritan Age in Massachusetts, says: "There is no denying the fact that the influence of the clergy was very great, though not supreme." See chapter V for a discussion of the Biblical Commonwealth, and the 'so-called Massachusetts Theocracy.'
claimed their powers as rulers on the basis of the charter granted them by the King; and when they finally agreed to accept a body of laws for the governing of the colony these men rejected Cotton's *Moses his Judicialia* in favour of a Breviate of the Liberties drawn up by Nathaniel Ward, also a minister but "previously a student and practitioner of the common law."¹ And from the very beginning of the colony the freemen and those who could not be freemen because they were not members of any church, sought for and obtained more voice in the government than either the legislators or the elders who advised them thought consistent with the type of government which they wished to set up.²

But the colonists themselves, or at least those among them who had decided to make the adventure because of religious convictions, were persuaded that theocracy was the kind of government most suited to their ideals and their needs. They believed that "the civil power should be guided in its exercise by religion and by religious ordinances:"³ they made and long retained the law that all magistrates and all voting members of the community must be church members, and they required that all others be obedient to civil command.

Although Cotton did not reach New England shores until three years after the Massachusetts Bay Colony had been settled, and although by the time of his arrival the law regarding church membership had been enacted, he may still have been chiefly responsible for advancing the idea of a theocracy. Cotton

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1. Ellis, op. cit., p. 197
2. See above, Chapter II, pp. 76 ff.
3. Ellis, p. 198
Mather, in his eagerness to credit his grandfather with
great influence in civil affairs, wrote:

...inasmuch as very much of an Athenian Democracy, was
in the Mould of the Government, by the Royal Charter,
which was then acted upon, Mr. Cotton effectually
recommended it unto them, that none should be Electors,
or Elected therein, except such as were visible Subjects
in our Churches. In these, and many other ways, he pro-
pounded unto them, an Endeavour after a Theocracy, as near
as might be, to that which was the Glory of Israel, the
peculiar People. (1)

Without question, Mather was wrong concerning the
matter of church membership for the electors and the elected:
examination of the Massachusetts Court records proves the
requirement to have been made earlier. But his statement that
Cotton (propounded unto them, an Endeavour after a Theocracy)'
may have foundation in fact. John Norton, previously referred
to as Cotton's successor at the Boston church, and as the author
of the biographical sketch Abel being Dead yet speaketh, recalled
that Cotton had advised a theocracy.2 Samuel Clarke, in his
Lives of Thirty-Two English Divines, made the statement that
Cotton recommended theocracy as "God's Government, over God's
people".3 But of far greater importance than either of these
reports is the fact that Cotton himself made use of the term
in his letter to Lord Saye and Seal written in 1636 in reply to
a letter which questioned the political organisation of the colony.
Were the word to be seen frequently in the works of other writers
of that period, it might pass unnoticed in Cotton's letter. It

2. P. 22.
3. P. 221.
4. Ellis, op. cit., p. 175.
It was so rarely used, however, that Ellis, in his chapter on The Biblical Commonwealth, was able to remark:

"I can recall only one occurrence of the word 'theocracy' in our earliest literature."¹ His reference was to the letter mentioned.

A concise and carefully-worded document, concerned entirely with the problem of the relationship between the magistrates and the churches, this letter is perhaps the most important of Cotton's discourses on civil government. Lord Saye and Seal, Lord Brooke, and other men of their standing had written to the colony demanding that the system of the government there either be such as would be satisfactory to themselves or they would remove elsewhere. Cotton was requested by the magistrates to write the official reply. After a complimentary opening in which he expressed his great admiration for Lord Saye and Seal's administrative ability, he proceeded to a definition and justification of the kind of government the colony was attempting to establish. "I am very apt to believe", he said,

what Mr. Perkins hath, in one of his prefatory pages to his golden chaine, that the word, and scriptures of God doe conteyne a short uncluposis, or platforme, not onely of theology, but also of other sacred sciences, (as he calleth them) attendants, and handmaids thereunto, which he maketh ethicks, economicks, politicks, church-government, prophecy, academy. It is very suitable to Gods all-sufficient wisdome, and to the fulnes and perfection of Holy Scriptures, not only to prescribe perfect rules for the right ordering of a private mans soule to everlasting blessednes with himselfe, but also for the right ordering of a mans family, yea, of the commonwealth too, so farre as both the churches usurpation upon civill jurisdictions, in ordine ad spiritualia, and the

commonwealths invasion upon ecclesiasticall administrations, in ordine to civill peace, and conformity to the civill state. Gods institutions (such as the government of church and of commonwealth be) may be close and compact, and co-ordinate one to another, and yet not confounded. (1)

In a nation where the government is already ordered, the church must adapt itself as it can. But where, as in New England, it is possible to shape both the church and the government anew, it is better that the commonwealth be fashioned to the setting forth of Gods house, which is his church: than to accommodate the church frame to the civill state. (1)

Then follows the statement which has been used before in this thesis but which is well worth repeating, the statement that contains the word theocracy.

Democracy, I do not conceive that ever God did ordain as a fit government either for church or commonwealth. If people be governors, who shall be governed? As for monarchy, and aristocracy, they are both of them clearly approved, and directed in scripture, yet so as referreth the sovereignty to himselfe, and setteth up Tehocracy in both, as the best forme of government in the commonwealth, as well as in the church. (2)

Concerning the regulation requiring that magistrates be church members, Cotton said that he could see no reason for arguing against it. It gave to the people magistrates with whom they were familiar, and it guaranteed the rule of the righteous. It is endorsed by Scripture, for Jethro advised that those "to be set over the people, should be men fearing God."³ It could not lead to the danger of the church having power through

1. Ibid., p. 415.
2. Ibid.
3. Exod. 18.21.
excommunication of removing those in disfavour from office, for it was understood that "non-membership may be a just cause of non-admission to the place of magistracy, but yet, ejection out of his membership will not be a just cause of ejecting him out of his magistracy." And in answer to Lord Scye and Seal's expressed fear that such a regulation would result in a situation in which the church was virtually in control of the entire government, Cotton wrote:

... be pleased (I pray you) to conceive, that magistrates are neither chosen to office in the church, nor doe governe by directions from the church, but by civill lawes, and those enacted in generall corts, and executed in corts of justice, by the governors and assistants. In all which, the church (as the church) hath nothing to doe: onely, it prepareth fitt instruments both to rule, and to choose rulers, which is no ambition in the church, nor dishonor to the commonwealth, the apostle, on the contray, thought it a great dishonor and reproach to the church of Christ, if it were not able to yield able judges to heare and determine all causes amongst their brethren. (2)

In one of the concluding paragraphs of the letter Cotton testified, as he had done two years previously before the Massachusetts General Court, to his firm belief that a community can be so organised that the rights and privileges of groups within it can be freely exercised without the danger of any one group overpowering any other. Interdependence, he would have said, had the word been in use, interdependence is the secret to the preservation of order and the balance of power.

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1. Hutchinson, op. cit., p.415. Although this seems contradictory to the guarantee of good leadership, still it must be remembered that church membership was difficult to obtain and an occasion of ejection would not only be rare but would be so serious an offence as to require ejection from the community as well.


For (under correction) these three things doe not undermine, but doe mutually and strongly mainteyne one another (even those three which wee principally aime at) authority in magistrates, liberty in people, purity in the church. Purity, preserved in the church, will preserve well ordered liberty in the people, and both of them establish well-balanced authority in the magistrates. God is the author of all these three, and neyther is hiselme the God of confusion, nor are his wayes the wayes of confusion, but of peace. (1)

Cotton thus may be understood to have held that church and state are two separate instruments ordained by God for the salvation of men and for the establishment of His Kingdom upon earth. Each has its own peculiar functions to perform, and, in addition to these, each has a part to play in forwarding the work of the other.

With specific reference to the work of the church in civil affairs Cotton had very little to say. In The Keyes he did, at the close of his discussion of the subjection of the church to the power of the sword, give a brief but cogent warning:

... this may not bee omitted, that as the Church is subject to the sword of the Magistrate, in things which concern the civill peace: so the Magistrate (if Christian) is subject to the keyes of the Church, in matters which concerne the peace of his conscience, and the Kingdom of heaven. Hence it is prophesied by Isaiah, that Kings and Queens, who are nursing fathers and mothers to the Church, shall bow down to the church, with their faces to the earth, Isai. 49.23. that is, they shall walk in professed subjection to the ordinances of Christ in his Church. (2)

And in his reply to Roger Williams, The Bloudy Tenent, Washed, And made white in the bloud of the Lambe, he wrote:

The truth is, Church-Governours, and civill-governours doe herein stand paralell one to another. The Church-Governours though to them be chiefly committed the charge of soules, as their adequate objects: yet in order to the

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2. P. 53.
good of the soules of their people, (they may and ought) to dehort from idlenesse, negligence, from intemperancy in meates and drinkes, from oppression, and deceit, and therein provide both for the health of their bodies, and the safety of their estates. (1)

But these statements are hardly adequate indications of the grave responsibility the church was believed to carry in the proper functioning of the civil government, and it is to the service that Cotton and other ministers rendered to the Massachusetts magistrates that we must turn our attention if we would grasp his understanding of the inter-relationship of church and state.

As we have seen, Cotton was requested almost immediately upon his arrival in Boston to assist the magistrates in as many ways as possible in the governing of the colony. He and his colleagues, both in the Boston church and in the other churches of the scattered colony, preached from their pulpits sermons that touch the matter of politics. Election days afforded them expedient opportunities for expositions on the nature of the duties of magistrates and citizens. They were present in their capacities as Elders at the sessions of the General Court, and were frequently called upon to preach to the magistrates on the religious bearings of the problems under consideration. Matters which the administrators felt incompetent to handle were referred for counsel to committees of ministers, not principally because these men were the most educated in the community, but because they were capable of discovering within the Scriptures

1. P. 68
2. See above, Chapter II, pp. 7aff.
the right solutions to the most intricate problems. Occasionally they were assigned some particular task, such as consultation with a wayward colonist guilty of disturbing the peace, or with a critical visitor from across the sea. Quite often they held private conference with the Governor or with his assistants, and proffered advice which rarely failed of its purpose. In all these activities Cotton was a diligent participant; and because he was the Teaching Elder of the foremost church, and because he was convinced that the government and the churches would work together, his advice was constantly sought.

Perhaps the most carefully prepared and the most substantial contribution which Cotton made to civil government was his *Moses his Judicialls*, the body of laws which he compiled at the request of the magistrates from the laws in the Old Testament. Though not adopted by the Colony, this code, which enjoins theocracy as the type of government most effective in establishing the Kingdom of God on earth, served to influence Nathaniel Ward in the drawing up of his *Breviate of the Liberties*, and was accepted as the frame of government for the colony of New Haven.

It consists of ten divisions of laws, namely, laws concerning magistrates, free burgesses and free inhabitants, protection and provision, inheritance, commerce, trespasses, crimes punishable by death, less serious crimes, trials and the execution

1. See above, Chapter II, pp. 106ff.
2. Morison, Builders of the Bay Colony, pp. 230 ff, says: "The body of Liberties still contains a good deal of 'Moses his Judicialls,' and adds that the capital laws were taken over bodily by Ward. Felt, op. cit., p 262, says that most of the laws in 'Moses his Judicialls' were incorporated in the Body of Liberties.
of sentence, and international affâirs. Each particular law is substantiated by references both from the Old and from the New Testaments. The whole is contained in only sixteen pages, pages that are crowded with material illustrative, even though not authorised, of the earliest laws in the colony.

A further illustration of the importance of the position that Cotton held as adviser and friend to those in charge of civil government is to be found in the one letter that remains to us of his correspondence with Oliver Cromwell. Having heard from Thomas Hooker that Cromwell, in a letter, had spoken of him "with tender of loving and more respectfull salutations than I could expect", he wrote to the General, indicating his approval of the principles which were guiding his military moves, mentioning the treatment accorded the Scots prisoners that had been sent to New England, and closing as follows:

Go on therefore (good Sir) to overcome your selze (Prov. 16.32.) to overcome your army, (Daut. 29.9 with v.14) and to vindicate your orthodoxe integrity to the world. (2)

In reply to this letter Cromwell wrote:

I received yours a few days since. It was welcome to me because signed by you, whom I love and honour in the Lord ... We need your prayers in this as much as ever ... ; (3)

With this picture of an active ministry in view, it is possible to say that Cotton believed that the church through its elders was chiefly responsible as far as civil affairs were concerned for advising those in charge of the government. Such

2. Ibid.
advice was to be given in matters secular as well as in matters religious, for the magistrates were expected to consult 'the Lawes and Rules of the Word of God' on every occasion. It was understood that the Elders themselves were not to hold position in the government: but because of their profession, their education, and their experience they were to be treated with respect and with reverence by ordinary citizen and by office bearer alike. And whether they were counselling a fair exchange of goods in matters of trade or the flying of the King's flag from the fort, their decision was to be accepted as having great weight, though not legal authority.

Osgood, in his study of The American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century, writes that when cases of importance came before the magistrates or the general court, the advice of the clergy was sought and almost invariably followed. The clergy in an extra-legal capacity acted as a board of referees on important questions of legislation, judicature, and practical polity.(2)

That this was the way it should be Cotton never doubted.

In a sermon preached in 1637 and reported by Winthrop in his Journal, he said:

The rulers of the people should consult with the ministers of the churches upon occasion of any war to be undertaken, and any other weighty business, though the case should seem never so clear.(3)

But he also declared that for a magistrate to follow uncritically any mistaken advice of the clergy would be for him to make a 'beast' of the church itself (4).

2. P.217.
The elders were not infallible, and Cotton was the last to claim that their word should be final, and the first to urge the use of sound reasoning and good sense on the part of those having authority.

Together with the members of the churches, the elders also were to decide whether or not a man was fit for church membership. Because only those who were 'personally confederated in our Churches' were eligible to hold office in the government, the church controlled to a certain extent the number of candidates available at the time of election. But since those who were voters were members of the churches and had the power to choose and ordain their elders and to disagree with them on matters of church government, possible usurpation of power by the ministers was adequately checked, and the power of the church remained the power of the people.

In theory, Cotton provided for a balance of power between the churches and the civil government, between people, magistrates, and clergy. In practice, because the ministers were held in high esteem, and because they were felt to be most capable of interpreting God's will, it is probable that the church represented by the pastors and teachers remained for a long time the power behind the throne. Perhaps it was this tendency to theocracy that was ultimately responsible for the fact that the Massachusetts Bay Colony succeeded where other colonies failed. Perry Miller writes:
It was to the cooperation of the Church that the Massachusetts leaders owed their final triumph. Though they lost important points in the constitutional struggle, they gained even more strategic ones by employing spiritual auxiliaries, whom they were then able to repay by contributing their share to the establishment of a uniform orthodoxy. (1)

Ministers and magistrates together held the reins firmly, and with worthy endeavour guided the community along the way towards their heavenly goal.

Thomas Cartwright, in his Replye to an Answere published in 1573, claimed that the right relationship between church and state was only attained when kings realised that it was their duty to "throw down their crowns before (the church) and lick the dust from off her feet." (2) Seventy-four years later Cotton published a supplementary statement. He said:

Both these may well stand together, that Magistrates may be subject to the Church, and lick the dust of her feet, & yet be supreme Governours of the Church also. In spirituall matters, and in the right administration of them, the Magistrates are subject to the Church. But in civill matters, and in corrupt administration of Church-Affaires, (so farre corrupt, as tendeth to the disturbance of civill Peace, there the Magistrates are supreme Governours even over Churches also, in their owne Dominions. (3)

In order to maintain civil peace, Cotton argues, the magistrates must be allowed supreme power, not only in affairs that are strictly secular in nature, such as "the disposing of mens goods, or lands, lives, or liberties, tributes, customes, wordly honours, and inheritances", (4) but also in matters which closely concern the church. They too are responsible for the spiritual

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1. Miller, Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, p. 239f.
welfare of the people, at least in so far as they can control outward circumstance and so assure religious development of the right kind. Indeed, the well-being both of the individual and of the civil government depends upon pure religion and uncorrupt churches, and consequently civil authorities must be allowed the power of the sword in situations which might seem to call for action on the part of the church only.

It is a carnall and worldly, and indeed, an ungodly imagination, to confine the Magistrates charge, to the bodies, and goods of the Subject, and to exclude them from the care of their soules. Did ever God commit the charge of the body to any Governours, to whom, he did not commit (in his way) the care of soules also? Hath God committed to Parents the charge of their childrens bodies, and not the care of their soules? So civil-governours though to them he chiefly committed the bodies and goods of the people (as their adequate object:) yet in order to this, they may and ought to procure spirituall helps to their soules, and to prevent such spirituall evills, as that the prosperity of Religion amongst them might advance the prosperity of the civill State. (1)

Certain situations needing the 'power of the sword' were easily to be defined. Magistrates, Cotton said, should be given the power of setting apart days for public thanksgiving and humiliation, for these

may advance and help forward the publick good of Civill State according to God. In time of warre, or pestilence, or any publick calamity or danger lying upon a Common-wealth, the Magistrate may lawfully proclaim a Fast . . and the Churches ought not to neglect such an administration, upon such a just occasion. Neither doth it impeach the power of the Church to call a Fast, when themselves see God calling them to publick humiliation. (2).

He also believed that magistrates should be permitted to call a synod. Although at the time of the Cambridge Synod of 1646

some of the people of Boston felt that the yielding of such power to the Magistrates betrayed the liberty of the churches, Cotton supported the cause of the government.

It may fall out also, that in undertaking a warre, or in making a league with a forraine State, there may arise such cases of conscience, as may require the consultation of a Synod. In which case, or the like, if the Magistrate call for a Synod, the Churches are to yeeld him ready subjection herein in the Lord.(1)

In his report The Result of a Synod at Cambridge, he agreed that "the power of the constitution of Synods, as properly such, firstly resideth with, ariseth from, and lastly returneth to particular Churches," but he held that because the results of synods concerned the government as well as the churches, the civil authorities should be able to call church elders and representatives together when they considered it necessary. However, the 'implicite consent' of the churches must be forthcoming before a synod can assemble. On the other hand, the churches may call a synod without the consent of the magistrates, but should they desire to do so they must inform the magistrates concerning their plans.

.. The Elders of the Churches, desirous to maintain verity, and unity of judgement in matters of doctrine, and integrity of life throughout all the Churches: doe both acquaint our Magistrates, being nursing fathers to the Church, with the necessary occasions and ends of a general and a solemn assembly, and do also solicit the Churches to send some fit persons, at such a time, to such a Church .. (4)

Magistrates, Cotton held, must be notified of any action being taken towards the gathering of a new church, for as 'nursing

1. Cotton, The Keys, p. 51,
3. Ibid.
fathers to the Church, they are especially concerned with the enlarging of the kingdom of Christ. It is their duty to encourage suitable persons to join together in church fellowship. It is also within their power to forbid all Idolatrous and corrupt Assemblies, who offer to put themselves under their patronage, and shall attempt to joyne themselves into a Church-estate, and if they shall not hearken, to force them therefrom by the power of the sword. (1)

Another duty expected of the magistrates concerned the maintenance of the church officers. Although Cotton urged that such maintenance be given voluntarily by the people, he accorded to the magistrates power sufficient to force those neglecting to carry their portion of the expense to give the amount which "the Gospel commandeth to bee offered to them freely and bountifully." (2) He also asserted that it is the magistrates' responsibility to "provide that Gods Word be preached by faithfull and able Ministers." (3) "Magistrates", he said, in his commentary on Ecclesiastes,

\[\text{teach knowledge, not only as Solomon here, by writing, but first, By, providing and sending forth good ministers . . . (4)}\]

For that reason, it is interesting to remark in passing, the General Court gave impetus to the founding of Harvard College.

The power of the magistrates to establish pure religion and to punish all infringements of the first table of the Law, the first four of the Ten Commandments, came seriously into question. Cotton believed that "the Magistrate is custos of both the Tables of godliness." (5) He took a firm stand in favour of the civil

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2. Ibid., p. 164.
3. Cotton, A. Censure of Mr. J. C. upon Mr. Henden, p. 10.
government's participation in the disciplining of those who, through corruption in matters of religious belief and practice, endangered the spiritual welfare and the peace of the community. "It is true," he said, in The Keyes,

. . . the establishment of pure Religion, and reformation of corruptions, pertain also to the Churches and Synodical Assemblies. But they goe about it onely with spirituall weapons, ministry of the Word, and Church-censures upon such as are under Church-power. But Magistrates addresse themselves thereto, partly by commanding and stirring up the Churches and Ministers thereof to goe about it in their spirituall way: partly also by civill punishments upon the wilfull opposers and disturbers of the same. (1)

Since it is the property of magistrates "to attend .. the duties and sinnes which appeare in the walke of the outward man," then at the same time that the churches censure any members who err in "the internall acts of the soule", they must proceed against those who in "external acts of the body" express inward guilt.

Difficulty arose, however, in trying to determine the limits of this 'power of the sword'. The Cambridge Synod decided to

. . . grant the Civill Magistrate his power thus to command, forbid and punish in matters of Religion, cleerly revealed in the word. (4)

Such a policy permitted beyond question the punishment by civil authorities of those who were guilty of idolatry, blasphemy, the breaking of the Sabbath, the disruption of religious services, witchcraft, and lack of reverence for and obedience to those in

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 6.
in authority whether they be father and mother, elders, or magistrates. Cotton emphatically said that a king or magistrate must not allow 'Blasphemers of the true God' to live, for they as well as apostates and witches provoke sin within a community. He also advocated the death penalty for those who are idolaters, those who profane the Sabbath, those who consult with witches, and those who revile the magistrates.

... the civil magistrate, whether Christian, or Pagan, may and ought to be so well acquainted, not only with civil causes, but also with causes of religion, especially such as concern life, as to be able to judge, though not of all questions, yet of capital offenses against religion, as well as against the civil State. Surely, if everyone be bound to put forth himself to his utmost power in God's business, then civil magistrates are bound to put forth their civil power, in defending the Faith of Jesus.

But were magistrates to be given the power to compel men and women to profess and to practise the religion established in the colony, and no other? That was the crucial question, the question that was the cause of heated controversy in England and New England alike, the question that was only answered when, in America, complete separation of state and church was effected, and when freedom of worship was finally allowed.

Unhesitatingly, Cotton, supported by his colleagues and the magistrates of the Bay Colony, accepted the Presbyterian point of

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1. The customary interpretation of the fifth commandment included, in New England, the honouring of the church and commonwealth. Mrs. Hutchinson was charged with breaking the fifth commandment when she supported Wheelwright's preaching in opposition to expressed opinions of other elders and magistrates. Hutchinson, II, Appendix II.
2. Cotton, Ecclesiastes, p. 87.
3. Cotton, Moses His Judiciaills.
view and argued for religious uniformity. Religion as established in the colony, he said, is the true religion. The New England way is patterned after the organisation of the early church, and is "the nearest thing possible to what would be set up 'if the Lord Jesus were here himself in person.'"¹

The order of the churches and the commonwealth is now so settled in New England by common consent that it brings to mind the new heaven and new earth wherein dwells righteousness. (2)

Since this is so, any opposition to the doctrine, worship, and polity of the 'Way of Christ in New England' must be broken. All other opinions save those acceptable to the elders must be uprooted. Tolerance of such errors would only result in corruption within the churches and the destruction of the civil peace.

It is necessary, then, that magistrates be given power to compel adherence to the religion taught by the churches. They must be able to assert their authority in the task of keeping religion pure. It is their duty to require that church members observe church orders according to the Word, and that everyone whether a church member or not attend the preaching of the Gospel.³

"Nevertheless", and Cotton softens the severity of the regulation, though we willingly acknowledge a power in the civil Magistrate, to establish and reform Religion, according to the word of God; yet we would not be so understood, as if we judged it to belong to the civil power, to compel all men to come and sit down at the Lord's table, or to enter into the communion of the Church, before they be in some measure prepared of God for such fellowship.⁴

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1. Miller, Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, p. 160.
That is, the elders must have given some instruction, and the people indicated their willingness to join the fellowship of the church, before the magistrates can exact obedience to the church laws. The magistrates have no power to compel all men to become members of Churches, because they have not power to make them fit members for the Church, which is not wrought by the power of the sword, but by the power of the Word: Nor may they force the Churches to accept of any for members, but those whom the Churches themselves can freely approve of. (2)

Cotton also stipulated that pagans and Jews are not to be compelled to profess Christianity, but that magistrates are "to neglect no good means to help them onward to the knowledge and faith of Christ Jesus." (3)

It is also necessary that the magistrates be given power to suppress heresy and atheism, and to remove from among the people those elders and brethren who endanger the safety of the colony with their false teachings.

What Reason can the Discusser give why the Magistrate should break the teeth of the Lyons, who offer civil violence to the Church and Saints, and not break the teeth of the ravenous wolves (false Prophets) who offer violence to their souls? Doubtless those ravenous wolves, that make havoc of their souls, are far more mischievous than the Lyons be, that offer violence to their bodies. (4)

... it is not only every man's duty, but the common duty of the Magistrates to prevent infection, and to preserve the common health of the place, by removing infectious persons into solitary tabernacles. (5)

2. Cotton, A Model of Church and Civill Power, ... Examined and Answered by Roger Williams, p. 157, in The Bloudy Tenet.
4. Ibid., p. 71.
5. Ibid, p. 65.
In answer to those who said that this was of a certainty the duty of the churches, rather than of the magistrates, Cotton replied

It is true, Christ hath appointed spirituall means for the avoiding and preventing the infection of heresies; so hath he also for the preventing and avoiding all offences in Church-members. But that hindreth not the lawfull and necessary use of a civill sword for the punishment of some such offences, as are subject to Church-censure. If indeed the Ordinances of Christ in the Church doe prevaiile to the avoiding and healing of heresies, there is no need of the civill sword for that end. (1)

But sometimes it happens that a church member cast out of the church on account of heresy continues to trouble the community, and the civil authorities must take action against him or "such leaven may leaven the whole Masse of a City, or Country."2 Then too, the guilty person may not be a member of a church, and so be outside the jurisdiction of elders and members. In such a case the magistrates are responsible for conviction and punishment.

Regarding the method by which magistrates were to proceed to the correction or chastisement of those whose religious beliefs and practices were out of harmony with the established way, Cotton wrote:

A civill Magistrate ought not to draw out his civill Sword against any Seducers (Whether Hereticks, or Idolaters) till he have used all good meanes for their conviction, and thereby clearly manifested the bowels of tender commiseration and compassion towards them. (3)

If they are church members, and their offence is notorious, the magistrates must keep them in safe custody, but they must afford them opportunity to mend their ways by giving them over to the

1. Ibid., p. 66.
2. Ibid., p. 66.
3. Ibid., p. 83.
church for admonition and instruction, before pronouncing judgment and sentence. If the offence is not publicly known, either the church or the magistrates may take it first in hand Only with this caution, that if the State take it first in hand, they are not to proceed to death or banishment, until the Church hath taken their course with him, to bring him to repentance, provided that the Church bee willing and ready thereunto. (1)

In every instance it should be the magistrates' first concern to "seeke out and procure meanes of Grace for them so farre as they are capable in Gods way." If such help is not effective, if the Idolater or Heretick grow obstinate & as the Apostle saith, waxe worse and worse deceiving himselfe and others, now the Magistrate maketh use, not of Stocks, and Whipps (for these doe not remove, but exasperate the malady:) but of Death, or Banishment, that may cut him off from opportunity of spreading the leaven, and Gangerne of his pernicious wayes, whether in Doctrine, or practise. (3)

And here Cotton gave indication of experience and resulting wisdom:

It is onething to speake of Heresie and Idolatry in the Abstract: another in the Concrete. Heresie, Idolatry and all spirituall wickednesse, cannot be rooted out of the hearts of the sonnes of men, but by spirituall weapons. But Hereticks, and Idolaters may be restrained from the open practise, and profession of their wickednesse by the Sword of Justice, and such weapons of Righteousnesse. (4)

In the hard work of governing a colony founded for the principal purpose of establishing upon earth a religion pure and undefiled, preventive legislation was necessary. In co-operative effort church and state were to strive to keep Massachusetts from corruption of every kind.

Cotton's chief opponent in matters concerning church and state

3. Ibid., p.95.
4. Ibid.
was Roger Williams, about whose troubled years in the Bay Colony and eventual banishment much has already been written. As the result of the action of the Massachusetts Court in banishing Williams, the two men had frequent correspondence concerning the power of magistrates in matters religious. Then, in 1644, while he was in England, Williams published with his book The Bloudy Tenet, of Persecution for cause of Conscience. Cotton's reply to a short essay written by a prisoner in Newgate against persecution for matters of belief. This started an important controversy between the two men on the problem of liberty of conscience, and religious toleration, a controversy which excited not only New England, but England as well. Parliament, already having trouble with the Independents, who were fighting for toleration for all religious sects, ordered that The Bloudy Tenet be burned by the common hangman. Cotton wrote a refutation of the book, entitled The Bloudy Tenent, Washed, And made white in the bloud of the Lambe, and to this Williams replied with The Bloudy Tenent yet more Bloudy by Mr. Cotton's endeavour to wash it white in the Bloud of the Lambe. The whole controversy tended to show that Cotton accepted the position of the Presbyterians which, in 1649, was so clearly defined by Rutherfurd in A Free Disputation Against pretended Liberty of Conscience, a treatise written against Williams and others who were contending for 'licentious Toleration of Sects and Heresies'. And it early became evident that the matter in question was used as

1. See above, Chapter II, pp. 92 ff.
a wedge by some of the controversialists to drive the congregationalism of England and of New England farther and farther apart. In 1644 Williams wrote to Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, and others:

> It shall never be your Honour to this or future Ages, to be confined to the Patterns of either French, Dutch, Scotch, or New-English Churches. We humbly conceive some higher Act concerning Religion, attends and becomes your Consultations.

Such as 'higher Act' Williams then proceeded to outline to the English Independents:

> The core of Cotton's argument against liberty of conscience and toleration of other religious sects is contained in his reply to the prisoner's short essay. In a page and a half he gave a clear and concise statement of his position. He defined persecution for cause of conscience as persecution for

> professing some point of Doctrine which you believe in Conscience to be the Truth, or for practising some works which in Conscience you believe to be a Religious Duty.

Then, after demonstrating that points of doctrine may be fundamental or circumstantial, and points of practice, weighty or of little consequence, that doctrine and practice both may be modestly or arrogantly displayed, and that conscience may be rightly informed or blind, he drew four important conclusions.

> First, it is not lawful to persecute any for conscience sake Rightly informed; for in persecuting such, Christ himself is persecuted in them.

> Secondly, for an Erronious and blind Conscience, (even in fundamental and weighty Points) it is not lawful to persecute any, till after Admonition once or twice: ... Thirdly, In things of lesser moment, whether Points of Doctrine or Worship, if a man hold them forth in a Spirit of Christian Meeknesse and Love (though with Zeale and

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1. Williams, Roger. Queries of Highest Consideration Proposed to Mr. The Godwin... Introductory Epistle, A 3 verso.
constancie) he is not to be persecuted, but tolerated till God may bee pleased to manifest his Truth to him . . . But if a Man hold forth or professe any Error or false way, with a boysterous and arrogant spirit, to the disturbance of civill peace, he may justly be punished according to the qualitie and measure of the disturbance caused by him. (1)

In the rest of the tract Cotton concerned himself with refuting the objections which had been advanced against civil punishment for religious belief. He interpreted each of the passages of Scripture which had been used to justify toleration, in the light of his own understanding of the Old and New Testaments. References to the practices of worthy rulers, church fathers and reformers, he explained as misapplied because of the lack of a full knowledge of the circumstances involved or the meaning behind the words. He closed his reply with testimonies to the power of the state in religious matters taken from Augustine, Calvin, Beza, and others.

Cotton stressed over and over again the fact that he did not accept the right of the state to persecute for cause of conscience if conscience was rightly informed or blind. He laid the weight of his whole argument in favour of civil punishment for heresy upon deductions drawn from his second conclusion. If, after being admonished once or more times, a man accused of heresy persists in his erroneous belief or practice, and if he is accordingly punished by the magistrates, it cannot be said that he is being persecuted for cause of conscience either rightly informed or blind. Rather he is being made to suffer for "sinning against his Owne conscience", for

1. Ibid., p. 7f.
in fundamentall and principall points of Doctrine or Worship, the Word of God in such things is so cleare, that hee cannot but bee convinced in Conscience of the dangerous Erreur of his way, after once and twice Admonition, wisely and faithfully dispensed. (1)

Standing as we do in the middle of a century which takes for granted the separation of state and church, and insists upon every man's right to worship as he will, it is difficult to see the validity of Cotton's argument. Two questions immediately come to mind. By what right did the authorities in the Bay Colony dictate what doctrine and practice were true, and what false? And is it possible to declare that a man's conscience and his conscious mind are divorced from one another, and that one who remains convinced of the correctness of his so-called erroneous beliefs or religious practices after adequate admonition is guilty of 'sinning against his Owne conscience'? To the first question Cotton would have answered that the Word of God is the only authority for truth, and that, correctly read, the Old and New Testaments reveal exactly what pure religion is. Certainly he would never have attributed to himself authority to determine the rights and wrongs of doctrine and practice. On the other hand, the interpretation of Scripture upon which the elders of the Colony agreed was accepted as authoritative, and we would be justified in addressing Cotton as did Sir Richard Saltonstall:

I hope you doe not assume to yourselves infallibilitie of judgment, when the most learned of the Appostles confesseth he knew but in parte . . (2)

1. Ibid., p8.
The second question Cotton would perhaps have had difficulty in understanding. Truth, he might have said, is demonstrated by logic. If the logic is sound, then surely it is acceptable to the mind and to the conscience, and any one ignoring it or failing to see it because of other interests, is guilty of deceiving himself and of misguiding others. Cotton could never have entertained the idea that truth is relative, nor did he show any tendency to regard it as garbed in varying shades of gray. The person who mistakes error for truth might just as well be guilty of calling black white; and he is, indeed, a danger to the community.

But believing that right was right, and wrong wrong, and that the Massachusetts Bay Colony was intended by God as well as by its founders to be a single-minded plantation, Cotton could hardly have taken a stand other than the one he did. It is much to his credit that in the actual work of dealing with those whose opinions he held to be erroneous and dangerous he continually pleaded the cause as conscience uninformed and devoted a great deal of time, thought, patience, and Christian love in attempting to lead the guilty into the true way. He was consistent throughout the controversy in giving to the church the major share of the responsibility of detecting and censuring errors, only permitting the civil government to make trial and to give sentence at the request of the churches or when religions within the Colony would endanger the state.
For our tolerating many Religions in a State in severall Churches, beside the provoking of God, may in time not only corrupt, leaven, divide, and so destroy the peace of the Churches, but also dissolve the continuity of the State, especially ours whose walls are made of the stones of the Churches; it being also contrary to the end of our planting in this part of the World, which was not only to enjoy the pure Ordinances, but to enjoy them all in purity. (1)

Against Cotton and the others who directed ecclesiastical and political policies in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Roger Williams upheld the complete separation of church and state, and equal protection for all forms of religion. His most famous exposition of these views was *The Bloudy Tenet*, mentioned above, wherein two characters, Truth and Peace, consider each sentence and phrase of Cotton's short tract on persecution for cause of conscience. Two passages serve to illustrate the position which Williams took.

In explanation of the absolute independence of the church from the civil government, Truth says:

The Church or company of Worshippers (whether true or false) is like unto a Body of Colledge of Physicians in a Citie; like unto a Corporation, Society, or Company of East-Indie or Turkie-Merchants, or any other Societie or Companie in London: which Companies may hold their Courts, keepes their Records, hold disputations; and in matters concerning their Society, may dissent, divide, breake into Scisms and Factions, sue and implead each other at Law, yea wholly breake up and dissolve into pieces and nothing, and yet the peace of the City not be in the least measure impaired or disturbed; because the essence or being of the Citie, and so the well-being and peace thereof is essentially distinct from those particular Societies. . The City was before them, and stands absolute and intire; when such a Corporation or Society is taken downe. (2)

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A few pages farther on, following a discussion of the practice of banishing from a colony all those who will not conform to the prescribed religion, Peace summarises with warmth of feeling:

On how contrary unto this command of the Lord Jesus have such as have conceived themselves the true Messengers of the Lord Jesus, in all ages, not let such Professours and Prophets alone, whom they have judged Tares, but have provoked Kifes and Kingdomes (and some out of good intentions and zeale to God) to prosecute and persecute such even unto death? Amongst whom Gods people (the good wheat) hath also beene pluckt up, as all Ages and Histories testifie, and too oft the World laid upon bloody heapes in civill and intestine desolations on this occasion. All which would be prevented, and the greatest breaches made up in the peace of our owne or other Countries, were this command of the Lord Jesus obeyed, to wit, to let them alone untill the Harvest. (1)

As the chief among those who first laboured for freedom of worship, Williams holds, dja. deserves to hold, high rank in the annals of history. His recommendation that his opponents should examine more closely the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, indicates not only a major weakness in Cotton's position, but also the strength of the proof offered in behalf of his own argument. And surely no one could refute his principal allegation that spiritual illness cannot be cured by civil punishment but must await the healing touch of Christ or the final judgment of God. But the danger of the rapid spread of anti-Christian beliefs and practices, disparaged by Williams who felt that the chosen of God could not be infected, was more correctly foreseen by Cotton. And in the light of recent world events which would seem to have been the result of a failure on the part of the State to realise its dependence upon the Christian Church for moral rectitude and spiritual strength, it would be wise indeed to reconsider.

1. Williams, The Bloudy Tenet, p.52.
Cotton's theory of the close interrelationship and the interdependence of church and state.

One further aspect of Cotton's delineation of the magistrates' power in matters pertaining to civil peace remains to be considered. He made special mention, both in The Keyes and in The Bloudy Tenent Washed, of the fact of the people's subjection to the magistrates both in time of good favour shown the churches and in time of persecution.

For though persecution of the Churches and servants of Christ, will not advance the civil peace, but overthrow it; yet for the Church to take up the Sword in her own defence, is not a lawful means of preserving the Church-peace, but a disturbance of it rather... As they have received the power of the keys, not of the sword, so the power of the keys they may, and ought to administer, but not of the sword. (1)

If those who rule fail to do so according to the word of God, those who are ruled must nevertheless submit.

Subject ourselves, I say, either in active submission, and obedience, when they command according to God: or in passive submission, of our bodies, and goods, lives, and liberties, when they command against God. (2).

But Cotton did not recommend that unrestricted power be exercised by either the elders or the magistrates. Perry Miller writes of him:

John Cotton put the case for the limitation of rulers as bluntly as any radical of the eighteenth century: neither magistrates nor ministers, he said, should "affect more liberty and authority than will do them good, and the People good," and so it is necessary "that all power that is on earth be limited." (3)

And whether or not he was the 'unmitred pope' of the Colony\textsuperscript{1} speaking with unquestioned authority in affairs both ecclesiastical and civil, and delivering the laws by which the government should be ordered to the magistrates, he insisted that

God's institutions, such as the government of church and commonwealth be, may be close and compact, and coordinate one to another, and yet not confounded. (2)

Cotton did advise a type of government in which God through his Word could rule His people. Thus it might be said that he was the Patriarch of the Massachusetts Theocracy. But perhaps theocracy can never be more than an ideal, perhaps it can never be worked out in the practical life of a growing community. For certainly in the Bay Colony, the one place where it was admittedly tried, the churches and their elders, of whom Cotton was the most outstanding, remained subject to civil magistrates, and had contention arisen between them these magistrates would have had the final word.\textsuperscript{3}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Expression used by W. W. Sweet, Religion in Colonial America, p. 96.
\item \textsuperscript{2} M'Clure, Life of John Cotton, p. 221. Quoted from Hutchinson, I, p. 437.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Newton, Colonising Activities of the English Puritans, p. 160.
\end{itemize}
CHAPTER VI.

Cotton's Influence and Importance.

Across a span of three hundred years, and from the distance caused by change of outlook, of custom, and of the position of the church within the community, it is difficult to understand the genius of a man who was believed by those who knew him to be "a famous light in his generation, a glory to both Englands." A few years following Cotton's death, John Norton wrote of him:

Amongst these, as the Age that now is (through Grace) hath abounded with many worthies, so This Eminent Servant of God, the subject of our present meditation, may without wrong unto any be placed amongst the first Three. (2)

And not many years later, Increase Mather, who was a college student, thirteen years of age, at the time of Cotton's death, felt justified in saying:

Both Bostons have reason to Honour his Memory; and New-England-Boston most of all, which oweth its Name and Being to him, more than to any one Person in the World... (3)

Yet judging him by his own works, and from the point of view of the nineteenth century, James Bass Mullinger, in his History of the University of Cambridge, decisively stated

2. Norton, Abel being Dead, p. 5.
that "Cotton's writings scarcely sustain his contemporary fame": 1

Such a judgment, may, of course, be due to a lack of real sympathy for and interest in early New England thought. It may also be the result of desultory reading in some of the less interesting and more controversial of Cotton's treatises. But, none the less, it is true that the work from Cotton's pen rarely stimulates the reader to creative thought or kindles in him the flame of religious enthusiasm. And in order fully to appreciate the extent of his influence during his lifetime it is necessary to consider the many personal contacts which he made, and the number of friends and acquaintances with whom he conversed and corresponded. His ministry, far from being restricted to the preaching of sermons and the writing of tracts, was chiefly spent in serving those who turned to him for advice, and from indirect references and occasional letters of request or gratitude, it is not hard to discover that his counsel was frequently sought and skilfully given.

Cotton's first important disciple was John Preston, the Fellow Queen's College, Cambridge, who forsook medicine for divinity after hearing Cotton preach on the doctrine of repentance in the church of St. Mary's, and thereafter until his death in 1628 visited Cotton as frequently as possible and recommended that his students spend time in Boston

attending the public lectures given by his 'Spiritual Father'. It is not possible to determine the importance of the friendship of these two men to the work each did in the fields of their endeavour, but because of the direction which Cotton gave to his life, Preston became Master of Emmanuel and the man "from whom the New England Puritans derived a large measure of their instruction".¹

One of the Cambridge students, known to have gone to Boston to see John Cotton, was Thomas Hill, who took his degree in Divinity at Emmanuel in 1633, and later became Master of Trinity College, and Vice-Chancellor of the University. Hill is reported to have lived with Cotton for a time, and, if so, could hardly have failed to have been influenced by the Boston Vicar and his outstanding preaching.²

Anthony Tuckney, a Cambridge graduate in Divinity who became Master of Emmanuel and then Vice-Chancellor of the University, and who has been mentioned already as Cotton’s assistant in the Boston church, probably also when a student knew Cotton. His father was William Tuckney, Vicar of Kirton, near Boston, and he himself, before taking his final degree, and before being appointed 'town preacher' in Boston, held the position of household chaplain to Theophilus Clinton, Earl of Lincoln, who was intensely interested in the Puritan cause and frequently welcomed Cotton and his wife into his

². Dictionary of National Biography, article on Thomas Hill.
Although Tuckney was an opponent of Independency, he retained his friendship for the man who defined its polity, and took great interest in the propagation of the gospel in America and the conversion of the Indians, corresponding with Cotton and raising contributions in the university. (1)

In 1654 and in 1655 he edited two collections of Cotton's sermons, sermons which Cotton had preached while in Boston upon Ecclesiastes and Canticles.

Samuel Whiting, a cousin of Tuckney's, and his roommate while at Cambridge, secured appointment after graduating from Emmanuel as the minister of the church at Skirbeck, a small town just outside of Boston. He came to know Cotton well, as his brief biography of him indicates; and three years after Cotton had left for New England, he too resigned his parish and sailed for Boston, Massachusetts. He became pastor of the church at Lynn, where he remained until his death in 1679. Both John Norton and Cotton Mather were dependent upon Whiting for information concerning Cotton's work in England, and in the following quotation from his Life of John Cotton we see not only something of the character of Cotton, but also something of the high esteem in which Whiting held him.

He had many enemies at Boston, as well as many friends, and some that rose up against him, and plotted secretly to undermine him, and others that practised more openly against him. But they all of them were blasted, either in their names, or in their estates, or in their families, or in their devices, or else came to untimely

1. Ibid., article on Anthony Tuckney, p. 287.
deaths; which shows how God both owned his servant in his holy labors, and that in the things wherein they dealt proudly against him, he would be above them. (1)

Two other ministers who became men of importance in the Bay Colony, and who had had contact with Cotton before leaving England, were Charles Chauncy and Nathaniel Ward. Chauncy, Vicar of Ware, wrote to Cotton in 1627, asking for advice as to the fulfilling of his charge in the face of his objection to ceremonies and other Church of England requirements. He made reference to his annual visit to Boston to see Cotton, and expressed the hope that Cotton would call upon him if passing through his parish. In 1654, after a long ministry at the church in Scituate in the colony of Plymouth, Chauncy became President of Harvard College, a position which he held until his death in 1671.

Nathaniel Ward, who has been several times mentioned in the course of this study, was also a graduate of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. After practising law in London, he entered the ministry, and in 1631 was convicted before the Bishop's Court on account of his Puritanism. A letter which he wrote to Cotton at that time reveals the great confidence

1. In Young, Chronicles, p. 427.
with which he turned to Cotton for spiritual help. Arriving in New England in 1634, Ward became the minister of Ipswich. He drew up, as we have seen, the Body of Liberties which was adopted by the Bay Colony in 1641, but is "remembered chiefly as the witty author of The Simple Cobbler of Agawam...a treatise aimed at manners and theories of which he disapproved". He should also be remembered as being among those who were influenced by John Cotton.

Among those who accompanied Winthrop to New England in 1630 there were at least three men of outstanding ability who knew Cotton well and respected his every suggestion.

1. I include the letter as one of the best examples of the letters which were sent to Cotton in his capacity as a spiritual adviser.

Reverend and dear friend,
I was yesterday convened before the bishop, I mean to his court, and am adjourned to the next term. I see such giants turn their backs, that I dare not trust my own weak heart. I expect measure hard enough, and must furnish space with proportionable armour. I lack a friend to help buckle it on. I know none but Christ himself, in all our coast, fit to help me, and my acquaintance with him is hardly enough to hope for that assistance my weak spirit will want and the assaults of tentation call for. I pray therefore, forget me not, and believe for me also if there be such a piece of neighbourhood among Christians. And so blessing God with my whole heart, for my knowledge of you and immerited interest in you, and thanking you entirely for that faithful love I have found from you in many expressions of the best nature, I commit you to the unchangeable love of God our Father in his son Jesus Christ, in whom I hope to rest for ever.
Stondon Mercy, Dec. 13, 1631.
Nath Warde.

Thomas Dudley, who was chosen deputy governor of the colony during the voyage across the Atlantic, had become a non-conformist under the influence of Dod, Hildersham, and other Puritan ministers while living in Northampton. He became steward to the Earl of Lincoln, successfully managing the estate for several years before moving to Boston where his friendship with Cotton and with others in the circle of enthusiastic Puritans within and about that town inclined him to make the adventure in the new land. He served the Massachusetts Bay Colony as deputy governor many years, and was elected to the office of Governor four different times. Simon Bradstreet, Dudley's son-in-law and successor to the position of steward to the Earl of Lincoln, was also a resident of Boston, Lincs., and a friend of John Cotton's. He and his wife travelled to New England with Dudley, and Bradstreet served as governor of the Colony from 1679 to 1686, and from 1689 to 1692.

Isaac Johnson, a young clergyman who left a large estate in Rutland, Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire, to share the fortunes of those building homes in the wilderness, married Arbella Fiennes, the eldest of the many sisters of the young Earl of Lincoln. He and his wife probably lived in Boston before their departure for America. They too sailed in 1630.

1. Hutchinson says that Dudley managed the Earl of Northampton's estate, on the recommendation of Lord Saye and Seal. Cook, Boston Goes to Massachusetts, claims that he was in the service of William Fiennes, Lord Saye and Sele, before becoming steward to the Earl of Lincoln. P. 11.
with Winthrop on board the ship Arbella, which was so named in honour of the distinguished passenger. But life in the new colony was too difficult, and within a month after her arrival Mistress Johnson died. In another three months Johnson also died. In his will he left thirty pounds and a gown cloth "to Mr. Cotton, from whom, to the praise of God's grace, he acknowledges to have received much help and comfort in his spiritual estate".  

The fact that these and others who migrated from Boston, England, to the land bordering upon Massachusetts Bay, named their new home Boston, and awaited the coming of John Cotton to the colony, writing him urgently to come, is unchallengeable evidence that Cotton was a beloved and revered pastor. Other members of his parish accompanied him on his flight from the Court of High Commission. Among these were Atherton Haugh, a former mayor of Boston and an alderman at the time of his emigration, and Thomas Leverett, also an alderman of the borough of Boston and a man deeply devoted to Cotton. Leverett's grandson, John, baptised by Cotton in St. Botolph's in 1616, later became Governor of the colony. In 1635 Richard Bellingham, once a Member of Parliament for Boston, and from 1625 until 1633 the Town Recorder, arrived in Massachusetts. He held the office of Governor of the colony for ten years. And still others continued to follow across the ocean, others who had known and honoured Cotton as a fellow

student, as a colleague, or as the minister of the Boston church, until it must have seemed as though those friends who were in New England outnumbered those who had been left behind.¹

Distant though he was from English shores, Cotton's help as friend and counsellor was never lacking to the people whom he had known in his native-land. He wrote to those of his parishioners still in Boston, and to ministers who were suffering for their nonconformity, encouraging them to hold fast to their convictions and not to hesitate to journey to New England if life became over-difficult under the rule of the bishops.² He kept up a steady correspondence with those who had sheltered him in London, convincing John Davenport and Henry Whitfield to leave England for America in 1637, and inviting Thomas Goodwin, unsuccessfully however, to come to the colony in 1647.³ Also among those in England who counted him a friend were such men as the Earl of Lincoln, Lord Saye and Seal, Lord Brooke, Sir Richard Saltonstall, Sir Henry Vane, and Oliver Cromwell, all of whom have been mentioned earlier in connection with some other aspect of Cotton's life. And to this imposing list should be added the name of Francis Quarles, the poet and mystic, who, in 1638, sent to New England through the courtesy of John Josselyn a "translation of the 16,

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¹ See Cook, Boston Goes to Massachusetts, for an interesting study of the amazing interrelationships of those Puritans who lived in and about Boston, and migrated to New England.  
² See Young, Chronicles of the First Planters, p. 442f.  
³ Felt, Ecclesiastical History, p. 308. Dictionary of National Biography, article on Goodwin.
25, 51, 83, 113, and 137 Psalms in English meeter" for Cotton's approbation.¹

Among those in New England who sought Cotton's advice, there could probably be numbered all of his parishioners, and the greater portion of the leading men and ministers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and in the other colonies round about. But it is needless to emphasise further the extent of Cotton's personal ministry. Although it cannot be measured or analysed, it was clearly as important in his own mind as were his sermons and his treatises; and certainly to those in both countries who looked to him for guidance and sympathy, it was of far greater value. It is interesting to note that early biographers said very little about Cotton's many written works, but lingered instead over the character and the personality of the man whom they wished to extol. They were convinced that his contemporary fame was a crown well earned by years of concentrated and consecrated personal service to his fellow-men, as well as by service from pulpit and in book. Like Matthew Swallowe, the author of an epistle To the Christian Reader, found in Cotton's Gods Mercie Mixed with His Justice, they had discovered that it was easy to "retaine in memory his parts and graces", ² for these were the secret of his renown.

But Cotton's importance to the Massachusetts Bay Colony,

². P. A 2 verso.
to New England, and to the development of Congregationalism, was not determined by those attractive personal qualities which made him a good pastor, though it must be said that without such qualities he might not have made the favourable impression upon his associates and followers that he did. Rather did it grow from his ability to think clearly, to define issues precisely, and to translate theory into the everyday affairs of a wilderness community.

He was accepted as the most gifted theologian in the colony during his lifetime. His sermons were masterpieces of argument, demonstrating, with proofs taken from the Bible and from natural science and used according to the logic of that day, the truths which he considered basic in the religious belief of his parishioners. In his controversies with Twisse and with Mrs. Hutchinson and the elders who opposed him, he struggled to give exact definition to theological terms which seemed to him to have been carelessly and indifferently used; and from acceptable tenets he deduced quite simply previously unperceived conclusions. He was able to see, more than did those with whom he debated, the full implication of every statement of dogma for the life of faith of the most humble of Christian believers. And no matter how complicated the thought of his sermon, he always included within it a summary of the practical uses to which each point of doctrine could be put, and words of consolation addressed to those for whom life was proving burdensome and Christian belief difficult.

Cotton's most practical contribution to New England
theology was, of course, his Catechism, *Spiritual Milk for American Babes*, which was used by churches and by families in the Christian education of children for many years after the author's death. But his mind ploughed deeper than the direct questions and answers of his children's book, and, looking searchingly at every idea that he turned up, he discovered the importance of the individual soul's search for God, and caught a glimpse of the true nature of the relationship between God and man, a relationship in which man, like God after whose image he is made, is free, and may choose to obey God's will and so attain salvation whether or not he is of the elect, a relationship in which God continually manifests His love and His mercy towards all mankind. However, despite this glance toward a theology freed from the shackles of negative reprobation and an arbitrary though just God, Cotton remained an earnest Calvinist, accepting as important articles of his faith the perseverance of the saints, the dependence of faith upon irresistible grace, and the absolute election of those whom God chooses to save. His religion was the stuff from which pioneers and heroes are made. It called for rigorous self-discipline in matters of the mind and of the spirit as well as of the body, yet it was at the same time cognisant of the trials of earthly life and the frailty of human nature. And perhaps Cotton's contribution to the Congregationalism of today, and indeed to every religious denomination, for everywhere there exists the tendency to let the religious life be controlled by custom rather than by
personal decision, and to define faith in terms of what one wishes to believe rather than in terms of fundamental truths, perhaps his contribution lies in just this, that he realised that Christianity is not an easy creed for the indifferent and the selfish, but is a straight and narrow path leading to the life everlasting through the griefs and the joys of this world.

Cotton held undisputed reign in the Bay Colony as the most capable of those who were striving to define and to put into practise a Congregational polity. He was able to think as clearly in matters of church organisation as he did in matters of theology. He discovered no difficulty in interpreting the doctrine of the church in such a way as to formulate rules and regulations of church procedure, or in describing, both for the community and for those in other countries, the sometimes intricate interrelationships of ministers, ruling elders, and ordinary church members. His treaties on polity proved to be textbooks on the Congregational way which were everywhere read by those interested in the experiment going on in New England. And just as he was a theologian mediating between the extremes of orthodox and unorthodox belief and acknowledging values on either hand, so he was a churchman taking the middle way between the rule of the church by laymen, and the rule of the church by presbytery, and striving to keep hold of the better parts of each system. Concerning this aspect of his work in polity, Thomas Allen, in his introduction to the 1655 edition of Cotton's Covenant of
Grace, wrote:

And thus much I shall crave liberty to testify of him, that, besides the multiplicity of occasions which was constantly upon him, he was not without care about the peace and welfare of the churches abroad... He hath sometimes said unto me, being privately together; - "Brother, I perceive there is a great gravamen which the one party is much offended at with the other. I pray let us study how we may ease and remove it." (1)

For an understanding of Congregationalism, Cotton's treatises still deserve close study. His definition of the polity of those churches which desired to remain independent of external authority was excelled in brevity and in interest by no other work in his own time save perhaps the Platform of Church Discipline accepted by the Cambridge Synod of 1646; and certainly his work, seventeenth century style though it is, still attracts the reader who recognises that it was written with the fervour and conviction of an author who truly believed in the importance and the validity of the polity with which he was concerned. Many of the practices outlined are explanatory of customs still prevailing in the churches of New England, and the problems of church management considered are frequently found to be problems of the present day. Although we may not agree with Cotton's every choice of word and phrase, we can see in the church government which he describes, an organisation through which the Holy Spirit could work the work of faith in the individual, and in which the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ could

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be truly experienced.

Concerning Cotton's importance to the development of the Massachusetts civil government during his lifetime, Governor Winthrop unhesitatingly said that "what John Cotton preached in his pulpit soon found its way into the legislative acts of the General Court". Even had he written nothing at all by which to judge his active interest in problems of the state, such a statement would amply justify the conclusion that his contribution in that field had been far from negligible. But from his long controversy with Roger Williams, from his occasional references to magistrates and their particular duties and privileges in his treatises on polity, from his letter to Lord Saye and Seal, and from the Model of Church Government which is acknowledged as coming from his pen, it is readily seen that after having recommended theocracy as the purest of all forms of government, he continued to help the magistrates in their efforts to rule according to the will of God. To his great credit both as a private citizen and as a minister, he remained true to his belief that church and state must not be confused. On the other hand, he did not withdraw from secular life, to live in abysmal ignorance of government problems, but offered all the counsel that knowledge and common sense could summon, and worked tirelessly to make church and state co-partners.

in the great Puritan enterprise.

Present day New England has to be grateful to Cotton for moving, no matter how unconsciously, toward the separation of church and state, and the limitation of the authority of both minister and magistrate in religious and secular affairs. Even though he argued strongly against democracy as a form of government, Cotton accepted its principles in the very form of church government to which he gave his support. Not only were the members of a church to elect their own officers and censure all offenders, but they were also to have power to separate from unworthy elders and to establish themselves again as a church. These powers were transferred into the civil government, and although the character of the freemen was to a measure controlled by the requirement of church membership, and although the magistrates retained a power 'aristocratical', or advisory, because of position, the government with Cotton was visibly progressing toward the idea of government 'of the people, by the people, and for the people'.

Of Cotton's importance for English Congregationalism little can with certainty be said. His moderate Calvinism was forgotten in the Calvinism of John Owen and others who supported the Westminster Assembly, and in the growing Arminianism of John Goodwin and his followers. His theories of church and state were overridden by the English Independents, a minority group who, in fighting for their own existence, opposed religious uniformity and preached religious
tolerance. But in his own century he was assuredly held in high esteem by English Presbyterians and Independents alike because of his treatises on church polity, all of which were published in London and were widely circulated. And it is probably safe to claim that as the chief penman of the Bay Colony, he was responsible for the moves which the English Independents made toward accepting those practices in the New England church discipline which they did. Hutchinson, in 1764, wrote:

An answer was wrote by Mr. Cotton, and a more full answer afterwards printed. In some of the points, I suppose the two last, the ministers in England were misinformed. In some of the others, particularly those which was thought most difficult to answer, in a few years after the clergy in England fully concurred with their brethren in New-England. (1)

However, as we have seen, his personal influence upon the lives of several of the leading Independents was great, and perhaps it is the one contribution to English Congregationalism that should be accounted him. It, of course, is a contribution of the most important kind.

If Cotton were to return to this world today, he would, I am sure, appreciate the emphasis placed upon the love of God and the free will of man; he would be filled with pride because of the contribution Congregationalism is making in the union of South Indian churches; and he would watch with approval while churchmen and statesmen counsel together for the good of mankind. For he was a man of clear vision and

1. Hutchinson, History of Massachusetts-Bay, p. 82.
of penetrating mind. Understanding the past, he looked to the future. Important while he lived because of his many abilities and his striking personality, he still can command the respect and interest of those who study the lives of yesterday to build the world of tomorrow.

If Boston be the chief Seat of New-England, it was Cotton that was the Father and Glory of Boston: Upon which account it becomes a piece of pure Justice, that the Life of him, who above all Men gave Life to his Country, should bear no little Figure in its intended History; and indeed if any Person in this Town or Land, had the Blessedness which the Roman Historian long since pronounced such, even, To do things worthy to be Writ, and to Write Things worthy to be Read, it was He; who now claims a Room in our Pages. (1)

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For the gathering of this bibliography I am indebted to
H. M. Dexter who includes in his volume The Congregationalism
of the Last Three Hundred Years an appendix Collections Towards a
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National Biography, and to the catalogue of the British Museum.

Except where otherwise stated all items are London publications.

Key: S Sermons These are the divisions of Cotton's works
CG Church Government according to the Dictionary of National
D Doctrinal Biography, hereafter abbreviated DNB.
Ex Expository Where these markings do not appear, DNB
makes no mention of the work.

* Items starred are included in Dexter's bibliography.
x Items so marked were omitted by Dexter but are certainly
Cotton's.
? Items questioned are perhaps not John Cotton's, but are
listed as such in certain bibliographies.
y Item so marked is mentioned in DNB but is not listed in the
bibliography.

*S 1. God's Promise to his Plantation, etc., . . 1634. According to
Dexter, the first edition of this work was published in
1635, the year in which Cotton addressed Winthrop's group
of voyagers. Printed again in 1686.

* 2. Questions and Answers upon Church Government. 1634. Dexter
questions the date of publication of this and says that
"perhaps it was not printed until years after." See Number 11.

*CG 3. A copy of a Letter of Mr. Cotton of Boston, in New-England
sent in answer of certaine Objections made against their
Discipline and Orders there, directed to a Friend . . . 1641.

*D 4. The Way of Life. Or, God's Vvay and Course, in bringing the
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of life and peace, etc., 1641.

*D 5. Gods Mercie mixed with his Iustice, or his Peoples
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*y 6. Abstract or (sic) the Lawes of New England, etc. 1641,
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*D 7. A Modest and Cleare Answer to Mr. Balls Discourse of set forms of Prayer. 1642. Printed again without date.

*Ex 8. A Brief Exposition of the whole Book of Canticles, etc. a Work very usefull and seasonable to every Christian; but especially such as endeavour and thirst after the setting of Church and State according to the Rule and Pattern of the Word of God, etc. 1642. Printed again in 1648 and 1655.

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*CG 11. The Ture Constitution of a particular visible Church, proved by Scripture, etc. 1642. This is the same, except for two small additions, as The Doctrine of the Church, to which are committed the Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, etc. It is probably also the same as Questions and Answers upon Church Government, number 2. The Doctrine of the Church etc. is listed separately by DNB and by Dexter, the former dating it in 1643, and the latter in 1642. Dexter lists the second and third editions of the last named work as publications of 1643 and 1644, under the full title The Doctrine of the Church to which are committed the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, etc. printed according to a more exact copy, etc. and some few proofes and wordes added in the margent, etc.

*CG 12. The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven, and Power thereof, according to the VWord of God, etc. tending to reconcile some present differences about Discipline, etc. 1644. Printed again the same year.

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*CG 16. The Way of the Churches of Christ in New England, or the Way of Churches walking in Brotherly equalitie, or co-ordination, without Subjection of one Church to another. Measured and examined by the Golden Reed of the Sanctuary. Containing a full Declaration of the Church-way in all Particulars. 1645.

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