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'Forget not the wombe that bare you, and the brest that gave you sucke':

John Cotton's Sermons on Canticles and Revelation

And His Apocalyptic Vision For England

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The University of Edinburgh

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed by me, that the research it contains is my own, and that none of it has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.



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November 2008

Abstract

The tumultuous events that erupted in Scotland and England c.1637 – 1650 sparked tremendous interest in John Cotton. As a result he turned to two Biblical books, Canticles and Revelation, to determine whether those events that transpired across the Atlantic Ocean were of apocalyptic significance. Cotton's exegetical findings concluded that prophetic fulfilment was indeed unfolding and more importantly that the glorious millennium foretold in Scripture was imminent. As the leading polemicist of New England's Congregational way, Cotton infused his defence of this controversial church polity with apocalyptic importance. However, he did not make the case for the exclusive role of the colonies in the grand scheme of eschatological reformation but New England's support for reform in his native country, England. This dissertation continues the revision of scholarship that moulded Perry Miller's *Errand into the Wilderness* thesis into an exclusive self-consciousness of divine intentions for the New England colonies by arguing for England's prominence in Cotton's eschatological vision. In the process, Cotton's ecclesiology will be presented in an eschatological context. Moreover, this thesis demonstrates that Cotton understood New England's experiment with non-separating congregational ecclesiology as contributing to English reformation.

Chapter One examines the only pre-migration source that concentrated on prophetic themes, Cotton's sermons on Canticles, which were preached sometime during the 1620s. Cotton presented an optimistic outlook on the church's future based on the recognition of a godly remnant he believed existed in his own parish of St. Botolph's as well as others scattered throughout England. Cotton recognized that

a lingering presence of popery threatened England's covenantal standing with God and that the faithful remnant upheld the nation's covenantal commitment to Biblical purity and obedience. Chapter Two re-examines the events surrounding Cotton's expulsion from England. A careful assessment demonstrates that Cotton's only desire was to remain in England at any cost, particularly in fear of being cast a separatist. However, Cotton became convinced of the legitimacy of exile to New England through the belief that from America Cotton could continue in active service to the English church. Though Cotton did not reject England's role in apocalyptic fulfilment, Cotton came to see Congregationalism as the primary agency through which Antichrist would be defeated and the millennial church ushered into history. This is clearly seen when Cotton returned to preach from Canticles a second time in the 1640s with the added accent on soteriology and piety. Chapter Three argues that Cotton used Scotland's resistance against Charles I and prelacy to exhort England towards adopting Congregationalism. Cotton praised the Scottish Covenanters for their resistance against prelacy, which Cotton identified as the image of the beast from Revelation, in the Bishops' Wars and the National Covenant. Through those events, Cotton demonstrated that God's apocalyptic strategy for the Antichrist's demise had resumed. However, Cotton also took the opportunity to demonstrate that the Kirk's Presbyterianism resembled prelacy's hierarchical and national structure and exhorted England to adopt New England's Congregationalism. Chapter Four demonstrates that Cotton was overwhelmed with optimism in the early 1650s based upon the signs of apocalyptic providences in the purging of Parliament, Charles I's execution and England's victory over Scotland at Dunbar in September 1650. To Cotton, Cromwell's victory at Dunbar was the indisputable sign that divine

providence stood in favour of Congregationalism over Presbyterianism and that God's presence endured with England.

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I dedicate this thesis to

Sun Young,

For her unwavering love and encouragement to me

And faith and hope in me

Without you this would not have been possible

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Introduction

I. Current State of John Cotton Studies:

The Need for a Devoted Study of Cotton's Eschatology

Scholars of both New England and English puritan studies have recognized John Cotton's profound contribution to the development of apocalyptic theology during the early modern period. However, only a single devoted study of Cotton's own eschatology has been conducted. This thesis will examine key sermons that Cotton preached from two Biblical prophetic texts: Canticles and Revelation. Those homilies were kindled by reports of reformation across the Atlantic. Cotton became convinced that historical circumstances between c.1640 and c. 1650 were precursory events to the imminent millennium. His excitement grew as each report reached him. Moreover, Cotton saw news from England as confirmation that his interpretation of apocalyptic prophecies was accurate. This study will also assess the impact Cotton's ecclesiology had upon his eschatology. Contrary to what many scholars have previously contended, the case is made that Cotton's vision of the end of time was not centred on the colonies; New England would not lead the global godly community into the millennium. Rather, Cotton appointed England to that pre-eminent role and clung to an apocalyptic outlook that anticipated his native country as the nation through which God's people would finally end the tyranny of Antichrist.

Cotton was a profound apocalyptic thinker of the seventeenth century. Arguably, his expositions on Biblical prophetic texts defined the eschatological consciousness of early New England. Cotton's expositions on canonical apocalyptic

sources were first preached to colonists. However, several of those homilies were later printed in England and afforded the watching world insight into the mind of this profound end time thinker and access into the apocalyptic consciousness that was being cultivated among New Englanders. Cotton's exhortations on eschatology evidenced what he had contended for so long, that neither he, nor New England churches had separated from the true and elect English Church. At the heart of Cotton's eschatological vision stood the ecclesiastical reform of England.

Research on apocalyptic thought of the early modern period has recently seen a revival. Irena Backus examined the eschatological thought during the Protestant Reformation.¹ Speaking of the seventeenth-century, Richard Muller noted that eschatology was the most diverse of the post-reformation doctrinal loci, both in its formulation and trajectories of interpretation.² Arguably, the post-reformation period was an era richer in apocalyptic activity and consciousness than the age of the reformers. If anything, post-reformation thinkers, including Cotton, were more daring and adventurous in their interaction with Revelation. Neither John Calvin nor Ulrich Zwingli produced exegetical works on Revelation.³ Recently, Crawford

¹ Irena Backus, "The Beast: Interpretations of Daniel 7:2-9 and Apocalypse 13:1-4, 11-12 in Lutheran, Zwinglian and Calvinist Circles in the Late Sixteenth Century," *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, no. 3 (2000), 59-77, Irena Dorota Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich, and Wittenberg*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

² Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, c. 1520 to c. 1725*, 2nd ed., 4 vols., vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2003), 420.

³ Calvin's reticence was due to his aversion to speculative theology. Calvin was convinced that any effort to make sense of Revelation's enigmatic prophecies would, at best, produce minimal certainty, see Heinrich Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955). Zwingli simply did not believe that Revelation was canonical, see Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth Century Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and the English Reformation; from John*

Gribben worked on eschatological thought among puritans. The need for Gribben's study was based on the correct assessment that apocalyptic theology clearly remains an area deserving of further scholarly exploration. He approached this profound area of historiography on a wider scale. But the importance of further research rightly applies to the individuals, like Cotton, who contributed to the movement of early modern millennial thought.⁴ The value of micro-examinations of key apocalyptic thinkers was recently recognised in Jeffrey Jue's study on Joseph Mede.⁵

Interest in puritan eschatology has produced some treatment on Cotton's contributions to apocalyptic historiography. In 1992, Avihu Zakai's book, *Exile and Kingdom*, a revision of his doctoral thesis, examined the great migration to the New World and its motivating eschatological ideals.⁶ Zakai's was followed by Theodore Dwight Bozeman's work, *To Live Ancient Lives*.⁷ Both Zakai's and Bozeman's works demonstrate the present warrant for continued attention on puritan eschatology. In fact, Zakai and Bozeman greatly depended on Cotton's eschatology to support their respective arguments. However, neither is a devoted study of Cotton's thought.

Bale to John Foxe and Thomas Brightman, The Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics; 8 (Abingdon: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1978), 45. Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli's successor at Zurich did compose sermons on Revelation see Heinrich Bullinger, *A Hundred Sermons Upon the Apocalips of Jesu Christe* (1561).

⁴ Crawford Gribben, *Puritan Millennium: Literature & Theology, 1550-1682* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 20-21.

⁵ Jeffrey K. Jue, *Heaven Upon Earth: Joseph Mede (1586-1638) and the Legacy of Millenarianism* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006).

⁶ Avihu Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom: History and apocalypse in the Puritan Migration to America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁷ Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, by the University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

Academic interests in Cotton's historical and theological contributions have come from various angles. The attraction speaks to the importance Cotton's theology has played in early modern historical theology. Arguably, he was the most profound New England theologian prior to Jonathan Edwards. Cotton was not an obscure figure who requires extensive justification to warrant a study of his theology. Some scholars have been attracted by Cotton's debates with Roger Williams on religious toleration and freedom.⁸ Others have focused on Cotton's rhetoric and preaching style.⁹ Biographical and historical studies have also been conducted.¹⁰

⁸ Elisabeth Feist Hirsch, "John Cotton and Roger Williams: Their Controversy Concerning Religious Liberty," *Church History* 10, no. 1 (Mar., 1941), 38-51; Henry Bamford Parkes, "John Cotton and Roger Williams Debate Toleration 1644-1652," *The New England Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (Oct., 1931), 735-756; Jesper Rosenmeier, "The Teacher and the Witness: John Cotton and Roger Williams," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 25, no. 3 (Jul., 1968), 408-431; Irwin H. Polishook, *Roger Williams, John Cotton, and religious freedom, a controversy in new and old New England* (Englewood, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1967).

⁹ See Helle M. Alpert, "Robert Keyne: Notes of Sermons by John Cotton and Proceedings of the First Church of Boston from 23 November 1639 to 1 June 1640" (PhD diss., Tufts University, 1974). Alpert's study is not an examination of Cotton's style of rhetoric but it provides a transcription of the sermons Cotton preached. See also Jesper Rosenmeier, "'Clearing the Medium': A Reevaluation of the Puritan Plain Style in Light of John Cotton's A Practicall Commentary upon the First Epistle Generall of John," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Ser., 37, no. 4 (Oct., 1980), 577-91; Teresa Andrea Toulouse, "The Aesthetic of Persuasion: Plain Style and Audience in John Cotton, Benjamin Colman, and William Ellery Channing" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1980); David Albert Simmons, "John Cotton's sermonic style: The use of figures of repetition" (ThD diss., Boston University School of Theology, 1995).

¹⁰ See Alice Farwell Warren, "John Cotton: The Father of Boston" (PhD diss., The University of Wisconsin - Madison, 1929); James H. Laird, "The Influence of John Cotton in the Massachusetts Bay Colony" (PhD diss., Boston University Graduate School, 1947); Donald Robert Come, "John Cotton, Guide of the Chosen People" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1949); Larzer Ziff, "John Cotton: Congregationalist, Theocrat" (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 1955). Larzer Ziff, *Career of John Cotton* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962), remains the standard biographical account for Cotton. Other good treatments on Cotton's life and work are Everett Emerson, *John Cotton: Revised Edition* (Boston, MA: G.K. Hall & Co., 1990); Alexander Wilson M'Clure, *The Life of John Cotton*

Jesper Rosenmeier has even discussed Cotton's view on usury.¹¹ The most popular area of study has been and clearly remains Cotton's soteriology and his understanding of the doctrines of salvation.¹² Recently, Janice Knight, Michael

(Boston: Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, 1846). With the recent contribution of Cotton's letters and the amount of scholarship that has been produced, over four decades worth, since Ziff's work, a new biographical work or even an intellectual biographical study are needed. See John Cotton, *Correspondence of John Cotton*, ed. Sargent Bush Jr. (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

¹¹ Jesper Rosenmeier, "John Cotton on Usury," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Ser., 47, no. 4 (Oct., 1990), 548-65.

¹² For doctoral studies on the subject of Cotton's soteriology see David Mark Stevens, "John Cotton and Thomas Hooker: The Rhetoric of the Holy Spirit" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1972); Erik Fraser Storlie, "Grace and Works, Enlightenment and Practice: Paradox and Poetry in John Cotton, Jonathan Edwards, and Dogen Zenji" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1976); Ann Marilyn Kibbey, "The Language of the Spirit: Typology in John Cotton and William Whitaker" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1977); Grover Albers, "The Heart Divided or John Cotton's Spatial Epistemology of the Knowledge of Christ" (PhD diss., St. John's University, 1980); John Robert Higgins, "Aspects of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit During the Antinomian Controversy of New England with Special Reference to John Cotton and Anne Hutchinson" (ThD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1984); Nancy Joy Shaw, "Speaking for the Spirit: Cotton, Shepard, Edwards, Emerson" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1988); Jean Elizabeth Cameron, "John Cotton's Role in the Trials of Anne Hutchinson" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1991); Lisa Anne Whitney, "Grace in which a man may swimme": The rhetoric of motion in the sermons of John Cotton" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2002). A recent study, P.R. Schaefer, "The spiritual brotherhood on the habits of the heart: Cambridge Protestants and the doctrine of sanctification from William Perkins to Thomas Shepard" (DPhil diss., Oxford University, 1994), included Cotton and Shepard in the study of this line of Cambridge thinkers. Also see William K. B. Stoever, "Nature, Grace and John Cotton: The Theological Dimension in the New England Antinomian Controversy," *Church History* 44 (Mar., 1975), 22-33; Jesper Rosenmeier, "New England's Perfection: The Image of Adam and the Image of Christ in the Antinomian Crisis, 1634 to 1638," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 27, no. 3 (Jul., 1970), 435-459; R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 110-117, 167-183; Michael Colacurcio, "Primitive Comfort: The Spiritual Witness of John Cotton," *English Literary History* 67 (2000), 655-695; Julie Sievers, "Refiguring the Song of Songs: John Cotton's 1655 sermon and the Antinomian Controversy," *The New England Quarterly* 76, no. 1 (Mar., 2003), 73-107.

Winship, and Theodore Dwight Bozeman have, in varying degrees, discussed Cotton's involvement in the Antinomian Controversy.¹³

Beyond the realm of puritan soteriology and ecclesiology, scholars have also recognized Cotton's importance in early modern apocalyptic historiography. During the 1980s, three doctoral dissertations were produced by Michael Mooney, John Hales, and Avihu Zakai that addressed American millenarian thought. Mooney included Cotton in an examination that dealt with the ideas of Roger Williams, Cotton Mather, Jonathan Edwards and Charles Chauncy.¹⁴ Hales constructed a similar study but extended the purview of his research into the mid nineteenth century.¹⁵ Zakai heavily depended on Cotton's eschatological sermons to defend his thesis that the great migration to the New World was eschatologically motivated to establish the New Jerusalem.¹⁶ In addition to doctoral research, J. F. Maclear noted

¹³ Knight's work is not specifically about the Controversy however she deals with Cotton and the Controversy in chapter 1 of her book, Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). The books by Winship and Bozeman solely address the Antinomian Controversy. See Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 211-305; Michael P. Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Free Grace in Massachusetts, 1636-1641* (Princeton, NJ: Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002).

¹⁴ Michael Eugene Mooney, "Millennialism and Antichrist in New England, 1630 – 1760" (PhD diss., Syracuse University, 1982).

¹⁵ John Richard Hales, "Time's Last Offspring: Millennialism in America from John Cotton to James Fenimore Cooper" (PhD diss., State University of New York at Binghamton, 1985). Hales argued that Cotton, along with John Winthrop, formulated an optimistic eschatology that anticipated New England leading the world into the millennium. However this eventually declined into an expectation of destruction for America in the outlook of James Fenimore Cooper.

¹⁶ Avihu Zakai, "Exile and Kingdom: Reformation, Separation, and the Millennial Quest in the Formation of Massachusetts and Its Relationship with England, 1628-1660" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1983). Zakai's book, *Exile and Kingdom* is the revised published version of his dissertation.

Cotton's part in a discussion of the development of Fifth Monarchy eschatology in early New England.¹⁷ Bozeman devoted a section of *To Live Ancient Lives* to Cotton's eschatology in support of his revision of scholarship on puritan millennialism.¹⁸ Bozeman and Zakai have joined the list of scholars who have recognized Cotton's lineage with the great English apocalypticist, Thomas Brightman.¹⁹ Interestingly, Bryan Ball engrafted Cotton's New England apocalyptic sermons into his study of English eschatological thought during the seventeenth-century.²⁰ In 1987, Deok Kyo Oh completed his doctoral research which currently stands as the only exclusively focused study of Cotton's eschatology.²¹

The lack of concentrated research on Cotton's career as an apocalypticist is puzzling especially considering the deep fascination Cotton held for Scripture's prophetic texts and his prolific career as an apocalyptic thinker. Cotton preached extensively from canonical apocalyptic books over the course of his career that spanned both England and New England. Five sets of apocalyptic sermons that

¹⁷ J.F. Maclear, "New England and the Fifth Monarchy: The Quest for the Millennium in Early American Puritanism," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Ser., 32, no. 2 (Apr., 1975), 225.

¹⁸ See Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives*, 237-262.

¹⁹ Ibid., 198-216, 221-222, 239; Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom*, 63-64, 179. Other who previously connected Cotton to Brightman see Bryan Ball notes that Cotton was not only influenced by Brightman but continuously interacted with his predecessor throughout his own expositions, see Bryan Ball, *A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 134, 162, 169, 241-242.

²⁰ Ibid., 57-58, 61, 68, 69, 120, 131, 134, 146-147, 154, 160, 162,.

²¹ Deok Kyo Oh, "The Churches Resurrection: John Cotton's Eschatological Understanding of the Ecclesiastical Reformation" (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1987).

contained one thousand and four pages of text were printed.²² Cotton's interest in eschatology began in Lincolnshire during the 1620s when he turned to the Old Testament book Canticles.²³ In New England, Cotton became America's first preacher to extensively expound on the theme of the end of time.²⁴ During the 1640s, Cotton delved deeply into the enigmatic prophecies of Revelation.²⁵ He

²² Cotton's output is comparable to Thomas Brightman, *The Workes of that Famous, Reverend, and Learned Divine, Mr. THO: Brightman* (London, 1644), which totaled 1094 pages. In fact Brightman preached through the whole book of Revelation, and the entirety of Daniel. Cotton's published works included three sermons of Revelation. Moreover, it may be said that Cotton may have been more influential since Cotton was preaching his expositions to a wide audience whereas Brightman's were not preached expositions.

²³ Cotton was elected vicar of St. Botolph's in Lincolnshire in 1612. Cotton applied a historical prophetic reading of Canticles. During the seventeenth century that approach was considered atypical. Further discussion regarding these sermons will be provided in chapter 1. The sermons were printed approximately twenty years later; John Cotton, *A Brief Exposition of the Whole Book of Canticles, or, Song of Solomon; Lively Describing the Estate of the Church in All the Ages Thereof, Both Jewish and Christian, to This Day...By John Cotton* (London: Printed for Philip Nevil, 1642). This printing was not authorized by Cotton. However, in the preface of a subsequent work, a second set of Canticles sermons, Cotton did not refute any of the material of the 1642 version.

²⁴ Cotton departed from England in 1633. The circumstances surrounding his emigration and their connection to his eschatology are discussed in chapter 2. It is uncertain whether Cotton, or Thomas Shepard, was the first in New England to preach a sermon on eschatology. Thomas Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins* (London, 1660) was preached between 1636 and 1640; see also *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Shepard, Thomas." However, according to Susanna Bell, Cotton preached from Revelation two prior to Shepard's preaching. It is possible that Cotton's sermon was preached after Shepard had already begun to preach his *Parable* sermons. See Susanna Bell, *The Legacy of a Dying Mother To Her Children, Being the Experiences of Mrs. Susanna Bell* (London, 1673), 48-49.

²⁵ The exact date of when Cotton began to preach from Revelation and Canticles in New England is not known. Sargent Bush concluded that there is material in Cotton's *Powring Out* that seems to respond to or directly referenced a letter written to him and John Wilson by John Reyner and William Brewster in 1639. For the letter see John Cotton, *The Correspondence of John Cotton*, ed. Sargent Bush Jr. (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press), 291-293; see also p. 6 for Bush's own comments.

presented his exegetical findings as Thursday lectures which were widely attended not only by Bostonians but also colonists from surrounding towns.²⁶ Cotton's expositions of chapters thirteen, sixteen and twenty of Revelation were later published. However, there is evidence that Cotton did not restrict himself only to those three chapters of Revelation and that in fact he preached from at least six chapters from John's prophecy.²⁷ Interestingly, Cotton's interest in the millennium did not take him to the book of Daniel as it had for Brightman. Rather, around the same time Cotton began to exegete Revelation, Cotton also returned to Canticles a second time. On that subsequent occasion, in New England, Cotton expanded his previous Canticles expositions that were preached before his exile to the New World and approximately twenty years prior back in England.²⁸

The existence of two printed sources of expositions on the same Biblical book is a rarity. In Cotton's case, the circumstances that separate the two occasions make this historiographical situation even more interesting and full of possibilities for discussions of theological development. Typically, scholars demonstrate intellectual development in a particular thinker's ideals by citing support which has been extracted from two or more sources of different theological loci or expositions of varying Scriptural origination. In Cotton's case, a comparison may be based on

²⁶ See Thomas Lechford, *Plain Dealing or, Newes from New-England* (London, 1642), 19.

²⁷ John Cotton, *An Exposition Upon the Thirteenth Chapter of the Revelation* (London, 1655); John Cotton, *The Poring out of the Seven Vials* (London, 1642); John Cotton, *The Churches Resurrection* (London, 1642). The evidence on Cotton's other expositions apart from these three chapters is provided in chapter 3.

²⁸ John Cotton, *A Brief Exposition with Practical Observations Upon the Whole Book of Canticles* (London, 1655). Further discussion of this work is provided in Chapter Two. To distinguish between the two sets of Canticles sermons the works will be referred to with their years of publication throughout the course of the thesis.

two sets of sermons that were preached from the same Biblical book, Canticles. Moreover, Cotton personally acknowledged that the second version was an expansion of the first.²⁹ There have been scholars who have recognised Cotton's sermons on Canticles as an excellent area of research. Christopher Hill praised Cotton's *Canticles* (1642), along with Brightman's Canticles expositions, as both "masterpieces of scholastic ingenuity."³⁰ Four researchers examined these sermons in scholarly journals. However, only one of the four focused on Cotton's emphasis of eschatology. Prudence Steiner compared Cotton's approach to Canticles with Edward Taylor's.³¹ Jesper Rosenmeier conducted a historical study of the context surrounding the preaching of *Canticles* (1642).³² Julie Sievers subsequently offered her analysis of *Canticles* (1655) but chose to highlight the soteriological implications.³³ Jeffrey Hammond's examination of both sets of sermons is the only

²⁹ Chapter Two will provide discussion of *Canticles* (1655). Attention will be given to comparing the latter edition with the earlier set of sermons. A case could be made for a devoted study on Cotton's sermons on Canticles simply based on this unique historiographical situation.

³⁰ Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London: Penguin Press, 1993), 368.

³¹ Prudence Steiner, "A Garden of Spices in New England: John Cotton's and Edward Taylor's Use of Song of Songs," in *Allegory, Myth, and Symbol*, ed. Morton W. Bloomfield (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 227-243. Steiner does not expound on the eschatological dimension however he certainly recognized this as intentional in Cotton's approach to Canticles (1642). Ball added an appendix on the "Apocalyptic Significance of the Song of Solomon" in his book. What is interesting is that Ball rightly included Cotton's *Canticles* (1642) in his discussion. However Ball did not include *Canticles* (1655). This is expected since he limited his examination of sermons on the Song of Solomon between 1610 and 1650. But it is strange that Ball did not extend beyond 1650 considering his book covered eschatological thought until 1660, see Ball, *Great Expectations*, 239-242.

³² Jesper Rosenmeier, "'Eaters and Non-Eaters': John Cotton's a Brief Exposition Of...Canticles (1642) in Light of Boston's (Lincs.) Religious and Civil Conflicts, 1619-1622," *Early American Literature* 36, no. 2 (March 2001), 148-181.

³³ Sievers, "Refiguring the Song of Songs," 73-107.

work that looked into what Cotton identified in both sets of sermon as Canticles' primary theme: prophetic history.³⁴ Moreover, none of these treatments adequately provide comparative analysis between the two sets of Canticles sermons.

Over twenty years have lapsed since Oh introduced his doctoral research on Cotton's eschatology. The number of studies conducted over the past two decades on the period of the seventeenth century regarding both sides of the Atlantic is too high to recount here. Sievers' and Rosenmeier's arguments provide some indication of what has been uncovered on Cotton's use of Canticles. In addition, Sargent Bush has recently performed an invaluable service to Cotton researchers, as well as scholars of the early modern period, in his compilation of Cotton's correspondence into a single volume.³⁵ Virtually none of Cotton's correspondences were available to Oh. This project will frequently cite references to eschatology made in correspondence Cotton sent and received.

The need to revisit and further understand Cotton's visions of the end of history and his anticipation of the glorious millennium is clear. But the purpose of this study is not simply to add to an area of Cottonian research that has been lagging. A study of Cotton's theology, or any other figure for that matter, may be approached through many different avenues. However, the danger in conducting a narrow study is that only one facet of thought is explored and delineated at the expense of all others. But in fact, the examination of a particular aspect of theology of a reformed thinker, in this case eschatology, should actually provide greater understanding into

³⁴ Jeffrey A. Hammond, "The Bride in Redemptive Time: John Cotton and the Canticles Controversy," *The New England Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (Mar., 1983), 78-102. For Cotton's recognition of Canticles' primary focus see Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 9-10; Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 1-2.

other areas of thought. For Cotton, as well as many other puritans, the individual strands of theology were all connected. Cotton, like many others, was extremely concerned to detail and unpack the individual disciplines of Christian theology. However, post-reformation protestant theologians never intended their treatises to disrupt the unity of dogma which they had inherited from their predecessors in the reformation.³⁶ Unity of theology was of the utmost concern for Calvin and all other reformed writers.³⁷ Like Calvin, Cotton was a systematic theologian. Individual loci under the rubric of Christian theology were understood to be correlated to each other. This coherence enabled Cotton to construct catechisms to be used by members of their parishes.³⁸

This study will demonstrate that while Cotton wrestled with enigmatic prophecies he constantly pondered their implications on the condition and form of the church. Michael Winship observed this dynamic relationship between New England ecclesiology and eschatology and noted that the development of congregationalism enabled New Englanders to gain greater comprehension of millenarian concepts.³⁹ James Maclear argued that scholars have often overlooked

³⁵ Cotton, *Correspondence*.

³⁶ Richard A. Muller, *The Study of Theology: From Biblical Interpretation to Contemporary Formulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 32.

³⁷ Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: Volume 1 Prolegomena to Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 26-27; see also Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Thought* (Yale University Press, 2003), 74.

³⁸ Cotton had composed a catechism while at St. Botolph's in Lincolnshire. Timothy Van Vleteren to John Cotton, 26 October 1629, in Cotton, *Correspondence*, 134. See also John Cotton, *Milk for Babes* (London, 1646). For a discussion on this work see Emerson, *John Cotton*, 96-102.

³⁹ Winship, *Making Heretics*, 61.

the unique “eschatological dimension” in New England congregationalism.⁴⁰ Jesper Rosenmeier demonstrated this in his work on Cotton’s involvement in the Antinomian Controversy. Rosenmeier recognized Cotton’s persistent analogy between the progress of redemptive history and an individual’s sanctification. According to Rosenmeier, Cotton believed that the believer’s “new image was of the crucified and resurrected Christ, not Adam,” just as the world “Created by the Holy Spirit, the new kingdom in America would be as different from the Garden of Eden as Christ’s image was from Adam’s.”⁴¹ Similarly this project will correlate Cotton’s ecclesiology with his eschatology. For Cotton, the study of end time was as much about the visible church on earth as it was about the defeat of Antichrist, the return of Christ and the dawning of the millennium.

II. Revision of Perry Miller’s ‘errand’ and Cotton’s apocalyptic theology

Avihu Zakai was correct to recognize that “Any discussion of the Puritan mission in the settlement of America, clearly must take into account not only Perry Miller’s famous essay “Errand into the Wilderness,” but the revisions of his arguments as well.”⁴² Equally, any consideration of Cotton’s eschatology must include reflection of the ideals surrounding the formation of New England and its correlation to the anticipation of Biblical prophecy. Miller’s work inspired subsequent scholars who propelled numerous arguments that for Cotton and fellow colonists, New England, not England, was to lead God’s people into the millennium.

⁴⁰ Maclear, “New England and the Fifth Monarchy,” 229.

⁴¹ Rosenmeier, “New England’s Perfection,” 439.

⁴² Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom*, 156.

Moreover, beyond the functional prominence, scholars contended that New Englanders identified the America as the location of the New Jerusalem. But recently, Miller's thesis has suffered tremendous criticism at the hands of revisionists. This thesis agrees with those findings and asserts that Cotton's eschatology actually centred on England's pre-eminent role in apocalyptic fulfilment.

However, the problem with Zakai's *Exile and Kingdom*, as Charles Hambrick-Stowe has observed, is that it does not significantly interact or contend with revisionist arguments.⁴³ Zakai mentioned the emergence and importance of revision; however he goes to assert his previous pre-revision thesis without serious consideration of his opponents. Moreover, the need for another devoted study of Cotton's eschatology resonates with the fact that Oh's research is pre-revision as well. Oh's thesis expounded on the exceptionalism of England which was believed to have been transferred to the New England colonies. This study does not deny that Cotton and others conceived of some type of errand for New England. Rather, the argument is that the errand was England-centred which was supported by the colonies. Relying on revisionists' arguments, this thesis will demonstrate how Cotton envisioned the unfolding of prophetic history and the roles England and New England were to play in that apocalyptic drama. Cotton's esteem for England as the forerunner of prophetic history is evident throughout his theological writings.

In 1982, Francis Butts described Miller as the "premier American intellectual historian of the present century and the 'giant' among students of colonial New

⁴³ Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, "Not the Main Event: Zakai vs. Bozeman," *Reviews in American History* 20, no. 3 (Sep., 1992), 308-312.

England.”⁴⁴ In New England apocalyptic historiographical research, Miller’s presence is still felt, particularly as a result of his essay, “Errand into the Wilderness.” Written in 1952, it was a seminal work. Prior to its presentation, modern scholars had not conceived the idea of a puritan ‘errand’ to New England.⁴⁵ Miller originally intended this to describe general efforts at reformation and the mindset of the second and third generations in New England of the American Jeremiads.⁴⁶ He discussed the dual definitions of the word “errand” when considering the common theme of failure in the writings between 1663 and 1677, suggesting that members of the founding generation either understood themselves to be sent on a mission or to have performed one of their own.⁴⁷

Miller’s discussion of ‘errand’ immediately became influential in American puritan research. Studies regarding the origins of New England puritanism were raised to another level. Rather than becoming another piece of scholarship receiving critical interaction it served as a springboard for subsequent theorists. Taking Miller’s suggestion about the definition of a conscious errand, coupled with the key reference to John Winthrop’s “city upon a hill,”⁴⁸ later scholars constructed the thesis

⁴⁴ Francis Butts, “The Myth of Perry Miller,” *The American Historical Review* 87, no. 3 (1982), 665.

⁴⁵ Miller’s lecture was first delivered at Brown University and subsequently published as an article. It was later included in a book under the same title, *Errand into the Wilderness*, along with other articles he had written. Perry Miller, “Errand into the Wilderness,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Ser., 10, no. 1 (1953), 3-32. The book published later was Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁸ See John Winthrop’s sermon, “A Modell of Christian Charity” (1630) in *Winthrop Papers: Volume II, 1630-1649*, ed. Allyn B. Forbes (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1931), 295. Winthrop’s sermon is also found in David D. Hall,

that the original journey was a mission consciously commissioned by God to usher in the millennium and establish the New Jerusalem in New England.⁴⁹ This embodiment of a biblical prescribed commonwealth and church served as a model for both England and Europe to emulate. The thought continued that Massachusetts and other colonies were then given divine significance and encompassed the climax of both the history and expectations of the whole world. An essay without any eschatological content or intent had been infused with apocalyptic and millennial aspects.

Miller's errand thesis was adopted by scholars like Sacvan Bercovitch and Jesper Rosenmeier. Bercovitch applied this to the rich typological language of puritans.⁵⁰ Typology, Bercovitch argued, was understood to be the chief agent in

Puritans in the New World: A Critical Anthology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 164-170.

⁴⁹ For scholarship that has taken great advantage of the city upon a hill thesis see, Loren Baritz, *City on a Hill: A History of Ideas and Myths in America* (New York: Wiley, 1964), 17; Sacvan Bercovitch, "Typology in Puritan New England: The Williams-Cotton Controversy," *American Quarterly* 19, no. 2, Part I (1967), 190; Lawrence Arthur Cremin, *American Education: The Colonial Experience, 1607-1783* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 15; Richard S. Dunn, *Puritans and Yankees: The Winthrop Dynasty of New England, 1630-1717* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), 11; Kai Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: Wiley, 1966); Jesper Rosenmeier, "The Teacher and the Witness"; Rosenmeier, "New England's Perfection"; David E. Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death: A Study in Religion, Culture, and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Harry S. Stout, "University Men in New England 1620-1660: A Demographical Analysis," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 4, no. 3 (1974), 396-397; John F. Wilson, "Studies in Puritan Millenarianism under the Early Stuarts" (ThD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1962). Also see Philip F. Gura, *A Glimpse of Zion's Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620-1660* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1984); Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980); Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Ideas of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

⁵⁰ Sacvan Bercovitch, "New England Epic: Cotton Mather's Magnalia Christi Americana," *English Literary History* 33, no. 3 (1966), 337-50; Bercovitch,

moulding their imagination. Bercovitch believed that typology enabled New Englanders to correspond their own circumstances and experiences with those of the Biblical narratives. Hence the development of progress in the stories of Biblical persons and communities, with their glorious eschatological anticipations were now employed to make sense of the colonial existence.⁵¹ Typology provided the framework from which scholars argued that divine intention motivated a puritan errand to America. Biblical typology informed the colonists that they were the literal and spiritual heirs of the Old Testament promises and prophecies. Hence, according to Bercovitch, New England puritans understood their purpose by applying Israel's journey to Canaan as their own sojourn from England to the New World. Bercovitch cited Cotton as an example of someone in New England who held fast to the literal parallel between the children of Israel and the chosen people of the Bible. The theocracy of Israel functioned as an archetype for the church-state. Bercovitch then extended this correlation and signified the migration to New England as Israel's antitypical journey to Canaan, as "a preview of the New Jerusalem."⁵² Moreover, Bercovitch argued that Cotton and fellow New England divines informed New

"Typology in Puritan New England." For discussions about Bercovitch's use of Miller's work see Donald Weber, "Historicizing the Errand," *American Literary History* 2, no. 1 (1990), 102. David Harlan wrote that Bercovitch is understood by most scholars as an extension of Miller and simply filling in the gaps of Miller's interpretative structure, see David Harlan, "A People Blinded from Birth: American History According to Sacvan Bercovitch," *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 3 (1991), 951-52. Arne Delfs saw Bercovitch's work as complex defences of Miller's research. Further, Delfs claims, again Harlan, that Bercovitch actually misread Miller's typological discussion. Delfs believed that Bercovitch felt he was compensating for what Miller had ignored but in fact because Bercovitch misread Miller, he ended up extending Miller's arguments; see Arne Delfs, "Anxieties of Influence: Perry Miller and Sacvan Bercovitch," *The New England Quarterly* 70, no. 4 (1997), 602.

⁵¹ Harlan, "A People Blinded," 953-954.

England colonists that they were “Israel redivivus” and they were to see themselves as the biblical remnant.⁵³ Rosenmeier agreed with Bercovitch that the great migration to America was perceived by New Englanders as a journey to Canaan. Regarding Cotton, Rosenmeier added that the divine perceived the Congregational churches in the wilderness of the Bay Colony to be the most exact realization of the Apostolic Church. Rosenmeier saw Cotton’s sermon to Winthrop, *Gods Promise to His Plantations*, as an endorsement of Winthrop’s work to establish God’s eternal kingdom in New England. America was conceived as the land of promise.⁵⁴ Primarily through the medium of American exceptionalism, typology became attractive in American puritan studies.⁵⁵ Bercovitch’s typological conclusions and millennialism were easily cultivated in the 1960s during the Vietnam War, for it conveniently supported the American exceptionalist claim.⁵⁶

New England exceptionalism was greatly supported by William Haller’s book, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation*. Haller’s book propelled the millenarian and apocalyptic theses of New England scholars even further by arguing that John Foxe had created and developed the concept of the elect nation for England.⁵⁷ As a result of Foxe’s work, English and God’s providential histories had

⁵² Bercovitch, “Typology in Puritan New England,” 176.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁵⁴ Rosenmeier, “Teacher and the Witness,” 421-422, 426-427. Cotton’s sermon is *Gods Promise to His Plantations: As it was Delivered in a sermon* (London, 1630).

⁵⁵ Philip Gleason, “World War II and the Development of American Studies,” *American Quarterly* 36 (1984), 343-58.

⁵⁶ Cecilia Tichi, “American Literary Studies to the Civil War,” in *Redrawing the Boundaries*, eds. Giles Gunn, and Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Modern Language Association, 1992), 212-213.

⁵⁷ William Haller, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (London: J. Cape, 1963).

become one. This had grave implications for New England historians with Haller himself proposing a correlation between England's particular nationalism and the ideals of New England's founding members. Scholars argued that the great migration was a mass response against the impending judgment on England in light of her failure to achieve reformation. England's loss as the elect nation was believed to be conceived as transferred over to New England as the place where God would establish his eternal kingdom. These implications were immediately assimilated into New England millennialism discussions.⁵⁸ The combination of an elect consciousness, failure to accomplish reformation, along with a trajectory of the new world to start anew, provided more momentum to a thesis that was already in full stride.

Oh's work was deeply impacted by Haller's work and projected the transition of exceptionalism from England to New England in his study of Cotton's eschatology. The presence of Haller's and Miller's arguments is felt throughout Oh's dissertation. Oh traced the idea of England as the elect nation through the writings of John Bale, John Foxe and Thomas Brightman.⁵⁹ Oh found in Brightman the pivotal figure in apocalyptic historiography who enabled the shift of God's favour from England to New England. Brightman, by associating England to the lukewarm apocalyptic Church of Laodicea, cast fear into the minds of Englishmen.

⁵⁸ For some examples see Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 35, 215 n. 9; Bremer, 33-34, B. S. Capp, "The Millennium and Eschatology in England," *Past and Present* 57 (1972), 156-62; Joy Gilsdorf, *The Puritan Apocalypse: New England Eschatology in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), 16; Mooney, "Millennialism and Antichrist in New England"; Oh, "Churches Resurrection," 124; see also David D. Hall, "Understanding the Puritans," in *The State of American History*, ed. Herbert J. Bass (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 341-348.

England was forsaken by the Lord and God wrath was imminent. As a result, according to Oh, elect status was transferred from the place of impending judgment to the New World. America had become the “redeemer nation” and the “millennial Kingdom of Christ on earth.”⁶⁰ According to Oh, Cotton pronounced New Englanders “New Israelites,” and America the “New Canaan.”⁶¹

Zakai’s *Exile and Kingdom*, which is a more recent discussion of puritan eschatology, essentially follows the same logic of New England exceptionalism. Interestingly, *Exile and Kingdom* was a revision of his doctoral dissertation. Zakai noted the revisionist arguments that had been asserted prior to his book. However, there is insufficient interaction at all. In fact Zakai has essentially posited the same argument that Oh presented but making use of a wider range of sources to demonstrate that this ideal was not only conceived by Cotton but was a widely held concept that founded and drove the New England colonies. Zakai was also swayed by Haller’s arguments of Foxe’s establishment of England’s elect self consciousness. In Zakai’s words, Foxe depicted England as a “unique embodiment of the prophecies of Revelation.”⁶² In Cotton, Zakai found the pre-eminent expounder of the concept that New England was an apocalyptic and providential wilderness for the Church during those important and formative early years.⁶³

However, in the 1970s, Richard Bauckham and Katharine Firth heavily criticized Haller’s elect nation theory. Bauckham filled a gap in research by focusing

⁵⁹ Ibid., 38, 43, 124.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 51, see also 59, 123, 128, 129, 215.

⁶¹ Ibid., 52-53, see also 124-125.

⁶² Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom*, 37, see also 33-36.

⁶³ Ibid., 167-172, 178-190.

on 16th century English apocalyptic thought while Firth devoted attention to the 17th century.⁶⁴ Both their treatments along with V. N. Olsen's *John Foxe and the Elizabethan Church* took aim at Haller's elect nation theory.⁶⁵ Haller's work had seen over a decade of publications that made great use of his argument without the confirmation of his use of the primary sources of John Bale and John Foxe. Haller failed to utilize the full range of Foxe's primary sources, particularly drawing no references from his commentary on the book of Revelation, when arriving at his conclusion, further basing his thesis solely on the *Book of Martyrs*. Moreover, Firth contended that an examination of another of Foxe's works, *Eicasm*, discourages and denies special status as God's elect nation.⁶⁶ Recently in English studies, Christopher Hill and Patrick Collinson have addressed the issue of England's elect status. Hill argues that the designation of *a* or *the* regarding England's elect nation identity is irrelevant. But, Hill did ultimately conclude that there was no concept of exclusion, rather inclusion into the global elect communities.⁶⁷ Collinson followed and agreed with Hill.⁶⁸

Revision of Haller's thesis soon impacted New England scholarship through the arguments of Andrew Delbanco and Theodore Dwight Bozeman against Miller's

⁶⁴ Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*; Katharine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530-1645* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

⁶⁵ V. Norskov Olsen, *John Foxe and the Elizabethan Church* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

⁶⁶ Firth, *Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain*, 107-108.

⁶⁷ Hill, *English Bible*, 264.

⁶⁸ Patrick Collinson, "Biblical rhetoric: the English nation and national sentiment in the prophetic mode," in *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*, eds. Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 23-24.

'errand.'⁶⁹ Delbanco and Bozeman concurred that as was the case with the widespread acceptance of Haller's work, the mass embrace of Miller's claim by the academy lacked critical interaction with the theories and sources. According to Delbanco, *Errand* was motivated by anger and contempt Miller felt in the face of what he perceived to be a "deep and ubiquitous anti-Americanism" in Europe.⁷⁰ For Bercovitch, the errand was not an ordinary journey but a divinely charged mission to a designated geographical location where Christ would return to establish the New Jerusalem. Delbanco retorted that Bercovitch simply provided the name of the

⁶⁹ Andrew Delbanco, "The Puritan Errand Re-Viewed," *Journal of American Studies* 18, (1984), 339-360; Theodore Dwight Bozeman, "The Puritans: 'Errand into the Wilderness' Reconsidered," *New England Quarterly* 59 (June 1986), 231-251. Delbanco followed his article with, Andrew Delbanco, "Looking Homeward, Going Home: The Lure of England for the Founders of New England," *The New England Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (Sept., 1986), 358-386. For others who cast doubt on the errand see Robert Middlekauff, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 32-33; Larzer Ziff, *Puritanism in America: New Culture in a New World* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 26, 35-45. Francis J. Bremer, *John Winthrop: America's Forgotten Founding Father* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 173-184 provides an excellent analysis of Winthrop's sermon and what was meant by "city upon a hill." Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "Errand to the Indies: Puritan Colonization from Providence Island through the Western Design," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 45, no. 1 (Jan., 1988), 70-99 provides a less direct but still relevant study. By directing the concept errand to the West Indies she cast a broader shadow of application which indirectly contends against exclusive application to New England. See also Susan Hardman Moore, "Popery, Purity and Providence," in *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain*, edited by Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 257-289 and more recently her book, *Pilgrims: New World Settlers & The Call of Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁷⁰ Delbanco, "Puritan Errand Re-Viewed," 344-346; see also Hall, "Understanding the Puritans," 330. Similarly, Reiner Smolinski argued that World War II fostered a strong sense of nationalism in America. As a result scholars began to heavily emphasize typology. The result, Smolinski wrote was that scholars separated "language from doctrine and thus allegorize and metaphorize the literal intent of those typological passages they extract for evidence." See Reiner Smolinski, "Israel Redivivus: The Eschatological Limits of Puritan Typology in New England," *The New England Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (Sept., 1990), 369. Another critique of erroneous application of Biblical typology see Thomas Roche, "Typology, Allegory, and Protestant Poetics," *George Herbert Journal* 13 (1989), 2, 7.

location of the Kingdom of God – America.⁷¹ Delbanco re-examined Bercovitch's reading of Cotton's sermon to the passengers of the *Arbella* and concluded that the sermon did not contain eschatological or geographical content. Further, Delbanco argues that for the founding members, emigration was understood as a substitute for revolution and that by opting for the former the New Englanders "missed the apocalyptic boat".⁷²

Bozeman synthesized criticisms of Haller's thesis and put forward his own compelling case against the suggestion of New England's divine errand. Bozeman first noted that Miller's essay was a thinly documented hypothesis that was ambiguously developed. Moreover, according to Bozeman, scholars should have tested Miller's proposal and recognized the insufficiency of evidence. Bozeman did exactly that and re-examined the primary and secondary sources that errand scholars had used to compose their arguments. Second, Bozeman argued that errand scholars misunderstood Miller's original intention to speak of an errand consciousness among the second and third generations and not the founding New England colonists.⁷³

Bozeman also employed criticisms by Firth and others who disagreed with Haller's elect-nation thesis, and drew implications and applications for New England

⁷¹ Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, 9, 40; Sacvan Bercovitch, "The Image of America from Hermeneutics to Symbolism," in *Early American Literature: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Michael T. Gilmore (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 163; Delbanco, "Puritan Errand Re-Viewed," 348; Jesper Rosenmeier, "Veritas: The Sealing of the Promise," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 16 (1968), 33.

⁷² Delbanco, "Puritan Errand Re-Viewed," 349.

⁷³ Bozeman, "Errand Reconsidered," 232-234. Bozeman noted that Miller failed to cite from sources between 1629 and 1640 aside from the single reference to John Winthrop of a "city upon a hill." He also argued that while Miller suggested the possibility of New England being established as a model to be emulated for the

considerations. Bozeman accentuated the argument that Foxe understood Biblical prophecies as universal and did not apply them exclusively to England.⁷⁴ In addition, Bozeman described the reliance on the “city upon a hill” reference as problematic due to its single occurrence in Winthrop’s writings, and then only in passing and not as the climax to an argument.⁷⁵ Moreover, Bozeman argues that Winthrop’s focus was on the intention of creating a model to guide both Europe and England and that Winthrop’s added notion of returning to England has been ignored.⁷⁶ Bozeman has provided some treatment on Cotton’s eschatology in a revisionist light. However, it was used to argue that puritan eschatology was aimed as restoring the primitive apostolic church rather than an ambiguous futurist millennium.⁷⁷

The endorsement of ‘errand’ in the theses presented by Oh and Zakai is rooted in the assumption that New Englanders were separatists. Zakai wrote that Brightman’s work “drastically altered England’s position ... from Foxe’s elect nation to that sinful church in Revelation ... England could expect nothing but the righteous ire of God.”⁷⁸ The migration then was a response to this impending destruction. Zakai posited a dual definition of the wilderness which he then applied to New England. On the one hand the wilderness was a place of refuge and shelter and on the other hand it was a “Temple of the Lord ... a Garden of the Lord.”⁷⁹ In essence it

purpose of reformation, Miller also correlated this with an intention of returning to England which has been ignored and overlooked by scholars.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 237.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 239-240.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 233-234.

⁷⁷ Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives*, 237-262.

⁷⁸ Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom*, 52.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 163-164.

is simply two facets of a singular definition. For Zakai, Cotton and other New Englanders became convinced of the “urgency of separating from an established corrupted religion.”⁸⁰ God had removed his presence from England and rooted it in America. The striking familiarity with the arguments of separatists like John Robinson is obvious.⁸¹ Separatism was motivated by the conviction that God had forsaken the English Church and it was no longer a true Church. Hence it is apparent that the discussion of Cotton’s eschatology must include not only a discussion of his ecclesiology but also a defence that Cotton was thoroughly and sincerely opposed to separatism.

What will emerge from this revisionist examination of Cotton’s eschatology is an apocalyptic outlook that elevated, above all else, the ecclesiastical reformation of England. New Englanders, in Cotton’s mind, were called to *assist* their native country in their efforts to expel the presence of the Antichrist and usher in the glorious millennium. The primary texts of examination are Cotton’s three printed sermons on Revelation, two published sermons on Canticles, and a Thanksgiving sermon Cotton preached sometime after the execution of Charles I on Revelation 15:3.⁸² The conclusions developed from these materials are supported through the citations on other Cotton primary sources. I will provide the necessary historical background to the homilies Cotton preached on various texts from both Canticles and Revelation. This is necessary because the historical prophetic hermeneutic that Cotton applied to canonical prophetic texts relied heavily upon history. During the

⁸⁰ Ibid., 164.

⁸¹ John Robinson, *A Justification of Separation from the Church of England* (1610).

1640s, Cotton exegeted apocalyptic texts in New England as he received more and more news from England. The result of this study will be the demonstration of continuity in Cotton's eschatology in the focus on England's church reform and development of his apocalyptic theology as he further explored and defined Congregational ecclesiology.

It is helpful at this time to provide an overview of Cotton's apocalyptic theology.⁸² How did Cotton envision the future unfolding of prophetic history? Cotton held to what is commonly referred to as a postmillennial eschatology. Granted, 'postmillennial' is a contemporary term that was not employed during the early modern period. However, its use is helpful to grasp Cotton's eschatology because the label captures the essence of what Cotton and others like Thomas Brightman anticipated regarding the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy. It also helps those who are familiar with the contemporary categories of apocalyptic views, amillennial, premillennial, and postmillennial, to locate Cotton along today's spectrum of eschatological positions.⁸³ Cotton's theology, as it is akin to the modern postmillennial outlook, was an optimistic interpretation of the gradual, unfolding fulfilment of Biblical prophecy. It essentially composed of two key components.

First, Cotton believed that Scripture foretold a coming literal period of a thousand years designated as the millennium. He believed that the millennium was

⁸² The Thanksgiving sermon is found in Francis J. Bremer, "In Defense of Regicide: John Cotton on the Execution of Charles I," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Ser., 37 no. 1 (Jan., 1980), 103-124.

⁸³ For a detailed description of Cotton's eschatological scheme see, Oh, "Churches Resurrection." See also Peter Toon, "The Latter-Day Glory," in *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660*, ed. Peter Toon (London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1970), 34-36.

to begin after a series of events through which God would cast judgment on Antichrist's rule.⁸⁵ During that time the earthly church would experience tremendous progress, and realized victory. Most importantly, this period would be highlighted by the sudden conversion and return of the Jews.⁸⁶ Cotton extracted this teaching from Revelation 20:5-6 which assured him of the certain demise of Satan. God's great nemesis would be bound and cast into the bottomless pit. At that time the saints on earth would be liberated from Satan's persecutions and the church would be free to reign unhindered as God's kingdom on earth.⁸⁷ Unlike Thomas Brightman, who believed the Bible spoke of two millennia, Cotton only anticipated a singular future period of glory.⁸⁸ Cotton even went so far as to determine, to the best of his exegetical abilities the year when the church could most likely expect the millennium to dawn, 1655. However, Cotton did caution his listeners not to rely upon this prognostication with absolute certainty.⁸⁹ Second, Cotton expected that Christ's return would occur after the millennium. Cotton expected that at the conclusion of the millennium Satan would be released for a brief "season" and a final battle of God and Magog would be fought between Antichrist and the saints.⁹⁰ As much as the millennium was to be a time of peace and great triumph for the earthly church, it was only a preparatory precursor for the Lord's return. This thesis details

⁸⁴ Crawford Gribben makes use of these terms as well. See Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 16-18.

⁸⁵ These fulfillments are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three and Chapter Four.

⁸⁶ Cotton, *Churches Resurrection*, 13.

⁸⁷ Cotton, *Churches Resurrection*.

⁸⁸ Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 88.

⁸⁹ Cotton, *Exposition Upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 93.

⁹⁰ Cotton, *Churches Resurrection*, 7.

what Cotton interpreted to be prophetic fulfilment and indicated the imminence of the millennium.

It is also necessary to make a brief statement about the use of the term puritan. This thesis will make frequent reference to these labels. First, 'puritan' will be used in the most general terms. Previously, this category was understood and treated as homogenous and monolithic. However, scholars have recognized that puritans demonstrated as much diversity and they did agree. Although the use of the term may often seem more problematic it is unavoidable when speaking of the religious climate of the early modern British period and the key players of that time in history. The debates and discussions that surround the concepts and identities relevant to the term 'puritan' will most certainly persist. Most recently, a collection of important essays have explored puritanism through various strands and perspectives in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*.⁹¹ This work, while affirming the complexity of the religious landscape of the early modern period and the inherent challenges and difficulties of the term 'puritan' also remind us that it still remains a necessary category and characterization of many figures of that period. Gribben has observed that even within the field of apocalyptic theology of the early modern period diversity within puritanism is evident. Hence, this thesis finds it helpful to employ the term 'puritan' as Gribben has and denotes those divines as persons who craved "further reformation of the protestant church within the three kingdoms."⁹² This definition agrees with Cotton's own occasional use of the term

⁹¹ John Coffey and Paul C.H. Lim, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁹² Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium: Literature and Theology, 1550 – 1682* (2000; repr., Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 7-8.

when he referred to those who sought for reformation of the English Church and included himself within that company.

Throughout the thesis the terms ‘Laudian’ and ‘Arminian’ will also be frequently used. These refer to persons Cotton and many others believed opposed puritans and their understanding of the biblical vision of the church. Anti-Calvinists, as they are often referred to by scholars, attempted to realign the Church of England with greater consistency in theology and worship with Rome and opposed puritans who believed the English Church needed reform from existing and lingering popery.⁹³ Arminians in the Church of England found their roots in the Remonstrance in the Netherlands.⁹⁴ However, unlike their Dutch counterparts, English Arminians applied their criticism against strict Calvinist predestinarian theology in the areas of sacramentalism and ceremonialism.⁹⁵ Many scholars have credited and defined the development of English Arminian theology according to William Laud. Although this movement was conceived by Jacobean divines only later to blossom under Charles I’s personal rule, Laud’s leadership has been seen as most instrumental in its propagation and application within the Church of England.⁹⁶ Hence the terms Arminian and Laudian will be used synonymously.

⁹³ See Nicholas Tyacke’s seminal work, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590 – 1640* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987). This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters One and Two.

⁹⁴ Arminianism originated from the theology of the Dutch theologian and professor of theology at University of Leiden, Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609). His views were later debated and condemned at the Synod of Dort in the Netherlands, which convened between 1618 and 1619.

⁹⁵ Dewey J. Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology, 1525-1695* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 98-99.

⁹⁶ William Laud was appointed the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. Laud’s role and the rise of Arminianism will be discussed in Chapter Two.

III. Summary of Chapter Contents

Chapter One will explore the beginning of Cotton's development as an apocalyptic thinker in Boston, Lincolnshire, sometime during the 1620s. This chapter primarily will examine Cotton's first set of sermons on Canticles. It will argue that Cotton's earliest formulations on eschatology revolved around the Scriptural concept of a godly remnant. Christ's presence was found in that small band of faithful believers who endeavoured to fulfil the covenant between the Lord and the church. Cotton applied these ideals to his dialectical opinion of the Jacobean Church. On the one hand Cotton criticized the English Church, under James I, for the stains of antichristian ceremonies. On the other hand, Cotton was also adamant that the English Church despite her sin was true and elect. Cotton affirmed the national church against Robert Sanderson who believed Cotton was a crypto-separatist. Cotton saw the national church preserved by a godly remnant that was scattered throughout England's parishes. Moreover, this chapter will argue that Cotton's exercise of a local church covenant at St. Botolph's was eschatologically motivated to maintain England's national covenantal standing with the Lord through faithfulness of Biblical purity and obedience. Overall, Cotton's earliest formulation found in his sermons on Canticles evidences that Cotton held an optimistic eschatology for England and opted to correlate England with the apocalyptic Church of Sardis rather than Thomas Brightman's preference of the Church of Laodicea.

Chapter Two will argue that Cotton understood his departure from England in 1633 as exile and that despite settling in New England and eventually embracing congregationalism his eschatology continued to affirm England's elect church. Cotton exhausted every possible option that could have kept him in England. He

wanted more than anything to remain active alongside England's godly and also feared being labelled a separatist. John Dod settled Cotton's conscience on both these points and that God's providence opened the door to seek refuge. Cotton became convinced that the move to New England was exile and not desertion. This chapter examines 'errand' by exclusively focusing on the circumstances that surrounded Cotton's emigration to Massachusetts. I will also examine Cotton's return to Biblical prophecy in his revisit of Canticles and provide comparison to his English Canticles sermons. The comparison shows that Cotton clearly maintained an affirmation of England's true status and prominence in apocalyptic fulfilment that he held prior to migration despite the difficult pressures expelled him from England and the development of New England Congregational polity.

Chapter Three will discuss the ecclesiastical dimension of Cotton's interpretations of Revelation's prophecies. News from England led Cotton to the Apostle John's Apocalypse. Upon his correlative reading of contemporary events and this prophetic text, Cotton concluded that the time of the fifth, out of seven, apocalyptic stages was near fulfilment. Cotton became convinced that the demise of the image of the beast was at hand, which he identified as Episcopacy. He praised the Scottish Covenanters' victory in the Bishops' Wars over Charles I and prelacy, and their National Covenant with God. However, Cotton refused to identify the Kirk as the primary agent of eschatological fulfilment primarily because the Kirk's presbyterianism resembled episcopacy as a national and hierarchical form of church government. This place was still reserved, in Cotton's theology, for England. Cotton's understanding of an apocalyptic battle being fought on church government terms saw New England's Congregationalism as the way to the millennium. Hence,

Cotton believed the ultimate demise of the image of the beast was not the instalment of the Kirk's national church government but the colonies' polity of particular congregations in England.

Chapter Four will contend that Cotton interpreted the execution of Charles I, Oliver Cromwell's victory at Dunbar, Scotland as the climactic signs of providence that the millennium was about to dawn, God had approved New England Congregationalism above all other church governments and the Lord's presence remained in England.

Chapter One: “Remnant, a seede, a little flocke”:¹

Cotton’s English Sermons on Canticles

I. *Canticles: Biblical Meta-Narrative of the Historical Prophetic Church*

In 1619 George Mountaine, the Bishop of Lincoln, commissioned Robert Sanderson, his chaplain, to preach visitation sermons at St. Botolph’s, John Cotton’s parish in Boston, Lincolnshire.² The purpose of Sanderson’s commission was to curb the growing tide of puritanism, which had been a threat to ceremonialism since the 1580s.³ Sanderson, a staunch defender of ceremonialism, accomplished this task by denouncing puritanism as separatism.⁴ Sanderson targeted his criticism at Thomas Brightman’s theology, which was deeply embedded among Lincolnshire’s non-conformists, especially Cotton.

Brightman was a profound apocalyptic thinker who greatly influenced many puritans. Brightman’s work built upon the theological contributions of John Bale and

¹ William Prynne, *Anti-Arminianism* (London, 1630), 128.

² Sanderson was also the rector of Wyberton from 1618 to 1619; see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Sanderson, Robert.” Sanderson first preached the visitations on 17 April 1619. His collection of sermons was later published in Robert Sanderson, *Two Sermons: Preached At Two Several Visitations, At Boston, in the Diocesse and County of Lincolne* (London, 1622).

³ Mark Spurrell, *The Puritan Town of Boston* (Boston, Lincolnshire: Richard Kay Publications, 1972), 1–23.

⁴ Peter Lake, “Serving God and the Times: The Calvinist Conformity of Robert Sanderson,” *Journal of British Studies* 27, no. 2 (April 1988), 81–116, esp. 91–96.

John Foxe who had located England within an eschatological context.⁵ In 1609, Brightman's greatest composition, his commentary on Revelation, informed the English that the Church of England was the antitype of the apocalyptic Church of Laodicea that God had rebuked as being neither hot nor cold but lukewarm. This meant that the English Church stood at risk of incurring divine wrath and judgment because of the lingering presence of popery within her confines and her persistent failure to complete reformation.⁶

Sanderson utterly contested Brightman's conjunction between Laodicea and England. First, Sanderson noted that Brightman was not the first to make this connection between Laodicea and England. According to Sanderson, to the original association was directed to restrain Jesuites in Ireland during Queen Elizabeth's reign and not to condemn supposed popish ceremonies in the English Church's worship. Second, apart from the inconsistent application of Laodicea to England, Sanderson argued that Brightman's metaphor premise was not consistent with its implication. Sanderson reasoned that if England was even "half so ill" as Brightman claimed, then the only appropriate response was to follow the Brownists and depart from the Church.⁷ Sanderson mocked puritans by claiming that the only matter that distinguished them from the separatists was that the latter remained steadfast to their

⁵ Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 37–43, 57–79; William Lamont, *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion, 1603–1660* (London: Macmillan, 1969), 18–55.

⁶ The Church of Laodicea is described in Revelation 3:14–22. For Brightman's association of England with Laodicea, see Thomas Brightman, *A Revelation of the Apocalyps* (Amsterdam, 1611), 102–133. Crawford Gribben noted that prior Brightman's use, the comparison between England and Laodicea was made by John Bale and then promoted by Williams Perkins; see Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 37–38.

⁷ Sanderson, *Two Sermons*, 43.

shared fundamental conviction that England was stained by antichristian religion.

Moreover, Sanderson wrote that puritans were “lukewarm for not quite separating, as they do us for no further reforming.”⁸

Cotton, who construed Sanderson’s words as a direct censure of his ministry and theology, regarded any insinuation that he was a separatist as an attack upon his loyalty to England.⁹ Although Cotton did agree with Brightman’s assessment that the English Church was partly reformed, he staunchly rejected separation. Cotton resiliently insisted that despite her condition, England was true and elect. This optimism was embedded in his conviction that God had preserved his divine and redeeming presence in a godly remnant, which Cotton described as a seed and little flock.

Sanderson’s association of Cotton and other puritans with the separatists is not surprising, considering their common theological origins. At Cambridge, Cotton became very familiar with separatist theology, primarily through his close relationships with Laurence Chaderton, Paul Baynes, and John Dod, and gained access to first-hand accounts of John Robinson’s ideas.¹⁰ After he had been

⁸ Ibid., 44, see also 43.

⁹ Rosenmeier, “‘Eaters and Non-Eaters’,” 161–162, 165; see also B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition: From the Marian Martyrs to the Pilgrim Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 33.

¹⁰ Chaderton was master of Emmanuel when Cotton entered Emmanuel in 1604. For discussions on Cotton’s relationships with Chaderton and Baynes, see Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, c. 1620 – 1643* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; repr., 2002), 19–21; Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, 39–44; Francis J. Bremer, *Congregational Communion: Clerical Friendship in the Anglo-American Puritan Community, 1610–1692* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994), 20–22. For Cotton’s relationship with John Dod, see John Norton, *Abel Being Dead yet Speaketh* (London, 1658), 20–21; Cotton, *Correspondence*, 185, 262–72. Sargent Bush noted

suspended from the ministry in 1603, Robinson immediately began to meet with the separatists and consider the legitimacy of their teaching. However, Robinson remained unconvinced that separatism was the proper course, soliciting the counsel of Chaderton, Baynes, and Dod to resolve his uncertainty.¹¹

The separatists drew from many theological sources that they shared with puritans, which inevitably resulted in an ambiguous distinction between the two groups.¹² The key separatist leaders William Brewster, John Smyth, Henry Ainsworth, Francis Johnson, Henry Barrow, John Robinson, and Robert Browne had all been educated at Cambridge, as had Cotton. All of these proponents of schism began their dissent with the profession of non-conformist convictions at Cambridge before disillusionment with the condition of the English Church drove them to adopt radical sectarian views.¹³ Their common theological training contributed to the similarities between puritans and the separatists. Both sides, citing the same theological sources, manifested similar ecclesiastical and ministerial practices.

Paul Baynes, Laurence Chaderton, Thomas Cartwright, William Perkins, Arthur Hildersham, John Preston, and Richard Sibbes as key influences in Cotton's thought; see Cotton, *Correspondence*, 15. In a later work, Cotton discussed Robinson's assumption of separatism, which may have reflected his proximity to Robinson during that pivotal period; see John Cotton, *The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared* (London, 1648), 7–9; Robert Baillie, *A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time* (London, 1646), 55.

¹¹ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Robinson, John"; Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, 7.

¹² Stephen Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints: Radical Puritan and Separatist Ecclesiology, 1570–1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 11–20.

¹³ See *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.vv. "Brewster, William," "Smyth, John," "Ainsworth, Henry," "Johnson, Francis," "Barrow, Henry," "Robinson, John," and "Browne, Robert." Cotton graduated from Trinity College Cambridge in 1603 with a BA and attended Emmanuel College from 1604 to 1606, where he received an MA. Cotton remained at Emmanuel on a fellowship until 1612, when he accepted an invitation to become the vicar of St. Botolph's.

Patrick Collinson points out that the administration of church covenants within local parishes by non-separating divines resembled the administration of church covenants of gathered churches. Yet Collinson also cautions that the covenants organized by Rogers, Bernard, and Cotton must be understood within the context of the strong opposition of these men against separatism.¹⁴

Sanderson correctly observed that Cotton and the Lincolnshire puritans shared Brightman's belief in an antichristian and popish presence in the Church. News of James I's accession in 1603 inspired much hope among Brightman and other Elizabethan puritans. The godly hoped that the King would complete the unfinished work of reformation that remained from Queen Elizabeth's reign. However, the godly soon found that the King was more interested in pursuing his own agenda of preserving the peace and unity achieved by the Elizabethan religious settlement, an agenda he clearly outlined at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604.¹⁵ To the further dismay of the godly, popish remnants of the settlement were retained in the Book of Common Prayer. Puritans particularly contested the three stipulated ceremonies of wearing the surplice, kneeling when receiving communion, and marking the cross during baptism.¹⁶ In a letter to Bishop John Williams, Cotton

¹⁴ There is no indication that church covenants were widely applied by the Puritans. Only Rogers, Bernard, and Cotton are known to have applied church covenants; see Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559–1625* (1982; repr., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 270–271. The non-separating application of a church covenant is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

¹⁵ See Patrick Collinson, "The Jacobean Religious Settlement: The Hampton Court Conference" in *Before the English Civil War*, ed. Howard Tomlinson (London: Macmillan Press, 1983), 27–52; Frederick Shriver, "Hampton Court Re-Visited: James I and the Puritans," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33, no. 1 (January 1982), 48–71.

¹⁶ Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967; repr., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 32–34.

explained that his conscience did not permit him to comply with these three ordinances.¹⁷

Echoing the King, Sanderson and other conformists argued that the disputed elements of the Book of Common Prayer were *adiaphora* (things indifferent that are neither right nor wrong in themselves) and that their absence in Scripture meant that the Church had the liberty to forbid or exercise them. Moreover, the conformists contended that ceremonies were prudent because they established peace, order, and unity in the Church.¹⁸ Cotton retorted that these ceremonies were extra-Biblical, denied the sufficiency of Scripture, violated the second commandment, and were inconsistent with the Christological and redemptive historical importance of Scriptural rituals. Arguing against the conformist argument of *adiaphora*, many puritans responded that the Bible's lack of explicit mention of these disputed elements of the Prayer Book was properly interpreted as forbiddance of their practice. They asserted that as the Bible explicitly regulated worship, only those practices expressed in God's word were permitted as divine ordinances.¹⁹

¹⁷ Cotton to John Williams, 31 January 1624, in Cotton, *Correspondence*, 98–102.

¹⁸ Robert Sanderson, *Ad Clerum* (London, 1681), 1, 12; see also Collinson, "Jacobean Religious Settlement," 27–52; Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, "The Ecclesiastical Policies of James I and Charles I," in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603–1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (London: Macmillan, 1993), 23–27; Kenneth Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor: The Episcopate of James I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 246; B.W. Quintrell, "The Royal Hunt and the Puritans," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31, no. 1 (January 1990), 41, 57–8.

¹⁹ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 20, 43, 48–49, 53, 66, 89–90, 96, 110; John Cotton, *Some Treasure Fetched out of Rubbish* (London, 1660), 13, 14–20, 29–34; Thomas Goodwin to John Cotton, Spring 1633, in *Correspondence*, 176; Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, 24–5; see also Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, vol. 1 (Hartford: Silas Andrus and Son., 1852; repr., Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1979), 263–264. The second commandment is found in Exodus 20:4–6, where God prohibited the fashioning of graven images or likenesses

Cotton observed lingering popish ceremonies in the English Church which he characterized as a slumbering spouse “inebriated” by the “poison” of “perfunctory worship.” He argued that superstitions, images, idols, and human inventions lulled the Church rather than refreshed and invigorated her, leaving her vulnerable and incapable of fending off the torments of Antichrist.²⁰ Cotton disagreed with Sanderson who saw no difference between labelling the English Church as popish and departing from the national church. Still, Cotton’s arguments certainly resembled those of the separatists, particularly regarding ceremonialism. However, whereas the separatists regarded their actions as the faithful pursuit of the true and pure Church, Cotton denounced separation from England as the loathing of the true Church. Even more importantly, Cotton saw departure as a rejection of Christ, which he reviled as sin.²¹

In 1621, Cotton sent John Williams correspondence acquitting himself of any suggestion that he was a separatist or affiliated with any schism after he learned that Williams had been appointed the Bishop of Lincoln. Cotton feared that his non-conformist reputation would be misconstrued as pro-sectarian by the Bishop, as Sanderson had previously construed it, for Williams had certainly been alerted to the

of God. Interestingly, John Robinson expressed similar arguments; see Robinson, *Justification of Separation*, 25–28.

²⁰ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 165–166; see also 15, 31, 45, 57–58, 65, 141, 144, 145–146, 148–151, 167–168. Interestingly Cotton’s view regarding the sufficiency of Scripture was affirmed in the Thirty-Nine Articles; see Cotton, *Some Treasure Fetched out of Rubbish*, 11–52; see also *Articles Wherevpon It Was Agreed by the Archbishops and Bishops of both the provinces and the whole cleargie, in the conuocation holden at London in the yere of our Lord God M.D. lxiij according to the computation of the Church of Englande for the aduoydyng of the diuersities of opinions, and for the stablyshing of consent touching true religion / put forth by the Queenes auctoritie* (London, 1564), 5.

²¹ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 33, 126–127, 180–181.

vicar's puritan credentials. Hence, Cotton defended his conscience and convictions not only to secure toleration for his refusal to abide by the ceremonial policies but also pledge his allegiance to his king, country, and church. Cotton's letter did not contain a polemic regarding the ceremonies' Biblical validity, reserving such discussion for another occasion. Rather, Cotton pledged to the bishop that on no terms was the vicar, unlike the separatists, "an enemy to the church, a rebel against the authorities, a disrupter of the public peace, a troublesome revolutionary, a scourge of schism." Furthermore, Cotton expressed that he "heartily" detested the actions of the separatists and Anabaptists and desired that separatist and Anabaptist beliefs "were driven completely from the hearts of the faithful."²²

Sometime between 1621 and 1623, Cotton defended his seemingly precariously puritan opinion of the Church through sermons he preached from Canticles, otherwise known as the Song of Songs or the Song of Solomon.²³ He recognized that clarification was needed and that these homilies could serve two purposes. First, Cotton proved that he was equally loyal to England as Sanderson and Williams were, demonstrating that ceremonialists and non-conformists stood in fraternity and both esteemed the English Church as the true Church. Thus, Cotton was among the godly divines who considered the compromise of conformity a strategy to reform the Church from within. Their justification was that ministers

²² Cotton to Bishop John Williams, 30 August 1621, in Cotton, *Correspondence*, 95–96. Cotton and Williams engaged in discussion over the issue of ceremonialism. Williams' primary argument against Cotton was the fact that Scripture did not explicitly forbid ceremonies; see Cotton to Williams, January 31, 1624/5 in Cotton, *Correspondence*, 101.

²³ Rosenmeier, "'Eaters and Non-Eaters,'" 149, 153. Larzer Ziff suggested that the sermons may have been preached as early as 1612 and as late as 1632; see Ziff, *Career of John Cotton*, 263.

suspended from ministry due to non-conformity were far less useful to the cause of reformation.²⁴ Cotton needed to demonstrate that non-conformists stood in solidarity with ceremonialists against what Peter Lake has described as the “twin threats of popery and separation.”²⁵ Otherwise, the puritan call for reformation would continue to be tainted with the label of schismatic ideology.

Second, Cotton could maintain a legitimate call for reformation. The charge that puritans were crypto-separatists was greatly detrimental to Cotton’s affirmation of England’s true status. Cotton creatively crafted his homilies to stay true to his puritan convictions by echoing the cry for reformation and condemning the English Church’s spiritual corruption at the same time that he maintained her rightful claim as a true and elect Church of Christ. Specifically, he resolved the tension between reformation and affirmation by applying the paradigm of the Biblical remnant, which recognized that Christ’s dwelling was preserved in a faithful few scattered throughout England’s parishes. Cotton anticipated that the long awaited restoration of the English Church was to come through those faithful believers.²⁶ The result of his carefully crafted and balanced efforts was an optimistic exhortation rather than a scathing condemnation of his nation and Church.

²⁴ This logic was explained to Cotton and Thomas Hooker at a conference at Ockley in 1633. Cotton and Hooker decided to flee England rather than conform or suffer punishment for non-conformity. Among those who attempted to dissuade Cotton and Hooker from this decision were Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, and John Davenport. For a good discussion on the Ockley conference, see Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 157–163; see also Norton, *Abel Being Dead*, 20–21; Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, 24.

²⁵ Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 77.

²⁶ Cotton’s varied response to an England he believed was partly reformed is discussed later in this chapter.

In Canticles, Cotton found a canonical source to serve as the basis of his demonstration of the English Church's election in the Lord. The English had begun to formulate a distinct elect identity for their country from the moment the Bible had been translated into the vernacular. Firmly established by the seventeenth century, this tradition continued to develop through the contributions of Foxe and Brightman. Although those who scoured the Bible for insights into England's elect character typically made great use of both the Old and New Testaments, they believed the Old Testament books more applicable to their endeavours than were New Testament writings.²⁷ Furthermore, they understood that the contributions of each book within the Old Testament corpus, depending upon the genre of the literature, had a distinct role in the formation of a theology of national identity. Poetic books like Canticles expounded upon the New Testament's description of salvation, which enabled readers to better understand God's relationship with the Church as well as individuals.²⁸

Cotton was particularly attracted to Canticles' historical prophetic depiction of Christ's marriage to his bride, the Church. Cotton previously applied the

²⁷ Hill, *The English Bible*, 7, 264–268; Collinson, “Biblical Rhetoric,” 18–24; Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), 16–17; Michael McGiffert, “God's Controversy with Jacobean England,” *American Historical Review* 88, no. 5 (December 1983), 1151–1174, esp. 1153. Hill argued and Collinson concurred that the discussion of whether England considered herself *an* or *the* elect nation is irrelevant. Furthermore, both Hill and Collinson contended that it was uncommon for the English to distinguish their election as exclusive among the other Protestant nations. The Thirty Years' War and the opposition between Catholicism and Protestantism were understood by many within an apocalyptic and millennial context; see Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 19–20 and Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age: England 1603–1714*, 3rd ed. (London: Longman, 2003), 82.

²⁸ Collinson, “Biblical Rhetoric,” 18–19.

traditional allegorical reading to Canticles that interpreted the bridegroom as representing Jesus Christ and the bride as representing the Church or individual believers.²⁹ Brightman's commentary on Canticles had introduced Cotton to the historical prophetic hermeneutic of the Song of Solomon.³⁰ At the outset, Cotton reacted to Brightman's classification of Canticles' genre as prophetic literature with doubt and suspicion, describing such a classification as "somewhat strange."³¹

²⁹ For examples of the traditional reading of Canticles, see Henry Ainsworth, *Solomons Song of Songs in English Metre: With Annotations and References to Other Scriptures, for the Easier Understanding of It* (London, 1632), sig. B2; Bartimaeus Andrewes, *Certaine Verie Worthie, Godly and Profitable Sermons, Vpon the Fifth Chapter of the Song of Solomon* (London, 1583); Henoah Clapham, *Three Parties of Salomon His Song of Songs, Expounded* (London, 1603); John Dove, *The Conversion of Salomon* (London, 1613); Dudley Fenner, *The Song of Songs* (London, 1587); George Gifford, *Fifteene Sermons Upon the Song of Salomon* (London, 1600); Richard Sibbes, *Bowels Opened or a Discovery of the Neere and Deere Love, Vnion and Communion Betwixt Christ and the Church, and Consequently Betwixt Him and Every Beleeving Soule* (London, 1641), sig. B; Richard Webb, *Two Sermons of Christian Loue and Life: On Canticles 2. Verse 10* (London, 1613); Thomas Wilcocks, *An Exposition Vppon the Booke of the Canticles, Otherwise Called Schelomons Song* (London, 1585). Samuel Rutherford also made frequent use of this perspective in his ministry; see Samuel Rutherford, *Letters of Samuel Rutherford. with Biographical Sketches of His Correspondents*, ed. Andrew A. Bonar (Edinburgh: W. P. Kennedy, 1863), vol. 1: 52, 93, 117–118, 179, 190; vol. 2: 98, 277; John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (1997; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 85–94, 104–109. Those who applied the traditional approach did not deny the presence of an historical prophetic theme: see Hammond, "Bride in Redemptive Time," 83.

³⁰ Cotton, "To the Reader," *Canticles* (1655), n.p.; Thomas Brightman, *A Commentary on the Canticles or the Song of Salomon* (London, 1644). Theodore Dwight Bozeman suggested that Brightman may have adopted this alternative approach from the reformer Theodore Beza, John Calvin's successor at Geneva, see Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives*, 252, n.27. For Beza's sermons on Canticles see Theodore Beza, *Master Bezaes Sermons Vpon the Three First Chapters of the Canticles of Canticles* (Oxford, 1587); see also Tadataka Maruyama, *The Ecclesiology of Theodore Beza: The Reform of the True Church* (Droz, 1978), 148–153; Stanley Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden: The Tradition and the Image in Seventeenth-Century Poetry* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 133.

³¹ Cotton, "To the Reader," *Canticles* (1655), n.p.

Interestingly, Brightman did not always hold to this classification.³² Brightman only overcame his doubts after his thorough examination of Revelation exposed an overwhelming number of correlations with Canticles, leading him to conclude, “This Prophecy . . . agrees well . . . in all things with that of Saint *John* in the *Revelation*.”³³ However, even prior to his adoption of Brightman’s reading of Canticles, Cotton had already “*much approved of Master Brightman’s Exposition of the Revelation*.”³⁴ Cotton’s assertion that Canticles was “chiefly penned to be . . . an historical prophecy” suggests that, like Brightman, Cotton may have recanted his scepticism for the same reason.³⁵

The undergirding premise of Cotton’s historical prophetic reading was that there was a correlation between Biblical antiquity and eschatology. Cotton agreed with Brightman that on a surface level, Canticles disclosed the annals of the redemptive community, while on a deeper level this historical record provided insights that, when properly interpreted, elucidated Scriptural prophecy. Both Cotton and Brightman believed the rich symbols and types contained in Canticles’ poetry projected the Church’s journey on earth towards the imminent glorious age of the

³² Brightman, “To the Reader,” in *Canticles*, n.p.

³³ *Ibid.*, 981. Brightman explicitly and repeatedly correlated the imagery of the Canticles with what he believed to be relevant texts from Revelation. The association between the two Biblical books is especially evident in Brightman’s discussion of major apocalyptic events such as the expulsion of the dragon from heaven and the millennium; see *Ibid.*, 1028–1029; Stewart, *Enclosed Garden*, 133.

³⁴ Cotton, “To the Reader,” *Canticles* (1655), n.p.

³⁵ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 10; see also Cotton, “To the Reader,” *Canticles* (1655), n.p.

millennium. Cotton, like Brightman, understood Canticles' historical portraits of the Lord's spouse as glimpses of the eschatological bride upon the return of Christ.³⁶

Cotton was not compelled to deny the validity of alternative readings of Canticles upon his acceptance of the historical prophetic reading. However, although he regarded other interpretations as legitimate, he believed that they served derivative functions and were subordinate to the prophetic concern.³⁷ Later in New England, Cotton maintained this perspective when he preached a second set of sermons on Canticles, calling eschatology the "ground-work" for all other applications.³⁸ Still, he strongly advised readers not to be mistaken; however "holy and useful" the non-historical prophetic purposes were, they were only ancillary.³⁹

When Cotton dissected Canticles' historical prophecy, he did not find an episodic presentation of the Church but rather a singular heavenly vision of the Lord's bride. He described the process of Canticles' origination as the extraordinary experience when God raised Solomon's spirit to the "mountain of Activitie," where

³⁶ See Hammond, "Bride in Redemptive Time," 88–92; Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives*, 251–3; Avihu Zakai, "Thomas Brightman and English Apocalyptic Tradition," in *Menasseh Ben Israel and His World*, eds. Yosef Kaplan, Henry Mechoulam, and Richard H. Popkin (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 32.

³⁷ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 4, 6, 8, 9–10. For other examples of this hierarchical understanding of Canticles' applications, see John Brayne, *An Exposition Upon the Canticles or, Solomons Song of Songs* (London, 1651), Introduction; Henry Finch, *An Exposition of the Song of Solomon: Called Canticles* (London, 1615); Nathanael Homes, *A Literal or Historical and Mystical or Spiritual Commentary on Canticles* (London, 1652), sig. A2; Joshua Sprigg, *Solace for Saints in the Saddest Times* (London, 1648), sig. B3, 5. Brayne and Finch were influenced by Thomas Brightman while Sprigg was swayed by Cotton's historical prophetic reading.

³⁸ Cotton, "To the Reader," *Canticles* (1655), n.p. This published work contained sermons Cotton preached on Canticles during the 1640s in New England. *Canticles* (1655) is further discussed in Chapter Two.

³⁹ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 10.

the King of Israel beheld the Church “throughout the present and all ages.”⁴⁰ To emphasize its importance, Cotton compared Solomon’s experience with Moses’ experience on Mount Pisgah, when God had instructed Moses to ascend the mountain to gaze upon the twelve tribes of Israel and the earthly Promised Land. According to Cotton, Moses had seen the Church as other humans saw her, bound in a specific time and place. Unlike Moses, who could only gain an isolated and limited view of the covenant community of Israel, Solomon was blessed to behold the Church as God saw her eternally and timelessly, for the Lord considered all things past, present, and future simultaneously.⁴¹

Cotton fashioned Canticles’ unique vision of the one true Church into a meta-narrative for England and all other individual elect churches. In Cotton’s words, Solomon’s story of the single bride of Christ “sweetly, and shortly, and lively, not only pointed at, but deciphered” the English Church and all true churches.⁴² Moreover, he asserted that Solomon’s story not only aided particular church communities bound to specific places and eras in gaining greater insight into Canticles but also revealed the churches’ vital contributions to the continuously unfolding chronicle of Christ’s spouse. For England, this meant that she could claim the heritage of the Biblical elect communities as her own as well as participate in the history of God’s redemption, and was thereby entitled to the very eschatological promises reserved for God’s one elect people. Cotton identified this Church of all

⁴⁰ Ibid., 13.

⁴¹ Ibid. The scriptural reference to Moses’ experience is Deuteronomy 34:1-4. For Cotton’s comparison between the human and divine perspectives see William Twisse, *A Treatise of Mr. Cottons, Clearing Certain Doubts Concerning Predestination Together with and Examination thereof* (London, 1646), 1.

⁴² Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 5.

ages as the true Israel of historical prophecy. Again, he believed that Moses' vision on Pisgah was a limited vision of an earthly Israel whereas Solomon's was a spiritual vision of the heavenly and true Israel. Cotton cited Christ's relationship with his Church, the true Israel, as Canticles' central theme. It was precisely because of its use of this motif that Cotton praised the Song of Solomon as "more excellent than others," even "David's Psalms."⁴³

Cotton forged Canticles, which he believed to be the "*divine . . . Acts and Monuments of the Church*," into a potent interpretative Biblical tool to clarify England's identity in the Lord.⁴⁴ He was eager to accomplish for the Jacobean church and his own parish what John Foxe had through *Actes and Monuments*, his magnum opus, for the Elizabethan church: establish the English Protestant Church within the true and elect ecclesiastical lineage.⁴⁵ Still, Cotton's reference to Foxe's work suggests that he recognized significant distinctions between Canticles and *Actes and Monuments*. The correlation between Canticles and *Actes and Monuments* was bold, considering the importance of Foxe's work throughout England.⁴⁶ Queen Elizabeth, to whom the first edition was dedicated, recognized its worth and decreed that local parishes chain a copy beside the Bible at an easily accessible site for parishioners to

⁴³ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁵ John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (London, 1563), sig. ai, iii; John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (London, 1570), sig. iij. *Actes and Monuments* was first printed in 1563 and subsequently reprinted eight times between 1570 and 1684; see also Hill, *English Bible*, 368; Norskov V. Olsen, *John Foxe and the Elizabethan Church* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 1.

⁴⁶ Jane Dawson wrote that *Actes and Monuments* was the single most important work of the Marian Exiles; see Jane E. A. Dawson, "The Apocalyptic Thinking of the Marian Exiles," in *Prophecy and Eschatology*, ed. Michael Wilks (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 76

read before and after service. Nevertheless, *Actes and Monuments* could never assume the importance of the Bible despite its significance; it was not canonical Scripture whereas Canticles was God's very own word.⁴⁷

In addition to Canticles canonical quality, Cotton distinguished Canticles' above *Actes and Monuments* for its historical purview. *Actes and Monuments* located the English Protestant tradition within post-biblical ecclesiastical history whereas the Canticles rooted the Church of England in ancient scriptural antiquity, thereby juxtaposing her alongside Israel and the apostolic communities. Although Cotton did not press this distinction to the point that he risked creating a rift and historical discontinuity, he endeavoured to ensure that the force of redemptive history was recognized.

Furthermore, Canticles' historical range was more comprehensive than was that of *Actes and Monuments*. Although both works concluded with Christ's return, Foxe began *Actes and Monuments* in 1000 AD, the year Foxe believed that the dragon had been released from the pit, as prophesied in Revelation,⁴⁸ whereas Cotton believed that Canticles began from King Solomon's establishment of the Church.⁴⁹ Cotton's disagreement was not intended to denigrate *Actes and Monuments*; in fact,

⁴⁷ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (1563), sig. Bj-Bij; see also John N. King, *Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs' and Early Modern Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2. King noted that the influence of *Actes and Monuments* did not compare to that of the Book of Common Prayer. Although King's aim was to demonstrate the importance and value of Foxe's work rather than show that it was of less value than the Bible, his emphasis has been reversed for the point made here.

⁴⁸ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (1563), title page; see also Firth, *Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain*, 82–83. The Scriptural reference to the dragon's release is Revelation 20:3.

⁴⁹ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 5, 10, 13; Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), sig. A5; see also Rosenmeier, "'Eaters and Non-Eaters,'" 164–5. Cotton deviated from Brightman's view that Canticles' historical presentation began with King David's reign and not that of Solomon's; see Brightman, *Canticles*, 981–982.

Cotton recognized that Foxe's work ultimately strengthened his own exhortations. Cotton's strategy of alluding to *Actes and Monuments* informed his listeners that England not only stood beside all reformed and true churches of the post-canonical era but those of Biblical times as well.

In one sense, Cotton's historical prophetic reading and application benefited from Foxe's contribution to English historiography. *Actes and Monuments* enabled Cotton to elevate the importance and legitimacy of reading England's standing before God with canonical force. Canticles' power to elucidate Scripture was due to its prominent focus on Israel's covenantal relationship with God.⁵⁰ Canticles' nuptial imagery was seen to typologically signify the covenantal fellowship or "heavenly marriage" enjoyed by all true churches, including England, with the Lord.⁵¹ Scholars have recognized that reformed traditions throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries understood that the Church's communion with the Lord was established through a divine covenant.⁵² Cotton, as did many others, traced the covenant between God and England and all other true and elect churches back to Adam's fellowship with the Lord in the Garden of Eden. Protestants long held Adam as the first recipient of a divine covenant (the Adamic covenant established between God and Adam before Original Sin) that defined all subsequent historical relationships between the Lord and his Church.

⁵⁰ Hill, *English Bible*, 271–273.

⁵¹ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 3–5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 14–15, 17, 30. The Puritans understood marriage as a symbol of covenantal union with God; see James T. Johnson, "The Covenant Idea and the Puritan View of Marriage," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 32, no. 1 (January–March, 1971), 107–118.

⁵² David A. Weir, *The Origins of the Federal Theology in Sixteenth-Century Reformation Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 1–36.

Creatively extracting covenantal significance from the pre-lapsarian days of God's relationship with Adam as well as Adam's marital union with Eve, the Italian reformer Jerome Zanchi applied the covenant to the post-Biblical Church. According to Zanchi, this first historical nuptial, in Adam and Eve's union, typologically anticipated Christ's covenantal communion with the Church.⁵³ Therefore, Adam's disobedience and consequential expulsion from Eden did not end the covenantal union; rather, as Augustine had observed, the covenant was renewed after the fall, and post-lapsarian history is the history of its restoration between God and man.⁵⁴ Describing the Adamic covenant in ecclesiastical terms, Brightman called Eden the first Church recognized as being in covenant with God.⁵⁵ Cotton saw Christ's post-lapsarian presence as functioning redemptively to restore and fulfil the covenantal promises lost through Adam's disobedience. Divine grace, Cotton argued, was extended to Adam because sin had shattered the previous conditions of fellowship.⁵⁶

Establishment of covenantal continuity beyond Eden's boundaries and despite the fall of man into sin was essential for Cotton's defence of England's national covenant. Although the English people commonly understood that their nation stood in a covenant with God, the separatists rejected any sense of a perpetual, uninterrupted covenant and denied that England, because of her apostasy, still stood

⁵³ H. Zanchius, *An Excellent and Learned Treatise, of the Spirituall Marriage betweene Christ and the Church, and Every Faithfull Man* (London, 1592), 84; Girolamo Zanchi, *H. Zanchius His Confession of Christian Religion* (London, 1599), 2–3, 64; John L. Farthing, "De coniugio spirituali Jerome Zanchi on Ephesians 5:22–33," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 24, no. 3 (Autumn 1993), 621–652.

⁵⁴ Hanneke Reuling, *After Eden: Church Fathers and Rabbis on Genesis 3:16–21* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 219.

⁵⁵ Brightman also believed that the Tree of Life foreshadowed the sacramental presence of Christ; see Brightman, *Revelation*, 46, 114.

⁵⁶ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 130–131, 139.

in a national covenant with the Lord. They argued that the theocratic model of Israel, along with the Mosaic covenant, had become obsolete in Christ. In the Old Testament order the magistrate filled the role of God's earthly authority. However, as separatists believed, that function was replaced by Christ who was the head of the church. Moreover, God's kingdom became based upon spiritual attributes rather than ethnic and national characteristics.⁵⁷

John Robinson challenged anyone to prove that England was the New Testament Israel of God.⁵⁸ John Smyth, holding to a belief in radical discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments, argued that the English Church had not been born of God's covenant with Israel but was rather a spawn of Rome.⁵⁹ Cotton rebutted this separatist argument by affirming the unbreakable nature of any covenant. Referencing the most miserable chapter in redemptive history—Adam's fall into disobedience—to assert this point most forcefully, Cotton argued that Adam's sin, though tragic, failed to sever the original covenant, which was instead renewed by God with his corporate elect people, the people of Israel. Moreover, Cotton transferred ultimate covenantal onus away from Adam onto Christ. Scripture,

⁵⁷ George Selement, "The Covenant Theology of English Separatism and the Separation of Church and State," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 41, no. 1 (March 1973), 66–74.

⁵⁸ Robinson, *Justification of Separation*, 91, 278. Robinson responded drastically to this radical assessment of the church by repudiating his ordination with the Church of England and becoming re-ordained in the separatist congregation of Scrooby; see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Robinson, John."

⁵⁹ John Smyth, *The Character of the Beast* (1609), sig. A2, 64, 71; see also James R. Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation: English Separatism, Mennonite Influence, and the Elect Nation* (Ontario: Herald Press, 1991), 54–55.

he argued, promised that the Adamic covenant was originally intended to be fulfilled and redeemed in Christ.⁶⁰

In addition, Cotton, like many other puritans, applied covenantal transference to England's covenantal union with God by shifting focus from Adamic circumstances to the Mosaic administration. He argued that Israel's reception of Adam's covenant not only provided the Biblical precedent for a national dimension in the covenant but also extended the covenantal requirement for Biblical obedience and its consequences from an individual to a corporate context. Therefore, the covenantal obligations received by Moses and established at Mount Sinai provided the proscriptions for godly living among zealous Protestants in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.⁶¹ Cotton agreed with the separatists that the ceremonial aspects of the law had been abolished with the coming of Christ and the gospel. However, Cotton believed that Israel and the Mosaic civil code, the essence of the covenant, remained viable and applicable for the New Testament elect community.⁶² Later in 1636 in New England, Cotton would propose a set of laws based upon the Mosaic covenant that he entitled the "model of Moses his Judicials," which he intended to reflect the "Force of Laws, & Ordinances in Israel."⁶³

⁶⁰ John Cotton, *A Practical Commentary or an Exposition with Observations, Reasons, and Uses Upon the First Epistle Generall of John* (London, 1656), 9.

⁶¹ Michael McGiffert, "From Moses to Adam: The Making of the Covenant of Works," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1988), 131–155.

⁶² Cotton agreed that the Mosaic ceremonies foreshadowed the anticipated coming of Christ and the gospel; see Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 66, 110.

⁶³ Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 39–40. Cotton to John Winthrop, late March or April 1648, in Cotton, *Correspondence*, 403; see also John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630–1649*, eds. Richard S. Dunn, James Savage, and Laetitia Yeandle (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 195. *Moses His Judicials* was

Cotton buttressed his concept of covenantal continuity and its implications for the national covenant with Scriptural millennial prophecies that guaranteed the future restoration of Israel. Many puritans emphasized the idea that Scripture anticipated the mass conversion of the Jews.⁶⁴ Cotton, like many others, focused greatly upon the sudden restoration of Israel because this event was expected to be the apex of millennial activity. Upon their return, the Jews would then form an apocalyptic army that was expected by Cotton and others to lead the Church's struggle against the Turk and the Antichrist, thus alleviating the persecution and oppression that had tormented God's people throughout history. This defeat of the Church's enemy would pave the way for the creation of a new church that Cotton was certain would be far more glorious than the Apostolic Primitive Church. The return of the Jews, Cotton believed, was the one event that would usher in Christ's return; Israel's conversion, the result of the renewal of God's covenant, was the sum of the expectations of all Biblical prophets and apostles. In light of the perception that *Canticles*' contained a singular identity of the historical prophetic church, Cotton read England's own eschatological prospects within this distinctively Jewish apocalyptic prophecy and asserted that England's own apocalyptic hopes would be realized through Israel's restoration.⁶⁵ Hence Cotton exhorted the faithful of England to anxiously long for the conversion of Israel that would accompany the judgment

later published as John Cotton, *An Abstract; or, the Lawes of New England* (London, 1641). For a discussion of this work see Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives*, 169-176.

⁶⁴ The expectation of the Jewish conversion, again, common in many Puritan writings, was not present among earlier reformers, see Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 39-40.

⁶⁵ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 119, 192-198, 202, 208, 221, 257.

and return of Christ, for this was the desire of the “faithful . . . true Spouses of Christ.”⁶⁶

II. England’s Remnant: Bearers of the National Covenant

Puritan ecclesiology taught that the established Church consisted of two distinctive communities: the visible Church and the invisible Church. The visible Church was understood as composed of those who publicly professed Christianity. Public profession, however, did not constitute true salvation but it was held that the visible Church inherently consisted of both the elect and reprobate. In contrast to the visible Church stood the invisible Church, which was understood to be pure and exclusive. The chosen people within the visible Church collectively constituted the invisible church. Further, the invisible church was distinguished from the visible Church not by mere superficial confession but spiritual identification; God alone was capable of accurately recognizing true saints who were justified in Christ.⁶⁷ John Bale defined the true Church as God’s indwelling presence in the hearts of believers.⁶⁸ The idea that the invisible church was essentially the true Church was the basis upon which Protestants argued with Rome that the true Church had existed prior to the Reformation. Moreover, Cotton, like many others, used these definitions to demonstrate and defend, in the face of separatists’ contentions, England’s election in the midst of spiritual defection.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 263–264.

⁶⁷ Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; repr., 2002), 128–130, 157–158.

⁶⁸ Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*, 60; Leslie P. Fairfield, *John Bale, Mythmaker for the English Reformation* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1976), 82–84.

Cotton invited the elect to observe in *Canticles* the unveiled heavenly vision of God's invisible Church, recognizing that England's entanglement in the sin of idolatry made such an observation absolutely imperative. Cotton believed that the spiritual darkness that often clouded the visibility of Christ's presence in the invisible church was precisely what had led to the separatists' abandonment. Ironically, this turmoil had actually enhanced the perspicuity of the true Church by winnowing the true believers from the mere professors of the Christian religion. Moreover, although the Antichrist targeted the elect, God's people would not succumb to oppression or the threat thereof. Instead, the godly would become a small band of faithful believers who would retreat, if necessary, into the wilderness and remote places in their desperate search for Christ, even if he were to be found in "holes . . . corners . . . under the stairs, and in cliffs of rocks."⁶⁹ Wherever "eminent and principal members" resided, Christ dwelled and the true Church was visible to God.⁷⁰ Cotton condemned the popish temptation to establish the Church conspicuously to the world, for doing so was "no true sign of a true Church."⁷¹ Rather, the "Dove of Jesus Christ," however small in number or concealed in secluded places of refuge, was always observable in the "eyes of God."⁷²

Recalling the Church under the reign of Constantine in the fourth century, when she had been "endowed . . . with peace, and wealth, and honor" and an "abundance of prosperity,"⁷³ Foxe celebrated the Church's days of peace and the

⁶⁹ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 77; see also 71, 78, 140, 179.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 179; see also 26.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 141, 144.

princes who had secured it. He praised Constantine as the champion of the Church and model Christian prince who stayed the persecution of the elect and “pacified and established the church of Christ.”⁷⁴ Similarly, Foxe praised Queen Elizabeth for emulating Constantine’s reign and ending the terrible Marian persecution of English Protestants. According to Foxe, God providentially preserved Elizabeth’s life to bring about “great rest to his Church . . . with . . . abundance of peace.”⁷⁵ In their longing for religious peace, Collinson, Foxe, and other puritans had believed that the Queen had inaugurated the “last, peaceful age of the Church.”⁷⁶

In contrast, Cotton warned that earthly peace and comfort could lead to tremendous debilitation. Cotton described earthly comforts as “dunghills and defarts” in comparison to the simple refreshing presence of Christ.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Cotton was not averse to peace and echoed Foxe’s desire that the Church become in “open view of all, as a City set on a hill.”⁷⁸ Moreover, he believed that as it had during the days of Luther, such openness would allow the Church to flourish and greatly aid the progress of reform. Nevertheless, Cotton alerted his listeners that the receiving of blessings could lure Christ’s bride to self-deception and “carnal security,” as they

⁷⁴ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (1563), sig. Bj; see also Lamont, *Godly Rule*, 34, 94, 180. Foxe dated the beginning of the millennium from Constantine’s accession, which ended persecution of the Church; see Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 60, 71. For a good discussion on Foxe’s view of Constantine see Michael S. Pucci, “Reforming Roman Emperors: John Foxe’s Characterization of Constantine in the Acts and Monuments,” in *John Foxe: An Historical Perspective*, ed. David M. Loades (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1999).

⁷⁵ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (1563), sig. Bj.

⁷⁶ Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 25; see also Glyn Parry, “Elect Church or Elect Nation? The Reception of the *Acts and Monuments*,” in *John Foxe: An Historical Perspective*, ed. David Loades (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 169.

⁷⁷ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 140.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

had been lured under Constantine.⁷⁹ Cotton argued that what truly mattered was obedience to the Lord; disobedience would lead God to drive his people into captivity and exile as swiftly as the Lord had delivered them through Constantine and Elizabeth.⁸⁰

Although he disagreed with Foxe regarding the benefits of earthly peace and comfort, Cotton agreed with him that persecution was the distinguishing characteristic of the Church, and therefore called England's elect to embrace suffering.⁸¹ Cotton acknowledged that dark times were enigmatic, comparing them to the confounding dreams and visions that the prophet Daniel had received and interpreted only with God's assistance. Likewise, Cotton expected that the Church, like Daniel, would be overwhelmed with uncertainty and fear if it did not receive divine clarification.⁸² He encouraged God's people to recognize affliction as a gift from the Lord and consider it an honour to endure hardship for the sake of Christ. Despite possible persecution, Cotton was confident of the Church's salvation, believing the Biblical promises that God would sustain her at all times.⁸³ Indeed, the Lord only permitted persecution as a means of the further building of the Church; God's people would only be strengthened under the heaviest of constraints.⁸⁴

In other contexts, perseverance entailed repentance through which the Lord would ultimately renew his vows with his Bride. The Lord not only often drove the

⁷⁹ Ibid., 141–142.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 31.

⁸¹ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (1563), sig. iii; see also Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 61–3; Firth, *Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain*, 91.

⁸² Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 57–58.

⁸³ Ibid., 75, 77–79, 180–181.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 140.

Church into exile as punishment for sin but also to cleanse her and make her his radiant bride:

God . . . loathed them because they loathed him; they were now tried and purified; before they were loathsome, but now are lovely; before hated, but now loved. But see what a blessed use chastisements are of to the Church how loathsome . . . we go into captivity, when we defile our selves with lusts and sins, yet when we have been thoroughly humbled with some crosses, how fair come we out!⁸⁵

Cotton assured the Church that God would always preserve a pure presence of Christ in the true spouse. He based his theological rationale for Christ's enduring presence in the Church upon the doctrine of hypostatic union established in the fifth century at the Council of Chalcedon, which affirmed that Jesus, the incarnate second person of the Trinity, was fully human as well as wholly divine. Cotton combined Chalcedonian orthodoxy with the Pauline teaching of the Church as the body of Christ to produce the concept of the Church as the Lord's mystical body that, like Jesus, possessed a dual nature. On the one hand, the Church, like Christ, possessed a *human* nature that was susceptible to decay. Worship and doctrine were corruptible. On the other hand, the Church possessed a *divine* nature in which the fullness of the Godhead dwelled, thus preserving the covenantal community's defining attribute, the righteousness of Christ.

Cotton used descriptions typically employed for discussions of individual soteriology when speaking of righteousness imputed to the Church and when associating the *divine* nature with the faithful remnant. Chalcedonian doctrine enabled Cotton to isolate the Church's purity from spiritual corruption. For Cotton, this purity was reminiscent of the Garden of "*Paradise*," and transformed the church into an "assembly of many good Christians, or Saints . . . amongst whom Christ

walks.”⁸⁶ Cotton confidently asserted that even if England were “covered over with an abundance of chaff,” the Lord would be found in her, for Christ’s true spouse was always hidden by the “garments of Christ’s righteousness.”⁸⁷ Moreover, isolation protected the remnant and Christ’s righteousness from being afflicted by sin. Cotton saw the faithful remnant in the church as the divine nature of Christ, protected and distinct from the human side of the church which could decay. By separating the divine remnant, the church was constantly reparable.⁸⁸

Cotton identified Israel as the primary Biblical model of the remnant. Once Cotton committed himself to reading England’s identity in the Biblical historical narratives of the Jews, he had to define his own nation by the redeeming remnant that was indispensable to Israel’s own posterity. Israel’s story was filled with episodes of infidelity, defection, and captivity; clearly, God’s chosen nation could not boast faithful adherence to her covenant with the Lord. However, it was precisely because of her sinful past that Israel became an exemplar in the seemingly perpetual struggle to reform the English Church.⁸⁹ Israel’s history consoled England’s godly that covenantal fidelity between God and his people was constantly maintained in and through a remnant, and that even when circumstances seemed to suggest that God had deserted his people, the promise of restoration would always prevail. Israel’s greatest error had been “casting off Christ so unworthily,” a sin far greater than was

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 76, see also 75, 77.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 130–131; for further examples of Cotton’s use of Garden of Eden imagery see 9, 170–171, 179–80.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 112, 146.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 48–90, 96, 145. In 451 AD, the Council of Chalcedon was held to settle the dispute over the nature of Christ. Cotton cited 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19; see *ibid.*, 48, 145.

England's idolatry.⁹⁰ The Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Messiah cast them into what Cotton described as captivity. Nevertheless, Israel remained a church of the Lord throughout the ages. Although the Israelites had a "hardness of heart" they remained a "Garden."⁹¹ God's faithfulness to Israel's patriarchs and the eschatological promise of their redemption had prevented their defection.

Cotton anticipated that suddenly and unexpectedly the Jews would embrace Christ through a "powerful and glorious calling" and enter "fellowship with Christ."⁹² Approving the use of discerning the "estate . . . of our own parishes" in Israel's history and prophecy,⁹³ Cotton hoped that God would abruptly restore England in a manner similar to His redemption of Israel. This exciting prospect was matched by Cotton's belief that a remnant was being preserved in England, a portion of which resided in his own parish.

In 1615, a pocket of faithful believers from St. Botolph's responded to the call for national covenantal renewal. Cotton and "some scores of godly persons" joined together and "entered into a Covenant with the Lord, and one with another, to *follow after the Lord in the purity of his Worship,*" which they believed was defective and in peril.⁹⁴ Cotton believed that those who entered the local church covenant already personally stood in covenant with the Lord, calling them "*Saints*" and the

⁸⁹ McGiffert, "God's Controversy with Jacobean England," 1154.

⁹⁰ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 198.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 195, see also 208.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 202, see also 196, 203, 205–206.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁹⁴ See Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches*, 20; italics mine. See also Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, 269–273; Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 380–382.

“worthiest of Christians” who endeavoured for the “purity of God’s worship.”⁹⁵ To emphasize his contention that only truly faithful believers were capable of bearing the weight of their nation’s covenant, Cotton presented England’s circumstances in Adamic terms, thereby implying that she stood at a covenantal crossroads. Asserting that Adam’s covenantal obligation held ramifications for all mankind, Cotton made an analogy between Adam’s federal headship and England’s role in universal reformation, exhorting her not to eat of the “forbidden fruits” that Adam could not resist.⁹⁶

Non-separating church covenants were not simply meant to be practiced for the spiritual benefit of a few individuals, as they held national significance. The formation of church covenants within local parishes was likely not prevalent throughout England, although scholars remain uncertain how widely they were actually applied in a non-separating form. Patrick Collinson has noted the covenants practiced by Richard Rogers and Richard Bernard in addition the one administered by Cotton at St. Botolph’s.⁹⁷ In 1588, Rogers covenanted with twenty “well minded Christians” from his Wethersfield parish in Essex for the “continuance of love, and for the edifying of one another.”⁹⁸ Bernard entered into a covenant with approximately one hundred people from the parishes surrounding Worksop.⁹⁹ The

⁹⁵ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 34. This is not to suggest that Cotton believed England’s remnant only resided in St. Botolph’s; see also Cotton, *Christ the Fountaine of Life*, 33.

⁹⁶ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 139.

⁹⁷ For discussions on church covenants see Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, 269–73, Patrick Collinson, *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London: Hambledon Press, 1983), 545–546.

⁹⁸ Richard Rogers, *Seven Treatises* (London, 1603), 477, see also 477-492.

⁹⁹ Collinson, *Godly People*, 545.

descriptions of the three covenants not only highlight the common motivation to cultivate personal piety but also a clear the corporate dimension of these exclusive gatherings of persons within a Biblical contractual relationship. Theodore Bozeman's assertion that puritans understood that an individual's participation in the covenant of grace was directly tied to adherence to the national covenant¹⁰⁰ may correctly be extended to local covenants. If local church covenants were clearly understood to foster an individual's faithfulness to the covenant of grace, then they certainly were also believed to entail national covenantal ramifications.

The historical circumstances surrounding the church covenants applied by Rogers and Cotton provide support for the existence of the Church's intrinsic national dimension. Both covenants were developed during periods when England's covenantal standing was threatened. Wethersfield's covenant was established in 1588, the year that Catholic Spain's Armada embarked upon an invasion of Protestant England. Prior to the Armada's defeat, Rogers and his coreligionists were certainly compelled to beseech the Lord for aid against the rapidly approaching army of the Antichrist. While the date of the covenant's administration remains uncertain, it is irrelevant whether Rogers' covenant was administered before or after the Armada's defeat. As Collinson noted, the fear of Spain continued to loom over England several years after the attempted invasion.¹⁰¹ Therefore, the godly of Wethersfield, believing that their nation lay in peril both before and after the

¹⁰⁰ Theodore Dwight Bozeman, "Federal Theology and the National Covenant': An Elizabethan Presbyterian Case Study," in *Church History* 61, no. 4 (December 1992), 394–407; see also Collinson, *Godly People*, 545.

¹⁰¹ Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 385–386.

Armada, assumed responsibility among England's elect to renew their country's covenant with the Lord in the hope that God would show mercy.

Rogers deliberately selected a Biblical text that spoke of the renewal of Israel's *national* covenant to buttress his case for the application of a covenant in local parishes. Referencing Wethersfield's covenant, Rogers cited 1 Samuel 7:4, where the Bible recalls an episode when Israel's remnant was called to restore those among God's people who remained after fifty thousand had been struck down by the Lord for disobedience,¹⁰² and described the children of Israel destroying their idols and returning to exclusive devotion to the Lord.¹⁰³ More importantly, Israel's repentance described in 1 Samuel 7 was in response to the prophet Samuel's promise that if the Israelites repented and returned to God, the Lord would deliver them from their archenemy the Philistines.¹⁰⁴ Rogers believed that Wethersfield's covenant was a response to God that England's remnant would uphold their national covenant in the hope that the Lord would spare them defeat at the hands of Spain.

Although Cotton's argument was not as precise as was Roger's, evidence strongly suggests that St. Botolph's covenant was motivated by the menace of the Antichrist in the form of the Thirty Years' War. As early as 1610, a European war between Protestants and Catholics became increasingly likely.¹⁰⁵ Cotton forewarned the Church that the Lord could be compelled to "set up foreign Princes" in their

¹⁰² 1 Samuel 6:19.

¹⁰³ Rogers, *Seven Treatises*, 492.

¹⁰⁴ 1 Samuel 7:3.

¹⁰⁵ Steven Gunn, "War, Religion, and the State," in *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History*, ed. Euan Cameron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 132–133.

country if “his people will serve other Gods.”¹⁰⁶ In 1618, just three years after the initiation of the Thirty Years’ War, St. Botolph’s responded to the threat of the “Roman Harlot” with its covenant,¹⁰⁷ which gave England’s remnant the opportunity to “strive with God to renew the light of his countenance” in Europe.¹⁰⁸

In addition, Cotton and some of his fellow puritans saw an offensive dimension to their response to the popish presence in Europe. The English people were called upon by their Protestant brethren throughout Europe to assume not only a defensive position to preserve their Church but also an offensive position by joining their brethren throughout the continent in the battle against the Antichrist. Moreover, English Protestants were encouraged by their Protestant allies to recognize England’s role as a leading apocalyptic nation during the Thirty Years’ War.¹⁰⁹

The corporate dimension of St. Botolph’s and Wethersfield’s covenants distinguished them from the application and understanding of covenants by the separatists. Again, separatists believed that the form of covenant used to establish Israel’s theocracy had been invalidated and made obsolete in Christ. In the New Testament age, covenant was no longer to be applied on a national level as it was during Old Testament times. Separatists then argued that covenantal union between God and his people was forged in church covenants through particular local churches.¹¹⁰ However, many puritans, who had not departed from the national

¹⁰⁶ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 31.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 33; see also Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 385–386.

¹⁰⁹ Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England*, 19–20.

¹¹⁰ Selement, “Covenant Theology of English Separatism,” 66–74; see also Champlin Burrage, *The Church Covenant Idea: Its Origin and Its Development* (Philadelphia:

church, disagreed, contending that local covenants did not *replace*, as separatists contended, but rather *upheld* the national covenant. Hence, before delineating Wethersfield's local covenant, Rogers made clear that the covenant was in no way to be associated with Brownism. In other words, if Wethersfield's covenant did not in any terms denounce England's election, as did separatist covenants, then it essentially affirmed England's national covenant as standing and valid.¹¹¹ Regarding Cotton, Collinson astutely points out that St. Botolph's covenant must be understood alongside Cotton's staunch and outspoken opposition to separatism.¹¹²

Later in 1630, Cotton accused Samuel Skelton and the Salem Church in New England of practising separatism. At Salem, certain persons were prohibited from participating in the Lord's Supper because they were not members of a particular reformed church but from English congregations not considered true churches.¹¹³ Cotton supported his argument that the "Saints of God justify the Congregations in which they are called" rather than an explicit mutual covenant through reference to

American Baptist Publication Society, 1904), 34–44; Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, 270–271.

¹¹¹ Rogers, *Seven Treatises*, 477; see also Patrick Collinson, "The English Conventicle," in *Voluntary Religion: papers read at the 1985 Summer Meeting and the 1986 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society (Studies in Church History 23)*, ed. William J. Sheils and Diana Wood (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1986), 227.

¹¹² Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, 271.

¹¹³ Cotton to Samuel Skelton, 2 October 1630, in Cotton, *Correspondence*, 143–147. For interpretations of Cotton's letter see Slayden Yarbrough, "The Influence of Plymouth Colony Separatism on Salem: An Interpretation of John Cotton's Letter of 1630 to Samuel Skelton," *Church History* 51, no. 3 (September 1982), 290–303; David D. Hall, "John Cotton's Letter to Samuel Skelton," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 22, no. 3 (July 1965), 478–485.

Old Testament citations.¹¹⁴ In Cotton's opinion, England already stood in covenant with God because "the whole state in Parliament in the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign did renounce popery . . . to embrace the gospel of Christ."¹¹⁵ Furthermore, Cotton charged that the separatists had annulled the national covenant and replaced it with a covenant at every church, although church covenants that had not been established as separate churches, such as St. Botolph's, were consistent with Biblical precedents of national covenantal renewal. Reformation in England would be accomplished through local covenants that, as Cotton described, would lead to the "wellbeing and continuance" of the true and elect English Church.¹¹⁶

The national dimension of the local church covenants was also demonstrated in their concern for unrepentant sinners. Puritans often held to a horizontal dimension of the covenant consisting of intra-community responsibilities in addition to the obvious vertical dimension applied from God to both the nation and individuals. Common among many puritans was the expressed concern that believers held personal and corporate obligations as well as responsibilities individual Christians held towards each other, which were fulfilled through two methods. First, elect persons edified and encouraged fellow elect persons through local covenants. Second, the elect were called to apply the gospel towards the unconverted. The godliness that the elect desired illuminated Christ to sinners in addition to spurring fellow Christians into sanctification. According to William Bradshaw, whose ideas greatly contributed to the formation of the non-separating congregational view, the

¹¹⁴ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 145, see also 146; Yarbrough, "Influence of Plymouth Colony Separatism on Salem," 297.

¹¹⁵ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 146.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

godly functioned to purify the national church.¹¹⁷ Rogers made clear that an indispensable aspect of Wethersfield's covenant was the desire for the conversion of the ungodly.¹¹⁸

Expressing his constant concern for unsaved persons who had yet to hear Christ's voice, Cotton was always sure to include a legitimate call to faith in God and an invitation to unbelievers to go "where the faithful hearing Christ's voice resort . . . and follow those"¹¹⁹ in his sermons. Correct Biblical doctrine was absolutely essential for this evangelistic agenda as well as the purity and holiness of the Church.¹²⁰ Cotton noted that true Biblical teaching was fully revealed through and most purely held by the apostles who heralded the "whole counsel of God . . . complete . . . Free from all error."¹²¹ Cotton summarized apostolic teaching as the "doctrine of certainty of . . . adoption" that invited those alienated by sin into God's

¹¹⁷ William Bradshaw, *The Unreasonableness of the Separation* (Dort, 1614), sig. P. William Bradshaw's *English Puritanisme* (1605) was extremely influential in the development of William Ames' congregational ecclesiology; see Keith L. Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames: Dutch Backgrounds of English and American Puritanism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 96–100. Cotton cited Ames, Robert Parker, and Paul Baynes as the primary sources of his congregational ideals.

¹¹⁸ Rogers, "The Preface, or Enterance to the Booke," in *Seven Treatises*, n.p., sig. B2, 214–215, 477, 479, 484–485.

¹¹⁹ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 34–5; see also Teresa Toulouse, *The Art of Prophesying: New England's Sermons and the Shaping of Belief* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 13–45. This lateral dimension of the covenant can also be seen in John Cotton, *The Way of Life* (London, 1641), 90–91; Cotton, *Christ the Fountaine of Life*, 31–37. David Como suggested that Cotton's constant concern and attempts to extend a legitimate invitation to unsaved persons may have led him to make concessions towards Arminianism in his formulation of predestination; see David Como, "Puritans, Predestination and the Construction of Orthodoxy in Early Seventeenth-Century England," in *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560–1660*, ed. Peter Lake and Michael Questier (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), 77–78.

¹²⁰ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 148.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

kingdom and emboldened the elect to confidently say of God, “*This is my beloved, this is my friend.*”¹²² Cotton then identified the core of this teaching as the “doctrine of free justification by Christ,” which he in turn identified as the defining element of the Protestant Reformation.¹²³

Cotton saw himself standing in this rich reformed tradition among the likes of Luther, Calvin, Martin Bucer, Thomas Cranmer, John Hooper, Nicholas Ridley, and Hugh Latimer.¹²⁴ Rooted in this fundamental reformed tenet, the Church would endure for eternity.¹²⁵ Moreover, St. Botolph’s aim to purify defective worship certainly entailed the need to centralize preaching in public worship, highlighting the importance of predestinarian grace against English Arminian attempts to replace it with ceremonies and sacramental grace.¹²⁶

Cotton was encouraged when he observed that “sundry Congregations in England” evidenced the work of conversion.¹²⁷ The radiance of Christ’s bride manifested through the nourishment of believers as well as the invitation and

¹²² Ibid., 161–162.

¹²³ Ibid., 49.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 177.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 48; see also Cotton, *Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*, 21, 124–127.

¹²⁶ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 161; Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 128–129, 358; Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 96. See also Anthony Milton, ed., *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort (1618–1619)* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), xvii–xviii, xxii–xxvii. See also Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 87–105; Peter Lake, “Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge, and Avant-Garde Conformity at the Court of James I,” in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 114, 120; Peter McCullough, “Making Dead Men Speak: Laudianism, Print, and the Works of Lancelot Andrewes, 1626–1642,” *Historical Journal* 41, no. 2 (1998), 416.

¹²⁷ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 186; see also 188, 189.

“entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven” openly extended to unbelievers.¹²⁸ A church, Cotton explained, became a *queen* by the “begetting of souls to an immortal inheritance;” otherwise, she was a concubine to the Lord.¹²⁹ Hence, at St. Botolph’s the preaching of the gospel was of utmost importance to Cotton because without this ministry St. Botolph’s would not be a queen in the eyes of God. Cotton qualified the English Church as true as well as discredited separatism through the preaching of the gospel and the saving of souls:

Christ is here in *England*, let us not go away . . . Christ is pleased to feed us, to drop milk and honey into our souls, let us not depart. . . . Ministers . . . make their Ministry amiable to Christ . . . not to preach once a month, or quarterly . . . but . . . to be full as the honey, and wholesome as milk, for the nourishment of Christ’s lambs.¹³⁰

Cotton also took the opportunity to admonish the English Church. Although he observed conversions throughout England, Cotton believed the number of souls won did not compare to the numbers of lives saved and being added to the Apostolic Church. Moreover, Cotton believed England’s meagre numbers of conversions was shameful, considering England’s “Universities” and “abundance of outward helps and means,” none of which the Primitive Church had had as resources.¹³¹

III. The Church of England and the Apocalyptic Church of Sardis

Scholars have clearly demonstrated that Brightman profoundly influenced Cotton’s eschatology. This conclusion has primarily been based upon their comparisons between Brightman’s commentaries and Cotton’s post-migration

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 187.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 188–189; see also 185, 186, 198–9.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 127–128.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 128.

sermons of Biblical apocalyptic texts preached in New England.¹³² However, as noted previously, *Canticles* (1642) was a pre-migration text. A comparison between this work and Brightman's expositions demonstrates that during the early stages of the development of Cotton's eschatology, both men executed distinctly different strategies, which is intriguing if not puzzling, considering the influence that Brightman exerted. By the time Cotton preached from *Canticles* in the 1620s, he already "*much approved of Master Brightman's Exposition of the Revelation.*"¹³³ Again, this approval enabled Cotton to recognize the relationship between the two Biblical sources and conclude that *Canticles* was historical prophetic literature. Furthermore, Cotton agreed with Brightman that the Church of England was true yet only partly reformed. However, Cotton opted against Brightman's use of fear and admonishments to convict the Church of sin. Rather, he chose to imbue the English Church with affirmation in hopes of goading her towards greater reformation. This variance becomes most evident in the apocalyptic ecclesiastical models each used to depict the state of a partly reformed English Church.

Brightman's expositions were aimed at the Church of England's "Popish government," which had expelled him from ministry.¹³⁴ Led by Archbishop Bancroft, efforts to align loyalists and purge the church of dissenting and unaccommodating clergy began in the spring of 1604. Royal proclamations declared that those who failed to conform and subscribe to the Canons of 1604 would suffer

¹³² See Toon, "Latter-Day Glory," 36; Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom*, 64, 178–191; Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives*, 246–249.

¹³³ Cotton, "To the Reader," *Canticles* (1655), n.p.

¹³⁴ Brightman, *Revelation*, 112.

deprivation, yet leniency would be extended to ministers who were believed would eventually adapt.¹³⁵

In late 1604, Brightman was stripped of his ministry as a result of his “bitter invectives against the ecclesiastical government” and refusal to yield to subscription and conformity.¹³⁶ This experience led Brightman to convict England of spiritual decline, evidenced by the harsh admonitions he delivered through his commentaries. In Brightman’s opinion, reformation in the English Church had not progressed since the Elizabethan era; rather than progressing, she had fallen into greater sin under James’ rule. This belief likely contributed to Brightman’s designation of the beginning of Canticles’ historical prophecy with David’s reign rather than Solomon’s. David’s reign was celebrated as the model Israelite community prior to captivity and the embrace of idolatry and defilement of worship.¹³⁷ As nothing less than complete expulsion of the Antichrist’s presence would satisfy the Lord, Brightman exhorted believers to “purge out all the Romish leaven, that thou may hang no longer in the midst between the *reformed and the Anti-Christian Church*.”¹³⁸

During the 1620s, Cotton’s accumulated experiences and his resulting regard for the English Church stood in stark contrast to Brightman’s exhortations against

¹³⁵ Kenneth Fincham, “Episcopal Government,” in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603–1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 75. Approximately seventy five ministers were ejected between 1604 and 1609. Arthur Hildersham and John Dod, who were close friends of Cotton, were among those ejected; see Fincham, *Prelate as Pastor*, 323–325.

¹³⁶ *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Salisbury . . . Preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire*, 24 vols., Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports [Inspectors’ Reports to the Commissioners]; Ser. 9, vol. 16 (London: HMSO, 1933), 379–380.

¹³⁷ Brightman, *Canticles*, 981–983, 986.

¹³⁸ Brightman, *Revelation*, 128.

her. Just as Brightman's troubles may have fuelled his apocalyptic reproach, Cotton's fortunes may have encouraged a more positive eschatological outlook and approach. Provoking envy among Cotton and like puritans, Bishop Williams provided Cotton with enormous liberty to express his non-conformity within his ministry, which Cotton further secured with royal favour, as John Norton explained:

He was in great favour with Doctor *Williams*, the then Bishop of *Lincoln*, who much esteemed him for his learning, and . . . went to King *James*, and speaking of Mr. *Cotton's* great learning and worth, the King was willing not withstanding his non-conformity, to give way that he should have his liberty without interruption in his Ministry, which was the more notable considering how that King's spirit was carried out against such men.¹³⁹

Cotton responded to James' benevolence by praising the King as England's Solomon, carrying on the long-standing tradition of associating England's monarchy with royal Biblical figures.¹⁴⁰ Cotton commended Solomon as one who rests as a "Saint in Heaven even during his days of unfaithfulness" despite his inadequacies.¹⁴¹ However, Solomon remained a controversial figure, having experienced a reign plagued by spiritual infidelity and failure to rule over God's people in a godly manner. Cotton fought against the fixation on Solomon's deficiencies by recalling and accenting Solomon's long list of praiseworthy characteristics and accomplishments, reminding his listeners that the Lord showed favour to Solomon by offering the king anything his heart desired. Solomon proved himself worthy of such an honour and gained worldwide renown when he requested heavenly wisdom

¹³⁹ Norton, *Abel Being Dead*, 18.

¹⁴⁰ See Charles W. A. Prior, *Defending the Jacobean Church: The Politics of Religious Controversy, 1603–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 24, 55, 216.

¹⁴¹ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 4, 12.

over wealth and power.¹⁴² Most compelling to Cotton was the fact that though David desired to build a temple for the Lord, God chose Solomon to erect the famed structure. Solomon was also divinely ordained to compose the Song of Songs, which was deemed worthy of inclusion in the canon of Holy Scripture. Cotton also praised Solomon's poetry as superior to David's Psalms, provoking a deliberate disagreement with Brightman, who came to the opposite conclusion after comparing the Biblical works.¹⁴³

Cotton suggested that James was a king of tremendous spiritual distinction, extending him the greatest honour by extrapolating Solomon's Christo-typological role to James' role as a Christian prince.¹⁴⁴ William Lamont has argued that Foxe nurtured the belief among puritans that the Christian prince was the apocalyptic deliverer of the Church, which was later rejected by Brightman, most likely due to his disappointment over James' neglect of reform.¹⁴⁵ But, during the 1620s Cotton does not evidence Brightman's rejection of the monarchy. That James was a learned and able Calvinist theologian interested and personally involved in the matters of the Church would not have gone unnoticed by Cotton. Although Cotton disagreed with certain policies that the King had endorsed, he acknowledged that James' ecclesiastical strategy was first and foremost aimed at maintaining the English Church's reformed character.¹⁴⁶ Cotton's esteem for James and his role as a Christian

¹⁴² Ibid., 14–17.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 7–9; Brightman, *Canticles*, 982.

¹⁴⁴ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 4, 15, 21, 22.

¹⁴⁵ Lamont, *Godly Rule*, 46–52. In the 1640s, Cotton shifted from a focus on Foxeian eschatology to Brightman's apocalyptic outlook. This will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

¹⁴⁶ Fincham and Lake, "Ecclesiastical Policies of James I and Charles I," 23–27.

prince is evidence of yet another clear divergence from Brightman's theology. Moreover, what is striking about the contrast between Cotton and Brightman is that Cotton was able to affirm the apocalyptic role of the monarchy and maintain a positive regard for James while he condemned what he observed to be the lingering, even growing presence, of popery in the English Church.

The contrast between the approaches of Cotton and Brightman becomes more apparent in their personal choices of the apocalyptic church with which to associate England. The Book of Revelation provided a list of seven apocalyptic churches that many used as a Scriptural ecclesiastical measure to explicate England's spiritual condition.¹⁴⁷ The vivid descriptions of these apocalyptic churches were especially useful for those who wanted to call attention to England's sin and need for reformation. Brightman became famous for his interpretation that England was the antitypical Church of Laodicea,¹⁴⁸ while Cotton, also correlating England with one of the seven churches depicted in Revelation, selected the Church of Sardis.¹⁴⁹ Cotton characterized England as a Sardisian church primarily because this apocalyptic model affirmed the true Church as the Lord's bride and gave the elect hope of future redemption. Although Brightman did not believe Sardis was without her blemishes, he, like Cotton, recognised her as a more optimistic model than was Laodicea, historically corresponding Sardis with Martin Luther and the German Reformation. While Brightman praised the reformer for his great accomplishments for the Church, he indicated that Luther's work was incomplete because the residue of popish

¹⁴⁷ Revelation 2 and 3.

¹⁴⁸ Revelation 3:14-22.

¹⁴⁹ Revelation 3:1-6.

doctrine still lingered. Scholars who have cited Brightman's use of Sardis have chosen to accent his negative comments rather than Brightman's acknowledgement that Sardis held more promise than did Laodicea.¹⁵⁰ Cotton associated with Sardis rather than Laodicea precisely because of the optimistic tone in Sardis that Brightman had observed.

Avihu Zakai has argued that Cotton's apocalyptic church of choice was not Sardis but actually Laodicea. Zakai argued that Cotton clung to Brightman's Laodicean doctrine in order to demonstrate that prior to his emigration to New England, Cotton believed that England was lost and on the verge of divine judgment. Furthermore, Laodicea, Zakai writes, was the apocalyptic context of Cotton's sermon, *God's Promise to His Plantations*, which was preached to John Winthrop and others prior to their departure in April 1630.¹⁵¹ However, in a letter to Samuel Skelton dated October 2, 1630, Cotton rebuked Skelton for what Cotton believed were separatist practices, and referred to England as Sardis without any mention of Laodicea. Moreover, Cotton closed both his sermon to Winthrop and letter to Skelton with the same plea. Cotton's appeal to the passengers of *Arbella* to "forget not the womb that bare you, and the breast that gave your suck" was echoed in his admonishment to Skelton to "reject not the womb that bare you nor the paps that gave you suck," to which he added until "Christ give us a bill of divorcement."¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Brightman, *Revelation*, 75–89, 107; Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon: English Apocalyptic Visions from the Reformation to the Eve of the Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 101, 118; Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom*, 48, 142.

¹⁵¹ Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom*, 64. For Cotton's sermon to Winthrop and colleagues, see John Cotton, *Gods Promise to His Plantations* (London, 1630).

¹⁵² Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 188–9; Cotton, *Correspondence*, 145–147; Cotton, *Gods Promise to His Plantations*, 18.

Cotton had yet to see the Lord's annulment of his covenant with England. Zakai's contention that Cotton founded his eschatological outlook upon a Laodicean doctrine that described an England forsaken by God and New England as a providential apocalyptic country is problematic simply because it is based on the conclusion that Cotton was a separatist.

Cotton's decision not to cite Laodicea may have also been the result of his intentionally anti-separatist message. Interestingly, throughout *Canticles* (1642) Cotton never referred to the English Church as Laodicea, though he described England as "black, yet comely" and essentially agreed with Brightman's lukewarm and half-reformed indictment. It is possible that Cotton intentionally avoided using any Laodicean reference because Sanderson had already painted this doctrine as crypto-separatist theology. However, Brightman was in fact staunchly opposed to separatism. The strong anti-separatist tone in Brightman's commentary on Revelation was so offensive that the printer who first received the manuscript edited the work to lighten the critique.¹⁵³ Sanderson's charges either deliberately painted Brightman's teaching with separatist colours to strengthen his denunciation of Boston's puritans or misinterpreted Brightman's teachings in the same way he had with Cotton's as an endorsement of schism.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Keith L. Sprunger, *Trumpets from the Tower* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 90–91. The editing was soon discovered and the printer was ordered to reprint it accurately.

¹⁵⁴ Brightman debated with the conformist Laurence Chaderton, who defended the church against a position that greatly resembled separatism; see Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, 254.

IV. Conclusion

Cotton steadfastly believed that England's covenant remained intact, renewed by a faithful remnant scattered throughout various parishes. He viewed Canticles as a song that was sung "whatsoever the estate of the Church" in relation to Christ. For Cotton, Canticles confirmed that the true Church always remained the Lord's spouse; even in times of corruption, its lyrics redeemed and cleansed her.¹⁵⁵ Brightman called this song Christ's kiss to the Church, his pledge of affection and love to her.¹⁵⁶ Cotton agreed that Canticles was a song from the Lord to His bride that assured her of adoption into His family and procurement of the heavenly kingdom.¹⁵⁷ The singing of Solomon's song ignited the Church's heart with "heavenly love" and further extinguished lusts and sins.¹⁵⁸ Cotton believed that England's redemption was only possible if the English people beheld the Church not with the "scorching . . . Vulture's eye" of the separatists but with the "child-like eye" of God.¹⁵⁹ Cotton

¹⁵⁵ Cotton recommended that Canticles be put into verse and meter, which Henry Ainsworth later did, Henry Ainsworth, *Solomons Song of Songs* (1623). The fact that Cotton did not mention Ainsworth's work in *Canticles* (1642) proposes three possibilities. First, it supports the argument that Cotton's sermons were composed prior to 1623. Second, it suggests that Cotton did not have approved Ainsworth's work or thirdly, that Cotton simply may not have been aware of it.

¹⁵⁶ Brightman, *Canticles* (1644), 982.

¹⁵⁷ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 13–14, 49, 171–177, 260; Twisse, *Predestination*, 62, 100, 107.

¹⁵⁸ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 5, 7–8.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 23–32, 47, 112; John Cotton, *The Saints Support and Comfort in the Time of Distress and Danger* (London, 1657), 1–6, 8–9.

regarded separation as “not a little sin and fault” but the rejection of Christ and his Church, and therefore strictly forbidden by God.¹⁶⁰

However, the rise of the anti-Calvinists, led by William Laud, brought darker days to England and the reversal of Cotton’s own fortunes. Cotton’s hope and optimism were later tested when he was challenged to continue to validate England as a true Church and qualify this conviction in light of his decision to depart England’s ports for New England’s shores. The following chapter demonstrates Cotton’s unrelenting fidelity to England’s elect status, even as he endured persecution. After being forced to seek exile in New England, Cotton would join what he believed to be England’s remnant in America, and there he would again sing Canticles’ redeeming song.

¹⁶⁰ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 33.

Chapter Two: Errand, Exile, and Eschatological Ecclesiology

I. *Exilic Errand*

Sometime between 1628 and 1631, Cotton expressed great fear of anti-Christian powers within the English Church that he believed were far more dangerous than the “Power, and malice of France, or Spain.”¹ Cotton was referring to the movement scholars have labelled anti-Calvinism. Under Charles I, the “Arminian” wing of the English Church, led by William Laud, seized control of the Church and aggressively aligned the English Church along its definition of the true reformed heritage.² Henry Parker wrote that in the eyes of English Arminians, the

¹ Cotton to a silenced minister; 1628-1631?, see Cotton, *Correspondence*, 165.

² Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*. For a discussion on the emergence of Laudianism see J. F. Merritt, “The Cradle of Laudianism? Westminster Abbey, 1558–1630,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52, no. 4 (2001), 623–646; see also Esther Gilman Richey, “The Political Design of Herbert’s Temple,” *Studies in English Literature* 37, no. 1 (Winter, 1997), 73-96. Tyacke’s revisionist thesis has been strongly opposed by scholars who contend that a Calvinist consensus did not exist, that Laudian Arminians were not innovators of religion, and that the Puritans split the Church, not the Laudian Arminians. See Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 279–308; Peter White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Laud has been given primary credit for leading the anti-Calvinist movement, although he acquired the See of Canterbury in 1633. See Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud* (Great Britain: Macmillan, 1940; repr., London: Phoenix Press, 2000), 45–46, 104–105, 151–152, 193; Nicholas Tyacke, “Archbishop Laud,” in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603–1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (London: Macmillan, 1993), 68–9; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Laud, William.” Laud made great use of Andrewes’ works; see McCullough, “Making Dead Men Speak,” 416, 419, 423; Nicholas Tyacke, “Lancelot Andrewes and the Myth of Anglicanism,” in *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560–1660*, eds. Peter Lake and Michael Questier (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2000), 5–33; Anthony Milton, “Licensing, censorship, and religious orthodoxy in early Stuart England,” *Historical Journal* 41 (1998), 625-651. David Como described Laud’s actions as “conscious, deliberate, and in many ways devious,” a “smokescreen” to thwart Calvinists and their accusations; see David Como, “Predestination and Political Conflict in Laud’s London,” *Historical Journal* 46, no. 2 (2003), 291.

Reformation, initiated by Edward VI and extended by Elizabeth, departed “too far from popery, out of favour to Puritanical *Calvin*.”³ But to Cotton and many others, more accurately, Laudian Arminians attempted to move the Church of England closer to Rome. To do so, they first denied the traditional Protestant identification of the Pope as the Antichrist.⁴ Second, this Arminian wing of the English Church replaced Foxe’s definition of the true Church as an exilic remnant characterized by individual piety and Biblical preaching with that of a Church that, essentially identified as a visible institution,⁵ was defined institutionally and visibly highlighted the importance of ceremonies.

As a result, Laudian Arminians created a theology of beauty that was rooted in the expansion of the meaning of liturgical elements. Beauty, they believed, was captured in divine holiness and manifested in the instruments and materials used for worship, most of all those used at the altar. By the 1630s, parishes were required to

Laudians sought influence through print and, through their manipulation using this medium, demonstrated their recognition of the importance of not appearing to squelch Calvinism; see Nicholas Tyacke, *Aspects of English Protestantism, c. 1530–1700, Politics, Culture, and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 141–142, 211–214.

³ Henry Parker, *The Altar Dispute* (London, 1641), 1; see also William Laud, *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud*, ed. Scott Williams and James Bliss (London, 1857), 6:42.

⁴ Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 110–127; Peter Lake, “The Significance of the Elizabethan Identification of the Pope as Antichrist,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31, no. 2 (April 1980), 161–78; see also Richard Bauckham, “Hooker, Travers and the Church of Rome in the 1580s,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 29 (January 1978), 37–50.

⁵ Anthony Milton, “The Church of England, Rome, and the True Church: The Demise of a Jacobean Consensus,” in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603–1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (London: Macmillan, 1993), 187–188, 196, 202–203; Damian Nussbaum, “Laudian Foxe-Hunting? William Laud and the Status of John Foxe in the 1630s,” in *The Church Retrospective*, ed. R. N. Swanson (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1997), 329–342.

permanently relocate the communion table altarwise at the east end and required that it be railed in. Furthermore, parishioners were expected to bow before the altar when entering and departing the church.⁶ At the heart of this teaching stood the contention that the church was the very house and chamber of God, which stood against the common puritan conception that the Lord's dwelling was found in the hearts of the faithful elect. Moreover, English Arminian sacramental theology challenged the puritan focus on preaching by elevating the elements of the Eucharist, resulting in the increased importance of sacramental grace over Calvinism's predestinarian grace. Laudians detested the fundamental reformed tenet of election, which they construed as illegitimately discriminatory. Instead, they offered what they believed to be the preferable all-embracing administration of divine favour, with worship centred on the sacraments, enabling salvific grace to be extended to all persons. In addition, the extent of the atonement was extended beyond the Calvinist exclusive limitation to the elect. Laudian Arminians believed this position did not bring justice to the Biblical concept that Christ died for the whole world. All in all, to puritans, Laudian Arminians advocated a popish view and denied the reformed protestant view of justification by faith alone.⁷ The Laudian Arminians aggressively rid the Church of those puritans who opposed their vision.

⁶ See Kenneth Fincham, "The Restoration of Altars in the 1630s," *Historical Journal* 44, no. 4 (2001), 919–940. Kevin Sharpe does not believe that the altar policy was an integral aspect of the Arminian uprising against the established Calvinist party, nor does he depict Laud as the policy's primary architect; see Sharpe, *Personal Rule*, 333–345.

⁷ Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, 83–104; Peter Lake, "The Laudian Style: Order, Uniformity and the Pursuit of the Beauty of Holiness in the 1630s," in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603–1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (London: Macmillan, 1993), 162–168, 181; Lake, "Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge," 131. For Laud's opinion towards the table over the pulpit see Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 55, 202, 246.

Despite Cotton's commentary on the Caroline church, he was certain that God still dwelled in England. He certainly feared that the anti-Christian presence in the Church would lead to the Lord's departure, which would have guaranteed England's spiritual demise and the removal of any and all protection for the godly. However, he was confident that the Lord, through displaying his providence and sovereignty, would ultimately prevail. Although not certain how or when the Lord would rise up against his enemies in England, Cotton was certain in his mind and heart that the Lord would do so. He expressed his confidence in the following passage:

I know not what times God hath reserved for his Church . . . the sins of the Times, deserve ill . . . yet . . . the ways of the Enemies are not more holy, their cause not so just, their consciences not so peaceable, their Religion not so gracious, their lives not so righteous. . . . The Lord Jesus hath overcome Hell, and Death, and the Devil for us: Only He help us to deny ourselves, and to cleave to Him, that in his victory you may go forth conquering to overcome.⁸

In 1631, Nathaniel Ward, the rector of Stondon Massey, Essex, wrote to Cotton soon after a visitation by William Laud, then Bishop of London. Ward described the intense pressure for his non-conformity that he had experienced and further expected in the future in a "measure hard enough" of making "giants turn their backs."⁹ When Ward was excommunicated the following year,¹⁰ Cotton likely sensed that he might face a similar fate. In fact, according to Cotton Mather, Cotton's

⁸ Cotton to Colonel Sir Edward Hardwood, sometime between 1624 and 1632, in Cotton, *Correspondence*, 169.

⁹ Nathaniel Ward to Cotton, 13 December 1631, in *ibid.*, 163.

¹⁰ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Ward, Nathaniel Ward."

suspicions were accurate. Mather noted that Laud once expressed, “Oh! That I could meet with Cotton!”¹¹

In 1632, Cotton realized that all liberty and tolerance had been lost when he received a summons to appear before Laud and the Court of High Commission, who were en route to his parish. Cotton embraced what he considered certain imprisonment were he to face Laud and the Court of High Commission. He regarded this call to suffering as an invitation to partake in Christ’s own sufferings, comforting his wife, Sarah, and finding solace for himself with this thought.¹² On an earlier occasion, he had consoled a silenced minister with this very teaching, encouraging him to “rejoice, and be glad, when you see yourself lie like a stone, cast aside of the Builders, that you may more fully partake in Fellowship with the Lord Jesus, who being in like sort cast aside, became the Head-stone of the Corner.”¹³ Cotton likened the oppression endured by believers to Jesus’ experience in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Lord, just prior to his imprisonment, had welcomed God’s cup, despite knowing that doing so would entail his suffering and death on the cross. Cotton described that his own cup would be “brackish at the first taste, yet a Cup of God’s mingling is doubtless sweet in the bottom” for it was a believer’s “greatest Happiness, to partake with Christ as in his glory.”¹⁴

However, Cotton, though prepared to drink the Lord’s cup, did not grasp the need to do so immediately. Rather, he relentlessly pursued and exhausted every

¹¹ Quoted in Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 1:263.

¹² Cotton to Sarah Hawkred Story Cotton, October 3, 1632, in Cotton, *Correspondence*, 174. See also Cotton to Bishop John Williams, 7 May 1633, in *ibid.*, 180.

¹³ Cotton to silenced minister, sometime between 1628 and 1638, in *ibid.*, 165.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 174; see also Matthew 26:39 for the Biblical reference.

available option that could possibly remove ecclesiastical pressures and restore him to his ministry. Cotton wanted to safely return to the conditions he had enjoyed during James' reign, but if this was not possible, was willing to accept any opportunity to simply remain in England and actively continue in the struggle for reformation. Cotton may have found the justification to stall his appearance before the High Commission and explore possibilities for acquittal in the very teaching that prepared his heart to accept suffering. He would have certainly been aware that in Gethsemane, an uncertain Christ had asked if it was His father's will that the cup be turned away. Likewise, Cotton seemed uncertain regarding God's will for him. He likely expected that should the Lord's plan entail further tolerance, then most certainly a favourable opportunity would present itself. Moreover, the Marian exiles' flight from Mary to the continent had demonstrated that it was legitimate to avoid persecution.¹⁵

Despite these Biblical analogies to his situation, Cotton's immediate response was to go into hiding upon receiving word of his summons; refuge promised time and opportunity to secure a pardon. That Cotton did not appear to seek the assistance of John Williams, who had helped him greatly in past years, may be attributed to the fact that by 1632, much of Bishop Williams' power had waned.¹⁶ Rather, Cotton sought the assistance of the Earl of Dorset, but the Earl could do nothing. The failure of the Earl's efforts to secure Cotton's pardon was due to the nature of Cotton's transgressions. Cotton had been indicted for the offenses of puritanism and non-conformity, both considered inexcusable and more serious than even drunkenness.

¹⁵ Cotton made this point to the passengers of the *Arbella*; see Cotton, *God's Promise to His Plantations*, 9–10.

¹⁶ Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud*, 58–62, 63, 65, 66, 76–77, 79, 86, 114–115.

After Cotton's hopes in the Earl had been dashed, he sought the counsel of John Dod, asking Dod whether it was prudent to seek private employment, as had Dod when he was suspended from the ministry many years ago. However, Dod discouraged Cotton from pursuing this course of action, suggesting exile abroad, which Cotton most likely considered completely undesirable if not illegitimate.¹⁷

Cotton seems to have been resolved to remain in England until Dod convinced him of another viable option. In fact, the evidence strongly suggests that Cotton's determination to stay may have been due to the fact that it was his only option at that point. Moreover, Cotton's conscience may have instructed him that departure would be nothing else than the desertion of a separatist. Although Cotton had explained to Winthrop that the option and warrant to depart was viable when "sins overspread a Country that threaten desolation,"¹⁸ there is no evidence to suggest that Cotton extended this advice to himself or even considered it. Despite this fact, Dod was able to convince Cotton that as a "Young *Peter*," he could endure the physical challenges of fleeing from one location to another.¹⁹ Cotton was persuaded by Dod's assertion that Cotton was physically capable of enduring the rigours of flight or exile.

In 1634, a year after his arrival in Massachusetts, Cotton was challenged to justify his departure by a minister in England. Cotton's defence indicates that Dod's argument had ultimately led to his decision to flee.²⁰ Assuaging his conscience,

¹⁷ Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 1:263–4; Norton, *Abel Being Dead*, 18–21.

¹⁸ Cotton, *Gods Promise to His Plantations*, 10.

¹⁹ Norton, *Abel Being Dead*, 16.

²⁰ Although the original letter addressed to Cotton and Thomas Hooker has not survived, Cotton's response has; see Cotton to a minister in England, 3 December 1634 in *Correspondence*, 181–185.

Cotton wrote, “Still, I must (as I ought) live by mine own faith, not theirs,” as just men live by their own faith and not that of others.²¹ The mere fact of Cotton’s youth was insufficient to justify his flight; Biblical witness, Dod informed Cotton, could not be contained regardless of the circumstances. God had given his people free will so that they could determine the manner in which their witness would be made. Cotton acknowledged the Apostle Paul’s precedent of basing decisions upon one’s conscience when he wrote, “To choose rather to bear witness to the truth by imprisonment than by Banishment, is indeed sometimes god’s way. . . . Did not Paul bear witness against the Levitical ceremonies, and yet choose rather to depart quickly out of Jerusalem to bear witness to that cause unto Prison, and death?”²²

Prior to meeting with Dod, Cotton had believed that the imprisonment and death that were possible by his remaining in England would not quiet his testimony for the Lord. However, Dod convinced him that an alternative course was available to him that entailed sailing to New England. Cotton confessed to his inquisitor the great pain he experienced when he resolved to leave.²³ According to Dod, and later expressed by Cotton in a letter, it was at that period that England most needed witnesses.²⁴ In the end, Cotton was able to overcome the doubts in his conscience, perhaps for fear of being labelled a separatist or because he began to see that

²¹ Letter from Cotton to Bishop John Williams, 7 May 1633, in *ibid.*, 179.

²² *Ibid.*, 183.

²³ *Ibid.*, 184.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 180, 183; Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 1: 263-264; Norton, *Abel Being Dead*, 20–1; Samuel Clarke, *The Lives of Thirty-Two English Divines*. . . (London, 1677), 70; see also Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims*, 29; Ziff, *Career of John Cotton*, 65–70.

peaceful residence elsewhere would afford him a more effective ministry to the puritan cause, as it had proven to be for William Ames and the Marian exiles.²⁵

After being persuaded to flee, Cotton originally resolved to join Hooker on a journey to the Netherlands, not New England. This decision was most likely due to Cotton's knowledge of Hooker's previous exile in the Netherlands.²⁶ His choice of the Netherlands supports the idea that Cotton was merely looking for temporary asylum and, not believing that his difficulties would persist forever, believing that he simply had to bide his time until his fortune reversed. Moreover, exile to the continent would enable him to return swiftly should even a small window of opportunity arise in which he could do so, as had the Marian exiles John Foxe and John Bale. Because of this factor, the Netherlands had already established itself as a haven for persecuted persons. Hugh Peter, who was also involved in the organizational meetings for the Massachusetts Bay Colony, had demonstrated the relative ease of travelling back and forth between England and the Low Countries.²⁷ Moreover, Keith Sprunger points out that at that time, the English Church in the Netherlands was already well established.²⁸ The Netherlands was not only

²⁵ See Keith Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames: Dutch Backgrounds of English and American Puritanism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 215.

²⁶ Hooker lived in the Netherlands from 1631 to 1633. Although Hooker initially encouraged Cotton to go to Netherlands, and the two of them embarked towards that destination together, he dissuaded Cotton from coming to the Netherlands in 1633. See *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Hooker, Thomas."

²⁷ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Peter, Hugh."

²⁸ Keith L. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982), 91–112.

recognized by so many puritans and their opposition as a haven for non-conformity but also as a centre for the cultivation of non-conforming ideals.²⁹

At the same time, Cotton was intimately familiar with the activities of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He had attended an organizational session in July 1629 along with John Winthrop, Thomas Hooker, Roger Williams, and Emmanuel Downing.³⁰ If ever there was an occasion to openly express errant sentiments, this closed-door session would have been the time and place. Although Cotton did not provide details of these proceedings, his ensuing actions indicated his basic concern for England. Certainly, if a divine mission to New England had been discussed, Cotton would have embraced it, yet he remained in England, indicating that it had not been discussed. Moreover, there is no indication throughout the farewell sermon, *God's Promise to His Plantations*, which he delivered to Winthrop and the party on the *Arbella*, that he was internally wrestling over this issue.³¹

As early as 1631, Cotton became aware of New England's viability as a place of refuge. Around February of that year, Cotton spent some time recovering from malaria at the residence of Theophilus Clinton, the fourth Earl of Lincoln. The Earl frequently received information about the Massachusetts Bay Colony and it was during this stay that Cotton began to reserve New England as a possible haven should he face the unbearable persecution.³² Although Cotton was intimately familiar with God's work across the Atlantic, it was not sufficient to deter him from suffering as a martyr in England. The fact that Cotton was not overwhelmed by the

²⁹ Sprunger, *Williams Ames*, 213–214.

³⁰ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 40.

³¹ Cotton, *Gods Promise to His Plantations*.

³² Ziff, *Career of John Cotton*, 64-65.

prospects in New England indicates that he did not consider the New World to be the New Jerusalem. How could any puritan extremely concerned for the reformation resist the opportunity or balk at the possibility of serving at the heart of the apocalyptic reconstruction of the Church?

On their way to the Netherlands, Cotton and Hooker were urged to attend a conference of London and Cambridge divines, who pleaded with them to reconsider their decision and recognize the value of conformity. The attempts of the divines were in vain; neither Cotton nor Hooker was persuaded.³³ Just before they reached the docks, Cotton and Hooker were met by a party of men, including Thomas Goodwin, John Davenport, and Philip Nye, who convinced them to attend a conference of divines in Ockley. The purpose of the meeting was to dissuade Hooker and Cotton from leaving England and convince them of the value of conformity.³⁴ After the divines had failed to persuade them, Cotton and Hooker resumed their journey. Although not persuaded to embrace conformity, Cotton and Hooker had made one significant change upon the conclusion of the conference: They had changed their destination from the Netherlands to New England. After comparing the Netherlands with New England and even Barbados, Cotton and Hooker determined

³³ The London and Cambridge divines attempted to convince Cotton and Hooker that the ceremonies were *adiaphora*, things indifferent, and that there was no harm in performing them. It was an argument that Cotton had heard before from Bishop John Williams. Ironically, it was Thomas Goodwin along with Philip Nye, John Davenport, and Henry Whitefield, who attempted to dissuade Cotton and Hooker from leaving England, were eventually convinced themselves to adopt a more stringent position against conformity; see Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 157–66, esp. 164; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v., “Goodwin, Thomas” ; John Wingate Thornton, *The Historical Relation of New England to the English Commonwealth* (Boston: Press of A. Mudge, 1874), 54. Goodwin ultimately adopted Congregationalism after being swayed by a letter from Cotton; see Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churching Cleared*, 23–28.

³⁴ Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 157–165.

to sail for Massachusetts.³⁵ They had realized that the factors that made the Netherlands an attractive destination were matched by as many if not more factors that made it undesirable for puritans. As early as 1628, Laud had become aware that the Netherlands was a haven for non-conformists.³⁶ On the one hand, by 1632, Laud's application of extreme pressure upon many puritans had been expanding for several decades in the Netherlands.³⁷ On the other hand, New England was the land of liberty where God's people enjoyed "not ... some ordinances of god, but of all, & all in Purity."³⁸ Moreover, New England was a new territory that needed strong leadership to guide its development. Cotton had previously been invited to join the colony, which had much optimism invested in it, numerous times. In 1629, William Ames had promised to make the journey to New England himself while he was residing and teaching in Franeker.³⁹ Cotton highly regarded Ames's, so much so that he had listed Ames as a forefather of the ecclesiastical movement.⁴⁰ If Cotton had been dissuaded from the Netherlands because it lay within Laud's reach, history has vindicated his decision. According to Sprunger, by 1635 puritanism had been uprooted from the Netherlands, forcing many underground.⁴¹ New England held an advantageous position far beyond the reach of opposing authorities to assist England's reformation, and England's reformation would profoundly affect the

³⁵ Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 1:264. For the Ockley conference see Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 157–165.

³⁶ Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, 144.

³⁷ Sprunger, *William Ames*, 213–214, 230–231. The group had begun expanding as early as 1630.

³⁸ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 184.

³⁹ Sprunger, *William Ames*, 200.

⁴⁰ Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, 13.

spiritual vitality and posterity of New England.⁴² These factors may have played a key role in convincing Cotton and Hooker to change their minds and set their sights for New England. In June 1633, both men boarded the *Griffin* and set sail for Massachusetts.⁴³

Cotton was not drawn to New England because of any particular apocalyptic vision infused into the Bay Colony's identity but rather, as Susan Hardman Moore argues, by extraordinary factors that thrust him from England's shores. A proper understanding of why Cotton and others left for New England's shores is best gained by examining their reasons for leaving England.⁴⁴ New England had become the haven for a great host of notable exiles,⁴⁵ including Hooker, who, like Cotton, chose New England over the Netherlands despite his belief that England was in a most perilous state of "rebellion."⁴⁶ However damning this comment appears, Hooker did not lose his hope that God was still in England's midst. Believing that England was in a state "ripe for ruin" because her sins were great, he called upon the English

⁴¹ Sprunger, *William Ames*, 248–249.

⁴² Laud, well aware of New England's practices, wished to aggressively enforce policies there, but understood that essentially nothing could be done because of its remoteness. See Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud*, 259–261.

⁴³ Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 157–164.

⁴⁴ Hardman Moore, "Popery, Purity and Providence," 260–261.

⁴⁵ Other prominent figures, apart from Cotton, also had fallen victim to the anti-Calvinists. Thomas Hooker met with Laud in 1629, and later the Bishop of London, to discuss his non-conformity. Hooker was willing to leave his diocese upon the condition that he would not be summoned before the Court of High Commission. However, in 1630 Hooker was called to appear, and chose to flee. Thomas Shepard experienced three conflicts with Laud over the same issue and eventually emigrated to New England. When Richard Mather received a visitation from Bishop Richard Neile, Neile became aware that in the fifteen years Mather had been preaching, not once had he worn the surplice.

⁴⁶ Thomas Hooker, *Danger of Desertion* (London, 1641), 4. Hooker preached this sermon just prior to departing for New England.

people to beseech the Lord not to depart from them, which would have resulted in utter destruction.⁴⁷ Clearly, Hooker believed that the Lord still resided in England and had not abandoned her.

Richard Mather, who subscribed to the convictions of both Hooker and Cotton, departed from England upon being suspended from his ministry. During a visitation authorized by Bishop Neile, it was discovered that Mather had not once worn the surplice once in his fifteen years of preaching.⁴⁸ Like Hooker, Mather believed that there existed a state of corruption in the Church, as revealed by the “many signs of fearful Desolation.”⁴⁹ However, Mather did not categorize England as a false and impure Church completely void of God’s presence; rather, he argued that she was simply less pure than the churches in New England, where God’s liberties abounded and His protection enveloped his people.⁵⁰

While Hooker and Mather clearly indicated that England was in jeopardy of becoming the recipients of divine wrath, they implicitly conceded its true status as a Church, to which Cotton concurs in *Canticles*. Therefore, devoting their lives into any divinely invested agenda for New England while maintaining England’s lingering favour with God would make them no different from the separatists from whom they had adamantly distinguished themselves. England’s door was shut, but another opened in New England.⁵¹ John Norton describes Cotton’s decision to

⁴⁷ Ibid., 5; see also 2–4.

⁴⁸ Increase Mather, *The Life and Death of the Reverend Man of God Mr. Richard Mather* (Cambridge, 1670), 10, 11, 20.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 12–17.

⁵¹ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 182. Extenuating circumstances were required to pry Cotton from his parish. Even in the days just prior to his death, he expressed his

emigrate as primarily motivated and initiated by the High Commission's pursuit of him. God had providentially provided refuge in Massachusetts from the "evitable danger" that awaited Cotton in England. Cotton's heeding of Dod's astute counsel would later be validated, as "useful he was to *England*, to *N.E.* to Magistrates, to Ministers, to People, in public and private, by Preaching, Counsel."⁵²

Exile to Massachusetts did not afford Cotton the luxury of a quick return should changes in England drastically and suddenly reverse his fortune, yet he still saw active opportunities for contributing to the godly cause. In their aggressive anti-Catholic polemical attack from the continent,⁵³ the Marian Exiles had established a profound precedent that revealed the advantages and potential impact of launching a strong polemical campaign from abroad. Bale produced his famous commentary on Revelation, *The Image of Bothe Churches*, in 1545.⁵⁴ Richard Bauckham has described *Image* as the finest apocalyptic commentary of the Tudor period.⁵⁵ *Image* was published in exile during the reign of Henry VIII. Persecution served as the impetus for the construction of Bale's commentary, which served as the core of the doctrine of two churches. Similarly, Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* was born out of the church's oppression under Queen Mary. Bale and Foxe both chose refuge in the continent over the fate of martyrs. Moreover, exile enabled both Bale and Foxe to compose their respective apocalyptic polemic works. Cotton most certainly would

fondness for St. Botolph's in a poem. Cotton recalled the "grief" of the prospect of the wilderness of New England in comparison to the "joy" and "happiness" he experienced in Lincolnshire; see Norton, *Abel Being Dead*, 30.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵³ Dawson, "Apocalyptic Thinking of the Marian Exiles," 75–76.

⁵⁴ John Bale, *Image of Bothe Churches* (Antwerp, 1545).

⁵⁵ Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*, 23, 29.

have looked to these examples not only to recognize the legitimacy of fleeing from persecution but also using the opportunity to benefit the church.

Beyond acquiring personal solace in the Apocalypse through his exile, Bale believed that Revelation was best comprehended by those with exilic experiences.⁵⁶ Like his fellow exiles, he had chosen not to die as had many English martyrs but had instead fled and sought refuge. Perhaps in response to any guilt, shame, or remorse in his decision to retreat, Bale affirmed that this course of action was acceptable in the midst of tyrannical circumstances within the apocalyptic context. In addition, Bale and his fellow exiles were well aware that the author of the Apocalypse, the apostle John, was subjected to similar exilic conditions when he composed his prophecies, further justifying their decision. Motivated by his intimate association with the Marian exiles, Heinrich Bullinger, the Swiss reformer, aided the cause of Bale and his coreligionists by ministering to them through homilies preached on Revelation. In fact, Bullinger dedicated his sermons on the Apocalypse to the exiles of England and other countries.⁵⁷ Cotton responded to exile and the circumstances that drove him from his beloved England by turning to the potent prophecies contained in Scripture's apocalyptic literature, just as Bale, Foxe, and Bullinger had done so effectively.

Sometime in July 1633, Cotton, along with Thomas Hooker, set sail on the *Griffin* from England to New England's shores. In one sense, Cotton must have been greatly disappointed by his inability to remain in service to England's remnant during a time when faithful divines were of great importance. However, Cotton did

⁵⁶ Bale, *Image of Bothe Churches*, sigs. A5–A6.

⁵⁷ Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse*, 104; see also Bullinger, *Hundred Sermons Upon the Apocalips of Jesu Christe*, preface.

not see the eventual outcome as a complete failure. Cotton later defended himself by asserting that providence had been the primary justification for his decision to depart from England; although the Lord had closed England's door to Cotton and Hooker, He had opened a new door in New England, thereby, as Cotton wrote, "calling us by a Remnant of our people."⁵⁸ Moreover, Cotton could not begin to muster the audacity to question or refuse a divine provision in his greatest hour of need. Certainly, Cotton must have been consoled and become more secure in his decision to depart England for New England by his belief that although he could not directly minister to God's remnant that remained on English soil, he could exercise his pastoral care towards the English faithful across the Atlantic Ocean. Geographical boundaries, Cotton argued, were insignificant in the Lord's work; whether it was "3 hundred miles" or "3 thousand," Cotton believed he was still serving the same God and Church.⁵⁹

Cotton spent his two months at sea contemplating ecclesiastical matters. On September 4, 1633, the *Griffin* safely and, many would argue, providentially completed its journey and docked in Massachusetts Bay. The Bostonians were eager to hear Cotton preach, specifically on the "Question . . . of the Church."⁶⁰ Cotton was perhaps equally anxious to begin the work in that exilic wilderness to which God had called him. Moreover, Cotton was likely eager to address the issue of ecclesiology, a matter that had been weighing heavily on his thoughts.

⁵⁸ Cotton to a minister in England, 3 December 1634, in Cotton, *Correspondence*, 182.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁶⁰ John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630-1649*, ed. Richard S. Dunn, James Savage and Laetitia Yeandle (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 95–96.

Cotton chose Canticles 6:8-9 as the Biblical text for his first sermon.⁶¹ There is no information available regarding the actual content of that sermon apart from a single summary statement recorded by Winthrop in which he recalled that Cotton “showed . . . that some churches were as Queens, some as Concubines, some as damsels, and some as doves.”⁶² Winthrop’s record does not shed any more light on what Cotton informed the congregation that day than what the actual Biblical text states. However, a consideration of other factors may lend a greater understanding of why Cotton selected this text and his ecclesiastical position at that time. By 1633, Cotton’s ecclesiology attributed greater importance to the identity of a local congregation as a true Church. Cotton’s dismay in 1630 over what he then perceived as separatist activity at the Salem Church in New England seems to have been an important factor in his gradual adoption and development of non-separating Congregationalism.⁶³ Although he initially disagreed with Salem’s refusal to admit persons from English parishes to the Lord’s Table because of Salem’s belief that those congregations were not true churches,⁶⁴ Cotton’s views rapidly and drastically changed.

Before delivering a sermon before the Salem Church congregation in 1636, Cotton took the opportunity to personally confess his previously held erroneous views and explained what had caused him to “assent to the judgment and practice of

⁶¹ Canticles 6:8-9 in the King James Version reads, “There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.”

⁶² Winthrop, *Journal of John Winthrop*, 96.

⁶³ See Chapter One.

⁶⁴ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 141–149.

the Churches here.”⁶⁵ Cotton noted that although Skelton had replied to Cotton’s original denunciation, he had received it at a time when he was suffering from “extremity of sickness,” causing him to lose and thus fail to read it. However, Cotton was certain that the content did not differ from what the “Lord . . . showed . . . by diligent search of the Scriptures.”⁶⁶ The only year in which Cotton was greatly affected by illness was 1631. In February of that year, Cotton contracted ague or malaria and was forced to take leave from his duties at St. Botolph’s for over a year to recover.⁶⁷ It is likely that Cotton intensely studied Scripture during that period, which led him to begin to drastically modify his view of the Church.

Why had Cotton turned to God’s word in search of answers concerning ecclesiology? There is no indication that he lacked any confidence in what he had already come to believe. In fact, he was confident enough to publicly denounce Salem’s ecclesiology. In a 1621 letter to Bishop Williams, Cotton vowed to lend his support to the English Church and “all authority, whether ecclesiastical, or civil.”⁶⁸ Cotton’s theological unrest may have been a combination of the mounting dangers towards the godly and the flow of reports Cotton certainly must have read while recuperating from malaria at the Earl of Lincolnshire’s home. The Earl received regular news from New England that described that which Cotton would later

⁶⁵ John Cotton, *A Sermon Preached by the Reverend Mr. John Cotton, Teacher of the First Church in Boston in New-England. Deliver’d at Salem, 1636* (Boston, 1713), 2.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁷ Pishey Thompson, *The History and Antiquities of Boston* (Boston: John Noble, 1856), 416. His wife Elizabeth suffered and died from the same illness in April 1631; see also Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 1: 262.

⁶⁸ Cotton to Bishop John Williams, 30 August 1621, in Cotton, *Correspondence*, 95.

personally experience: the enjoyment of great liberty among the purity of God's ordinances in that land of providence.⁶⁹

Cotton may have already been convinced of Salem's insistence on membership by the time he attended the conference at Ockley in 1632. Cotton's arguments at Ockley, which were extracted from the second commandment, touched upon the issue of the "limitation of Church-power."⁷⁰ Regarding baptism, Cotton later indicated that reconsideration of the second commandment had led him to believe that God had extended his Covenant to the seed once the parents became "Confederate with Abraham."⁷¹

The first clear sign of Cotton's drastic change in belief occurred en route to New England after Sarah Cotton had given birth to their first child, Seaborn. Although he certainly considered the possibility, Cotton decided against baptising his newborn son because neither he nor his wife was a member of a particular congregation. Moreover, Cotton, although an ordained minister, did not regard it appropriate to administer the sacrament to his child because he was without a congregation. Cotton had previously argued to Skelton that during the apostolic era, adult baptism had not been contingent upon membership in a particular congregation and profession had not been a requirement for membership into a local church.⁷²

Cotton recognized the divine investiture of authority and power in each individual congregation. Upon his arrival in Boston, Cotton wilfully subjected himself to the standard practices of membership in the local church. Cotton would

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 184; see also Ziff, *Career of John Cotton*, 59, 65.

⁷⁰ Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, 24.

⁷¹ Cotton, *Sermon ... Deliver'd at Salem*, 4–5.

⁷² Cotton, *Correspondence*, 144.

have seen the Boston Church's insistence upon the confessions of Cotton and his wife as the proper exercise of the keys of the Kingdom to guard the purity and sanctity of the administration of holy sacraments. The Boston Church required that both Cotton and his wife be examined according to its faith in order to be admitted as members; otherwise, Cotton could not be invited to serve as their pastor and without a congregation, Cotton would not be permitted to baptise his son.⁷³

This situation leads to two interesting observations. First, Winthrop recorded that Cotton insisted that his wife not make an "open Confession" for the sake of modesty, as had been established by apostolic rule. Cotton himself made a "modest testimony of her" and asked if she could be examined in private by the Elders. Winthrop recorded that Sarah was only asked whether she "did consent in the Confession of Faith made by her husband and if she did desire to be admitted."⁷⁴ It is not certain whether this approach to Sarah later became the standard procedure by which to examine women, particularly as Thomas Lechford recorded that women were later examined in the exact same manner as men.⁷⁵ Perhaps Cotton was fearful Sarah would not be able to endure the rigor of the Boston Church's test of faith, which would have resulted in Boston's refusal to admit her and consequently disallow the baptism of Seaborn.

In his first sermon to the Boston Church, Cotton affirmed the New England congregational way as well as upheld the true status of some English parishes. During the 1620s, a decade when Cotton often preached from Canticles, he preached that queenly congregations enjoyed the "power of the keys of the Kingdom of

⁷³ Winthrop, *Journal of John Winthrop*, 96, 99–100.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 96.

Heaven,” which England could boast in “sundry Congregations.”⁷⁶ A list of queenly congregations would certainly have included St. Botolph’s; there was no doubt in Cotton’s mind that New England was a queenly congregation. In fact, it is likely that by 1633, Cotton’s conception of a queenly congregation had further developed. In *Canticles* (1642), Cotton defined it in terms of discipline and a local body’s jurisdiction over itself. He also spoke of the keys in terms of opening and shutting the gates of heaven by exercising a strong evangelical and preaching ministry that invited sinners to embrace Christ in the gospel.

In *Canticles* (1655), Cotton placed strong emphasis upon the purity of the church and its individual members. Cotton’s immediate approval of the membership policies of the Boston Church upon his arrival in Massachusetts indicates a shift in his ecclesiology from the time he rebuked Skelton and the Salem Church. However, Cotton had not completely altered his thinking. In 1633 Cotton still believed what he had stated in the 1620s and would later re-affirm in the 1640s: that England still possessed queenly churches.⁷⁷ Cotton’s acceptance of Boston’s means of testing membership was not in any way due to his belief that St. Botolph’s was not a true church. Although there again remains uncertainty whether Cotton addressed this point in his first sermon, it most certainly remained his conviction. Although he was greatly dismayed by England’s dreadful state and exhilarated by that which God had brought him to in New England, he had no doubt that hope still resided in those pure saints and congregations dispersed throughout England.

⁷⁵ Lechford, *Plain Dealing*, 4–5.

⁷⁶ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 186–187.

⁷⁷ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 177.

II. *Canticles and Congregationalism: Remnant Eschatological*

Ecclesiology

Approximately twenty years passed after Cotton preached the sermons that composed *Canticles* (1642) when he once again extensively treated an apocalyptic text. What reignited Cotton's interest in Biblical prophecies was his revisiting of *Canticles*, the first Biblical text he had treated on the subject.⁷⁸ Sometime in the early 1640s, Cotton once again preached from the Song of Solomon, but this time in New England.⁷⁹ Comparison of his sermon in England and his sermon in New England reveals continuity and agreement between the two works. Cotton's primary concern remained historical prophecy, as he reaffirmed it to be the primary concern of the Biblical book in his New England sermon. The New England sermon shows the further development of Cotton's beliefs. Cotton saw no need to simply restate what he had made clear approximately twenty years prior. He had consciously incorporated commentary and exhortation directly motivated by and applicable towards the Jacobean Church in *Canticles* (1642). In Cotton's opinion, the English Church had remained in the same condition for nearly two decades, decades during which Cotton had engaged in theological reconsiderations, especially concerning ecclesiology. Hence, in *Canticles* (1655), Cotton significantly bolstered, and in the process modified, *Canticles'* (1642) content to accommodate the inherent teaching of

⁷⁸ Cotton also turned to Revelation around the same time he preached expounded *Canticles* (1655). Cotton's expositions on Revelation are discussed further in Chapter Three.

⁷⁹ The sermons were printed posthumously in 1655. Cotton died on 23 December 1652. Jesper Rosenmeier argues that *Canticles* (1655) were preached between 1646 and 1649, see Rosenmeier, "Teacher and the Witness," 425.

the “affection and relation between Christ and his Church in general” and “every sincere Christian soul,” which had previously been “omitted” in *Canticles* (1642).⁸⁰

Julie Sievers has recently argued that *Canticles* (1655) was written within the context of the Antinomian Controversies in which New England was embroiled between 1636 and 1638.⁸¹ Based upon her examination of the sermons, Sievers has concluded that *Canticles* (1655) was composed of sermons preached around 1641.⁸² Unfortunately, Sievers does not provide any explanation why she chose this date, although it is clear that the date is significant for her argument because it allows her to locate the sermons relatively close to the controversies that involved Anne Hutchinson and centred on the doctrines of justification and sanctification. Furthermore, Sievers believes that in the minds of such integral participants as Cotton and Thomas Shepard, “the controversy was far from over.”⁸³ If *Canticles* (1655) had been composed in 1641, as Sievers suggests, then it would have been written only three years after the official conclusion of the Antinomian controversies. Sievers’ very premise that *Canticles* (1655) aimed to address past controversies restricts the sermons’ importance within New England’s borders and limits the theological discussion within soteriology.

However, Sievers’ contention that Cotton was sufficiently concerned to address an issue that had almost destroyed his reputation and stained his theology as heretical is problematic. Sievers’ argument that the Antinomian Controversies

⁸⁰ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 1–2.

⁸¹ For an excellent discussion on the Antinomian Controversies see Winship, *Making Heretics*.

⁸² Sievers, “Refiguring the Song of Songs,” 75.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 107.

remained fresh in 1641 is also problematic because it does not accord with Cotton Mather's comment that the "clouds" had "thus happily blown over."⁸⁴ Regardless of the suspicion cast over Cotton's theology and the doctrinal inquiries to which he was subjected, the fact remains that Cotton remained relatively unscathed and ultimately exonerated from any guilt. Speaking of Cotton, Cotton Mather wrote that after all had settled, the "rest of his days were spent in a more settled peace."⁸⁵

Sievers also argued that the Antinomianism Controversies remained in Cotton's mind throughout his development of the expositions in *Canticles* (1655). However, it seems unlikely that Cotton would want to risk attracting immediate attention to himself and his theology after recently being acquitted of harbouring and espousing antinomian doctrine. Moreover, Sievers based her belief in the Antinomian Controversies as the immediate context solely on the presence of concentrated soteriological doctrines in *Canticles* (1655). While there is no denying that this past controversy bore some relevance to these sermons, the more pressing historical context is the waning presence of Arminianism in England and the remaining issue of England's church settlement.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 1:270

⁸⁵ Ibid. Granted, suspicion of Cotton's theology and actual involvement would remain with him for many years, most likely until his death, but if his views were still a very heated issue, fresh in the minds of its main actors, it would be foolish for Cotton to rehash these issues once again.

⁸⁶ Sievers, "Refiguring the Song of Songs," 89. Cotton's sermons on *Canticles*, because they touch heavily on soteriology, are unavoidably relevant to the Antinomian Controversy as well as any discussion of arminianism. Soteriology encompasses the doctrines of law, grace, justification and sanctification. These facets of theology are common to antinomianism as well as arminianism. Another treatment of this same theme of individual soteriology appears in Hammond, "Bride in Redemptive Time," 78–102.

A reconsideration of the date when *Canticles* (1655) was originally preached extends its significance beyond New England and onto a transatlantic stage. Textual indicators suggest that Cotton did not preach *Canticles* (1655) in 1641, as Sievers suggests, but between 1642 and 1644. Granted, it is equally feasible that these references spoke to the preparation of the manuscript for printing, which may have been subsequent to the publishing of *Canticles* (1642), and the fact that the actual oration may have preceded that date. The second indicator is a reference that Cotton made to Samuel Rutherford's *The Due Right of Presbyteries*, which, having been printed in London in 1644 challenges the dating of either 1641 or 1642 for *Canticles* (1655).⁸⁷ Again, this reference may simply be an editorial insertion made during the manuscript's preparation for printing. The third indicator is that, specifically commenting on the exercises of reformation and purity in his native country, Cotton wrote, "To behold this fulfilled even in our days also, in the Parliament, in the Army, so long as they attended this work," a clear reference to the tumultuous events surrounding the English Civil War that began in 1642.⁸⁸ By the early 1640s, Cotton found himself at the forefront of discussions on the debates on church polity, especially because New England's critics, particularly Scottish Presbyterians, regarded him as the lead polemicist for the Congregational cause.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 54.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 155. Cotton may be referring to the Long Parliament, which convened on November 3, 1640. He would not have received word of it until 1641, and even then it would have been premature to make such a grand statement about the fulfillment of reformation and purity when it had only been assembled for a short period of time.

⁸⁹ Robert Baillie believed that Cotton had inherited the English separatist tradition, which had originated in the Netherlands and been conveyed to England by John Robinson, who had in turn influenced Thomas Goodwin; see Baillie, *Dissuasive*, 54.

The most likely date on which *Canticles* (1655) was preached was sometime in 1644. This earlier date would not decrease the possible impact any interest in the debates involving the nature of the church and its polity had upon *Canticles* (1655). Cotton certainly would have been aware via transatlantic news of Laud's impeachment in 1640 and the Archbishop's detention in the Tower in 1641. Sometime after December 1642, Winthrop noted the reception of news "out of England . . . of the civil wars there between the king and the parliament, whereupon the churches kept divers days of humiliation."⁹⁰

In 1642 Cotton, along with John Davenport and Thomas Hooker, received an invitation to join the Westminster Assembly for the anticipated proceedings on ecclesiastical government. Although all three ultimately declined to attend, Cotton had most definitely expressed interest in making the journey.⁹¹ He saw it as an opportunity to personally and directly address, as well as plead his case before, those critics of Congregationalism who considered him the lead polemicist for New England Church government. By the time Cotton was preaching *Canticles* (1655), Episcopacy had suffered great defeat at the hands of the Scots in the Bishops' Wars and prelacy's future had been put in jeopardy and subject to debate in the Long Parliament. These events served to assuage Cotton's angst regarding the decay of the English Church, and God's providence had reinvigorated Cotton's participation in England's reformation. Although Cotton declined to attend the Westminster

⁹⁰ Winthrop, *Journal of John Winthrop*, 423. The first of the two civil wars began on October 23, 1642.

⁹¹ Ziff, *Career of John Cotton*, 179. The Westminster Assembly was called by the Long Parliament and met from 1643 to 1649. For the most recent discussion of the Westminster Assembly's proceedings see Chad Van Dixhoorn, "Reforming the Reformation: Theological Debate at the Westminster Assembly 1642–1652" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2004).

Assembly, an opportunity to personally participate in the actual deliberations and proceedings, he understood that he could still have influence. Cotton concentrated his efforts on both the pulpit and press, resulting in *Canticles* (1655).⁹² Considering *Canticles*' primary eschatological concern, the English ecclesiastical settlement appears to be the primary context. It is highly unlikely, if not improbable, that Cotton would not take advantage of the saturated apocalyptic theology he recognized in *Canticles* to speak to the issues of an individual's sanctification in Christ at a time when a millennial outlook and consciousness was heightened among so many in England and New England.

Cotton's merging of Biblical ecclesiology with eschatology signalled a significant development in his own apocalyptic theology. *Canticles* (1642) reveals that Cotton held high esteem for the English monarchy, regarding James I as England's own King Solomon.⁹³ Following Foxe's lead, Cotton expected the monarchy to play a great role in apocalyptic fulfilment.⁹⁴ The tremendous liberty that Cotton enjoyed during James' reign certainly made it easy to praise the King in this manner, especially when so many of his godly brethren had been persecuted. Lamont suggests that the identification of the Christian prince as the agent of prophetic

⁹² During these years Cotton composed *Way of the Churches of Christ in New-England* (London, 1645), *The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven* (London, 1644), as well as *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, his response to Robert Baillie's criticisms of Congregationalism. For a discussion of these three particular works see Everett Emerson, *John Cotton*, rev. ed. (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1990), 45–56.

⁹³ Cotton followed the English tradition of attributing Biblical typology to the monarchy, see Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), 18. MacCulloch describes the succession of Edward to Mary as the second Hezekiah or Josiah to the Catholic Jezebel. Foxe and many others followed this same practice when they called Elizabeth England's Deborah, recalling the great judge of Israel.

⁹⁴ See Chapter One.

fulfilment was pioneered by Foxe. Lamont also argues that this trend in English apocalypticism shifted when Brightman replaced the prince with Biblical and reformed ecclesiastical government.⁹⁵

A transition from Foxe's to Brightman's perspective can be found in Cotton's own development. In the 1620s, Cotton responded to James' favour on his non-conformist ministry with apocalyptic praise. In the 1630s, Cotton responded to Charles I's anti-Christian policies and persecution of the more rigid puritans, which Cotton had personally experienced, by rejecting the monarchy and crowning Biblical ecclesiastical polity as the agent of end-time fulfilment. To demonstrate his dissatisfaction with Charles, Cotton employed a similar tactic to that which Foxe had used: He removed the adulation he had bestowed upon James in *Canticles* (1642) from *Canticles* (1655), just as Foxe had removed his dedication to Elizabeth in the first edition of *Actes and Monuments* from the second edition due to his dissatisfaction with the Queen's fulfilment of her duty to further reform the Church.⁹⁶ Cotton remained committed to the same historical prophetic scheme but now recognized a different instrument through which the millennium would arrive. Cotton's grave disapproval of Charles ultimately culminated in his approval of the King's execution, which he interpreted as divine apocalyptic rejection of England's monarchy.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Lamont, *Godly Rule*, 46–52

⁹⁶ Pucci, "Reforming Roman Emperors," 33. Interestingly, Foxe dated the binding of Satan to the reign of Constantine only in the second edition. That he did not do this in the first edition suggests that there may have been some uncertainty as well as optimism during Elizabeth's reign. However, his eventual disappointment confirmed his description of Constantine's reign in apocalyptic terms; see Parry, "Elect Church or Elect Nation," 170.

⁹⁷ Cotton's belief that God had judged Charles is further discussed in Chapter Four.

Brightman held Elizabeth in very high regard. He believed that the Queen, during her reign, had poured the first of seven vials described in Revelation 16.⁹⁸ The dispensing of each vial cast divine wrath upon the Antichrist. Brightman later not only failed to see significant reformation during James' reign but also personally experienced persecution. Brightman's favourable opinion of Elizabeth contrasted with his unpleasant experience under James certainly played a part in his refocus away from Foxe's monarchy-centred eschatology to an eschatology centred on ecclesiastical reform. Unlike Foxe, Brightman did not retreat to Constantine in reaction to the English monarchy's negligence of reformation. While he had legitimately praised the queen, Brightman masked his criticisms within his adulations. Despite endorsing the need for a godly prince, Brightman did not respond in same manner as had Foxe; Brightman limited his expectations of the prince and shifted the onus of reformation to the godly Church.⁹⁹

Brightman's Laodicean doctrine captured this refocus to a godly Church. The lukewarmness, Brightman noted, was particularly the "form" of the English Church's "whole outward government for the most part, is yet still Romish."¹⁰⁰ More specifically, God's vengeance would eventually be cast upon the "whole Hierarchy" if England would not turn from its ways.¹⁰¹ Brightman's remedy was not action by the prince but rather reformation of ecclesiastical polity fortified by true Biblical laws and ordinances applied through Biblical discipline, as Brightman believed to be

⁹⁸ Brightman, *Revelation*, 423–430.

⁹⁹ Lamont, *Godly Rule*, 49–51. Brightman certainly had James as well as Elizabeth in mind.

¹⁰⁰ Brightman, *Revelation*, 108.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 111; see also 112.

evident in Scotland and Geneva.¹⁰² By espousing an ecclesiastical system that denounced the national structure of the English Church and called for its replacement with separate congregations,¹⁰³ Brightman was calling for the restoration of the keys of the Kingdom and authority to the local congregation:

Purge out all Romish leaven, that thou may hang no longer in the midst between the *reformed and the Anti-Christian Church*. . . . Let faithful Pastors be appointed for the several congregations; let them that have charge and rule be compelled unto diligence, let the changers and corrupters of the doctrine be repressed: let the censures be restored to the Pastors over their flock. And dispute not with Christ, how profitably the Polity used of the enemy may be joined with the Gospel.¹⁰⁴

By the 1640s, the identity of Canticles' eschatological true church had become apparent. For Cotton, New England Congregationalism, the self-government of local, particular congregations, had emerged as the "Church of Christ, in times of purest reformation."¹⁰⁵ In *Canticles* (1642), Cotton's concept of the true church was arguably vague, especially in comparison to that described in *Canticles* (1655). Cotton concluded *Canticles* (1655) with a detailed description of the primary attributes of the millennial church, all of which fell under two categories. The first category was church polity. True churches, Cotton contended, were self-governed and, while not yoked under any hierarchical authority, mutually edifying to all other congregations. The second category of purity was principally based upon the Church's response to God's call to separate from the world. Christ's spouse, referring to both churches and individual believers, could become "savoury and

¹⁰² Ibid., 90–3.

¹⁰³ See Lamont, *Godly Rule*, 51–52.

¹⁰⁴ Brightman, *Revelation*, 128. Brightman was particularly focused on the practices of ordination and the acquisition of ecclesiastical offices, which required bribery for their procurement; see *ibid.*, 116–119.

¹⁰⁵ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 233.

fragrant as Gardens” in the purity of godliness.¹⁰⁶ The importance of this newly enlarged definition and emphasis on purity is appreciated more greatly when compared against the brief description given in *Canticles* (1642) regarding holiness in the Church at the end of time.¹⁰⁷ In *Canticles* (1655), New Jerusalem was foretold to be established on an ecclesiastical government founded on particular congregations separated from the world against which the “gates of hell cannot prevail.”¹⁰⁸

Cotton was drawn to return to *Canticles* precisely for the diversity of its applications. In *Canticles* (1642), he had failed to fully appreciate the wisdom that Solomon’s poetry held for both the Church and the life of every believer. Cotton had previously been attracted to *Canticles*’ prominent historical prophetic content, to which he had exclusively attributed *Canticles*’ excellence.¹⁰⁹ Hence, in *Canticles* (1642), ecclesiology and soteriology were given merely “holy and useful” importance.¹¹⁰ By the 1640s, Cotton had affiliated himself with Congregationalism and its unwavering insistence on piety,¹¹¹ an affiliation that inevitably moulded his idea of the true Church. Hence, *Canticles* (1655) can be seen as a broadening of his concept of *Canticles*’ excellence. Cotton’s understanding of the true Church was now required to include clearly defined ecclesiological and soteriological dimensions.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 234–235.

¹⁰⁷ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 255–264.

¹⁰⁸ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 11, see also 234.

¹⁰⁹ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 9–10.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 10.

¹¹¹ Bozeman, *Precisianist Strain*, 211.

In the 1620s, Cotton had acknowledged that Canticles could be read using three distinct approaches. *Canticles* (1642) was Cotton's exercise in what he contended was the primary hermeneutical method among the three. In *Canticles* (1655), Cotton did not choose one method above the others but rather merged all three while maintaining a clear focus on eschatology as the primary topic in Solomon's Song. Hence, Canticles' distinction as an historical prophecy was expanded upon in *Canticles* (1655) to include the "threefold" applications of the Song of Solomon.¹¹² Cotton did not replace his previous definition of Canticles' excellence but redefined it to assert that eschatology was more lucidly understood and more robustly conceived with the full understanding of the supportive teachings of ecclesiology and soteriology.

Anthony Tuckney, who wrote the preface to *Canticles* (1655), noted that Cotton "improved and enlarged" the "Doctrinal Observations, and more distinct Applications" so greatly that the New England sermons could have been perceived as "differing from the former" *Canticles* (1642).¹¹³ *Canticles* (1655) was not a supplement to *Canticles* (1642); rather, by describing the earlier work as "ground-work," Tuckney suggested that Cotton had built upon the eschatological framework presented in the first edition to display in the second edition the true Church in all its godly splendour: that Church found manifest through the piety of believers and proper form of government.¹¹⁴ Two aspects became central to Cotton's concept of Canticles' apocalyptic true Church. The first was the "affection and relation between

¹¹² Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 1.

¹¹³ Ibid., "To the Reader," n.p.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Christ and his Church in general.”¹¹⁵ The second was the “affection and relation between Christ and every sincere Christian soul.”¹¹⁶ Cotton believed that neither “ought . . . to lie hid.”¹¹⁷

In order to justify that Congregationalism was the polity that would lead God’s people into the millennium Cotton had to demonstrate that Canticles’ portrayal of the true spouse of Christ was the presentation of a specific form of church government. A Biblical ecclesiastical polity centred on a local church’s autonomy and self-government was understood to be instrumental for the godliness of believers and the Church through the faithful exercise of the keys of the Kingdom. The functions of the keys included, among other functions, the careful admission of saints into the congregation, the faithful administration of the sacraments, and the effective exercise of church discipline. In all of these functions, the central common concern was purity. Again, Cotton described the very best reformed churches as “Queens” who exercised these divinely bestowed rights, among which he not only included the New England parish but also many English parishes.¹¹⁸ Cotton not only detailed the fibres of godliness that were interwoven to create the fabric of the true Church but also demonstrated that the true church was bursting with the fruits of holiness through the use of various ecclesiastical models provided by Canticles’ historical prophecy. But for Cotton, the purity of the church was essentially linked to the very form of the church’s government. Without the true polity installed, Cotton was

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 1.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 1-2.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 2.

certain that purity, as desired by the Lord and described in *Canticles*, would not be possible. Hence, throughout *Canticles* (1655) the soteriological dimension emerges to prominence, alongside Cotton's ecclesiological descriptions. Purity was rooted in New England congregational ecclesiology.

In *Canticles* (1655), Cotton's fundamental principle was the purity of churches and saints. He believed that *Canticles*' historical prophecy had immediately established the precedent of the "estate of a pure church" in Solomon's reign prior to the fall into idolatry.¹¹⁹ Solomon's Church demonstrated, more than did Eden, that the true Church was pure, by existing in the midst of a sinful and fallen world. By purity, Cotton meant that the church was exclusively composed of true believers, and by true churches, Cotton was referring to "Assemblies of God's Saints . . . the Chambers of the Lord Jesus."¹²⁰ These saints, Cotton wrote, produced the signs of "faith, love, joy and obedience," which indicated that they had been converted.¹²¹

Cotton made full use of powerful nuptial imagery, as he believed that church fellowship could only be understood when described in marital terms: an exclusive union in the most intimate context. As Christ is said to draw his lover into his chambers where He, as the groom, exchanges kisses with her, Cotton's emphasized the Lord's initiation of kisses with the Church. He argued that the Church, and by extension Christians, must first receive the Lord's unconditional kisses; otherwise,

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 176–177; see also Cotton, *Way of the Churches of Christ in New-England*, 1; for an entire work devoted to the subject of the keys see Cotton, *Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven*.

¹¹⁹ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 15.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

she would be incapable of responding.¹²² Christ did not permit anyone to enter the private chambers reserved only for His lover. Those drawn into the chambers were those “fit for Church-fellowship” and not “every common hearer or member.”¹²³ The Church was exclusively composed of “saints.” This description served to depict the process in which the

revelation . . . of the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost . . . enlightening us with the knowledge thereof . . . and sealing (or strengthening) us with the sense thereof . . . in the Word of the Gospel . . . That the eyes of your understanding being enlightened. . . Ye having heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, and believing were sealed.¹²⁴

If the Church was to be strictly composed of saints, then most certainly this meant that such persons were identifiable and distinguishable from unbelieving persons, and it was the duty of the Church to carefully determine where each person stood before the Lord. According to Cotton, mere professors of Christian faith would not possess or manifest the demonstrable evidence of one who has been truly touched by the Holy Spirit. Only the presence of the godly ensured the vitality and posterity of the church whereas “Hypocrites and backsliding Professors are destructive to the Church.”¹²⁵

Those critical of Cotton and efforts to identify the elect like the Scottish Presbyterian Robert Baillie did agree that “every member of a visible Church is not in truth and sincerity a Believer and Saint . . . all who are called are not chosen: In

¹²² Ibid., 2–3.

¹²³ Ibid., 10. Cotton’s emphasis on conversion demonstrates the overlap of soteriological issues that certainly would have been applicable in discussions of Antinomianism as well as Arminianism; see Sievers, “Refiguring the Song of Songs,” 83.

¹²⁴ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 4.

¹²⁵ Cotton, *Of the Holinesse of Church-Members* (London, 1650), 77.

the field of God there are tares among the wheat.”¹²⁶ However, Baillie not only believed it impossible to accurately determine one’s standing but also mocked Congregationalists and separatists for their lack of confidence and their fear that “ignorance or hypocrisy of any man may remove the foundation of any Church.”¹²⁷ He repeatedly criticized New England congregations for their strict membership standards and their most controversial test for membership: providing testimony that demonstrated spiritual experience.¹²⁸

Cotton relentlessly contended that true believers could be assured of their possession of true faith. The performance of good works, Cotton argued, “flows from faith not faith from them.”¹²⁹ The assurance of faith, Cotton concluded, “doth wholly reside in the grace of Christ.”¹³⁰ Baillie argued that outward signs were not absolutely indicative of “inward sincerity,” as such signs could be observed despite the “internal wickedness of hypocrites.”¹³¹ Cotton asserted that as a life indwelt by the Holy Spirit manifested true faith, the Church could identify true saints and believers.¹³² Moreover, true believers manifested signs of their true and saving faith.

¹²⁶ Baillie, *Dissuasive*, 165–166.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹²⁸ Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims*, 41. This was intended to demonstrate the work of saving grace in one’s life. This requirement distinguished the practices of New England churches from those of separatist churches; see Edmund Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea*, 5th ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 90.

¹²⁹ John Cotton, *A Conference Mr. Cotton Held at Boston with the Elders of New-England* (London, 1646), 6.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹³¹ Baillie, *Dissuasive*, 165.

¹³² Cotton, *Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared*, 37, 42–45; see also Cotton, *Doctrine of the Church* (London, 1642), 5.

Although Cotton denied sanctification as an “evident cause,” he acknowledged it to be a “secondary witness” or “confirmation of one’s justification.”¹³³ He reminded believers that individuals and churches who participated in “Communion with Christ” communicated through the “sure mercies of the Covenant of grace.”¹³⁴ In these statements by Cotton, what can be seen is the tension between the understanding of the assurance of salvation and the defence of New England’s membership standards. On the one hand, Cotton defended the reasoning behind the controversial insistence on an applicant’s testimony of spiritual experience. On the other hand, Cotton made clear that ultimate confidence lay in the internal and invisible witness of the Holy Spirit and faith in God’s promises of salvation.¹³⁵

Cotton seems to have found resolution in his emphasis on a believer’s profession of faith. The difficulty lay in the Church’s insistence on seeing visible manifestations of the invisible realities of faith and Church. Cotton saw resolution in the covenant, explaining that the bond between the invisible Church and Christ was covenantal and established through the “spirit of faith.”¹³⁶ Again, he contended that an invisible faith was only the work of the “efficacy of the Spirit . . . the finger and hand of Christ (the work of his Spirit).”¹³⁷ Cotton recognized that if the invisible reality of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit was evidenced in an invisible faith, then

¹³³ Cotton, *A Conference*, 6, 7. The words “evident cause” are carefully phrased by Cotton. He attributed the evidential value, though secondary, to sanctification. Cotton condemned the teaching that stated that holy obedience, pure living, godly works and any other manifestations as evident causes, as popery.

¹³⁴ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 197.

¹³⁵ Winship, *Making Heretics*, 33; see also Bozeman, *Precisianist Strain*, 219.

¹³⁶ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 86.

the bond between God and the visible Church, composed of visible saints, was centred on faith as well. Hence Cotton concluded that the “neck that joins the body of the invisible Church to Christ the head is faith” and “the neck that joins the visible Church is profession of faith.”¹³⁸ The profession of faith, Cotton insisted, was the church’s “chief armoury” upon which “all the strong shields and defences of the Mighty and Powerful Saints of God have hung” their faith in Christ.¹³⁹ Cotton credited profession of faith as solely responsible for preserving England during a period when godliness was being purged.¹⁴⁰

Cotton found support for his call to the Church to separate from the world in the apocalyptic Church of Sardis. In *Canticles* (1642) Cotton referred to Sardis to prove that the Jacobean Church, despite all of its idolatry and superstition, was a comely Church. He correlated the “few” in Sardis who had remained faithful to the Lord with the faithful remnant in England who had covenanted with the Lord and preserved England’s spiritual posterity. However, in the 1620s Cotton had not pressed the reservations and concerns about the mixed composition of the godly and reprobate in the Church that he would later develop as he embraced Congregationalism. Moreover, in *Canticles* (1642), Cotton encouraged the Church by asserting that the Lord ultimately recognized who were His, wherever they would find themselves and under any circumstances.¹⁴¹ However, by the 1640s when Cotton was fully immersed in New England ecclesiology, compromise on the

¹³⁷ Ibid., 132.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 98; see also Cotton, *Doctrine of the Church*, 4. For a record of the membership procedure see Lechford, *Plain Dealing*, 4–6.

¹³⁹ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 87.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 159.

church's purity was no longer tolerated. The Church could not be pure and solely composed of saints if she remained intermingled with unrepentant sinners.¹⁴² Cotton's presentation of Sardis in *Canticles* (1655) ceased to offer a gracious provision for a disobedient and sinful Church. Rather, Sardis was now presented as the Biblical precedent for the "necessity of separation between the Church and the World."¹⁴³ Cotton could no longer justify the Church as true simply based on an existing remnant in which the Lord's presence was found. Cotton did not recant in *Canticles* (1655) the affirmations he had made previously regarding the remnant in *Canticles* (1642); he now simply defined the Church according to that very concept. In the 1620s, the remnant had little to do with church polity. But by the 1640s, the remnant could not be defined along any other terms except through congregational ecclesiastical government. Cotton called for churches to thereby separate themselves from sin and impurity to establish themselves as a godly society of saints.

It was upon this idea of a pure church that Cotton and his coreligionists were able to legitimize their strict and controversial practices, particularly those pertaining to tests of membership.¹⁴⁴ Cotton explained that the devastating consequences of a mixed church could incur divine wrath, for "if the whole Nation be received into the Church . . . It will make . . . the body of the Church dead, a few names living, which will bring sudden danger of ruin . . . pollute the Ordinances . . . impeach the liberty of the Saints."¹⁴⁵ Cotton was aware of the grave implications of the church's

¹⁴¹ See Chapter One.

¹⁴² Cotton, *Doctrine of the Church*, 1.

¹⁴³ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 105.

¹⁴⁴ Cotton, *Doctrine of the Church*, 1.

¹⁴⁵ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 105.

separation from the world in public worship. Corporate worship was regarded by Cotton as the most intimate places reserved only for lovers. He called public worship the “marriage-bed” that, for obvious reasons, supported the notion of exclusivity.¹⁴⁶ Each church, Cotton argued, was invested with the power of the keys of the Kingdom to establish “pure Religion, in doctrine, worship, and government.”¹⁴⁷

The strict membership procedures were not only designed to recognize who rightly composed the Church but also determine who was divinely permitted to approach and partake of the Lord’s Supper. Communion was a blessing from God for the nourishment of His people, who “hunger and thirst after Christ. They only have a Spiritual appetite, and are sensible of their need of Christ.”¹⁴⁸ The bread and wine could only benefit true believers. An open invitation for all to participate was, as Cotton described, “not a Reformation, but a Deformation.”¹⁴⁹ Cotton traced such exclusive permission and benefit back to the Garden of Eden. He reminded his listeners that in the midst of the Garden stood the Tree of Life, which foreshadowed the sacramental presence of Christ.¹⁵⁰ The Church, like the “Garden of Paradise,” was the “habitation of such as are renewed after the Image of God.”¹⁵¹ Only Adam and Eve in their innocence were given access to the Tree of Life, but were expelled from the Garden after they had fallen into sin and consequently prohibited from ever again eating its sacramental fruit.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 209.

¹⁴⁷ Cotton, *Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven*, 13, 30, 50.

¹⁴⁸ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 197.

¹⁴⁹ Cotton, *Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven*, 51.

¹⁵⁰ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 104–105.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 104.

¹⁵² Ibid. The Biblical narrative is found in Genesis chapters 2 and 3.

Responding to Baillie's condemnation that New England's restrictive policies on the Lord's Table were a "grievous absurdity, a great dishonour to God, and cruelty to man," Cotton argued that it was in fact for the good of the ungodly that they be restrained:¹⁵³

What cruelty is it against men, to keep such from eating and drinking the Lord's Supper, who would eat and drink it unworthily, and so eat and drink their own damnation . . . The Lord himself thought it no cruelty to debar our first parents from the Tree of Life, who if they had found free liberty to eat it, would have blessed themselves in a false hope of living forever.¹⁵⁴

Ironically, Cotton argued that the strict policies of admittance to the Lord's Table were as much for the benefit of the "ungodly" as they were for the welfare of believers. Like the preaching of God's word, Cotton believed that communion was inherently invitational to those who lacked and most desperately needed Christ. Moreover, like the exhortation of God's word, it could only be enjoyed by those who had been touched by the Holy Spirit. Saints were essentially sinners who had been illuminated by the Holy Spirit to the truth of the gospel. Cotton saw communion as another opportunity for God's unconditional saving grace to work in the hearts of sinners. In *Canticles* (1642), Cotton expressed his deep and pervading concern for the call and invitation for sinners to embrace Christ.¹⁵⁵ He maintained this compassion even while defending a pure and exclusive Church in *Canticles* (1655).

The Church's failure to guard the Lord's Table from hypocrites was not only an act of negligence affecting the sanctity of the ordinance and materials but also an act of deception of unbelievers. Sinners without true faith had the greatest need for

¹⁵³ Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, 72.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁵⁵ See Chapter One.

Christ, and Cotton believed that the Lord's Table was intended by God to enable those people to recognize their desperate spiritual condition and the utter necessity of the Lord's grace and salvation. Cotton warned that if hypocrites were permitted to the Table, they would be misled into false assurance; they would foolishly place confidence in the mere physical exercise of eating the bread and wine rather than in obedience and godly living, the legitimate signs of true faith. Restricting the invitation allowed the faithful to "enter into Church-fellowship. . . . Not to rest in being or entering into the Court, but to look for leading into God's chambers. Men may be within the Church, without the Chambers; way to it, fear God."¹⁵⁶

Upon initial examination of Cotton's defence of Congregationalism in *Canticles* (1655), it is likely to appear peculiar. In comparison to his discussion of purity and the need for separation from the world, Cotton devoted little time to the indispensable element of the church covenant. Saints, though called out of the world, were not, as individuals, churches until they mutually "united together into one Congregation . . . by a holy Covenant."¹⁵⁷ Cotton had been instructed well by Paul Baynes and Robert Parker on this issue, as well as by Ames, who had argued, "Believers do not make a particular Church . . . unless they be joined together by special bond. . . . This bond is a covenant."¹⁵⁸

Cotton did not deny the indispensability of the covenant in *Canticles* (1655), yet despite its grave importance, he made surprisingly few references to it. Considering the attention it received from the critics of New England churches, a

¹⁵⁶ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 11.

¹⁵⁷ Cotton, *Doctrine of the Church*, 1.

proper and adequate treatment in *Canticles* (1655) would have been expected.¹⁵⁹ In *Canticles* (1655), Cotton certainly affirmed that God's people were in covenant and the covenant's stipulation on the church to continually seek the Lord and purge sin.¹⁶⁰ Cotton did not devote a portion of his expositions to the subject of church covenants because he understood that *Canticles* as a whole pertained to the marital bond between Christ and the Church as well as true believers. In one sense, Cotton's sermons demonstrated that according to Biblical description, an individual congregation was a true spouse of Christ. Although soteriological applications had detailed the quality and maintenance of the purity of those individual churches, these two characteristics were understood by Cotton within the marital imagery used in *Canticles* to present the true spouse. In other words, the true spouse was covenantally united with Christ. In response to what was meant by God as the Lord's true spouse, Cotton stated it was an individual church composed of saints. Cotton reasoned that just as every sincere believer, as well as the invisible Church, stood in covenant with the Lord, so did "every particular body" within the catholic "Temple of Christ."¹⁶¹ Cotton asked rhetorically that if not by covenant, "How else shall a Church be either married, or espoused to Christ."¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ See William Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity* (London, 1642), 159; see also Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, 20.

¹⁵⁹ See Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries* (London, 1644), 83–130.

¹⁶⁰ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 10, 25, 26.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 54–55. See also John Cotton, *The New Covenant* (London, 1654), 16 for his discussion on individuals participating in the covenant of grace with God.

¹⁶² Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 53. According to Cotton, a "godly society or company to become a Church unto God, could not be established without an effected covenant; Cotton, *Way of the Churches of Christ*, 3.

Cotton praised New England's churches as equal to the best of England's parishes primarily because of their claim and exercise of church covenants. He wrote that like "many others in England," New England churches were to be commended because they "enter into a fellowship with Christ with mutual Covenant" as well as enjoy the "power of Church-government in their own hands."¹⁶³ Reflecting upon Cotton's first sermon in Boston, taken from the same passage in *Canticles* as this statement, it is likely that Cotton's sermon included an affirmation and praise of the Boston Church's covenant with the Lord. Interestingly, Cotton's definition of a queenly congregation in *Canticles* (1642) did not include the church covenant.¹⁶⁴

The culminating factor in Cotton's definition of the pure and true spouse of Christ was mutual affection with sister congregations. Every individual church that entered into covenant with the Lord was rightly considered a true church and a sister to all other true churches. Cotton was already well aware of accusations that New England ecclesiology mimicked separatism. Robert Baillie called Cotton's polemics of Congregationalism the "best of the Brownists arguments" with the "greatest lustre and strength."¹⁶⁵ To reconcile the disparity between his insistence on the autonomy of congregations and the true status of the English Church, Cotton highlighted the consociation of churches. Cotton did not intend to assert the independence of particular churches at the expense of the unity of true churches but rather that New

¹⁶³ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 177.

¹⁶⁴ See Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 183–185. This point demonstrates that the covenant that Cotton had entered into with some of the godly at St. Botolph's at that time was neither clearly defined nor understood to be of great significance, as covenants had become in New England.

¹⁶⁵ Baillie was referring to Cotton's work, *Way of the Churches of Christ*. See Baillie, *Dissuasive*, 163.

England congregations were just as committed to the “Brotherly communion one with another” as they were to their own right to be self-governed.¹⁶⁶ He explained, “Neighbour-Churches should carry a sisterly relation and affection to one another, and a mutual care of one another’s good, or Neighbour-Churches as they have a sisterly relation, so they should carry a sisterly affection, and mutual communion one with another.”¹⁶⁷ Cotton anticipated the millennial landscape to be filled with local church exercising Biblical autonomy yet cooperating in accountability to and for other particular congregations.

Cotton’s extensive description of the key tenets of Congregationalism paved the way for his return to *Canticles*’ primary concern, historical prophecy. Again, what must be kept mind is that *Canticles* (1655) was not principally or exclusively a polemic on church polity. In order for the Church to properly progress in apocalyptic reform, an accurate understanding of true Biblical government was essential. A discussion of end times was not possible if the true Church was not delineated. Cotton correlated the completion of his definition of the true Church with a description of the era of the churches of the reformation to the “end of the World,” the time of the “calling and arising of some New Church.”¹⁶⁸

In *Canticles* (1642), Cotton’s identification of this “New Church” indicated that it consisted of the Jews and the fulfilment of the prophecy of Israel’s return.¹⁶⁹ Essentially, his identification of the “New Church” did not change in *Canticles*

¹⁶⁶ Cotton, *Way of the Churches of Christ*, 102.

¹⁶⁷ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 227.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 179, 234. Cotton believed that the time of the church of Christ and the apostles was followed by the time of the reformed churches, in which Cotton believed he was living; see *ibid.*, 174.

¹⁶⁹ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 192–203.

(1655) from *Canticles* (1642)¹⁷⁰ but was added to by effect of the sudden Jewish conversion. Cotton believed that Israel's return was preceded by what he labelled a period of reformed churches, describing it as the period of the emergence of pure particular and local congregations established through church covenants exercising the power of the keys of the Kingdom.¹⁷¹ Cotton was confident that he was living in that period. He saw evidence of the rise of a "purer Church" in New England's pioneering ecclesiastical work as well as the "sundry particular congregational Churches from England" that had sprung forth.¹⁷² Cotton also suspected that this age was near completion, which meant that the Jews would return to the fold of God. Cotton anticipated the apocalyptic movement to inundate the world with pure congregations, aided by the return of the Jews that was to occur at the "drying up of the Euphrates," a reference to the apocalyptic prophecy detailed in Revelation 16:22.¹⁷³

Cotton did not consolidate all true churches into the New Church of the Jews. Rather, Cotton extended the reproduction of particular true churches past the Jewish return.¹⁷⁴ This final stage of prophetic history was what Cotton called the time of "purest reformation," which was not one of "any one visible General assembly, but in many particular Churches."¹⁷⁵ In *Canticles* (1642), Cotton simply

¹⁷⁰ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 180.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 185. The fulfillment of this prophecy is discussed in further detail in Chapter Four.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 226–228.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 233.

described this final chapter in history as one filled with sudden mass conversions.¹⁷⁶

In his work on the keys of the Kingdom, Cotton wrote that the dimensions of the New Jerusalem, as detailed in Revelation prophecies, were the “communion of a thousand Churches . . . and all of them will have such mutual care, and yield such mutual brotherly help and communion one to another, as if they were all but one body.”¹⁷⁷ New England had contributed to the construction of that which the apostolic church had first established: the true Church and spouse of Christ against which the gates of hell could not prevail and from which apocalyptic wrath would go forth in the destruction of Antichrist.¹⁷⁸

III. Conclusion

Cotton clearly delineated the manner in which he believed that England should respond to the practices of the New England churches. New England had pointed the way through reformation and into the millennium, confident of the important role of the colonies’ churches in assisting England’s reformation.

Winthrop concluded that New England “was ready to make use of any opportunity God should offer for the good of the country here, as also to give any advice, as it should be required, for the settling the right form of church discipline there.”¹⁷⁹

When Cotton came to a similar conclusion, he was careful to mask it to avoid the perception of arrogance. Upon completing a description and defence of

¹⁷⁶ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 196–199.

¹⁷⁷ Cotton, *Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven*, 56.

¹⁷⁸ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 11.

¹⁷⁹ Winthrop, *Journal of John Winthrop*, 353–354.

Congregationalism in *The Way of the Churches of New-England*, Cotton expressed its implications for England in the following manner:

We take not upon us as ἀλλοτριεπισκοποι,¹⁸⁰ to prescribe unto our Brethren in England, (men of their Churches, and eminent lights in the world) what course to take in pursuing and perfecting the great work of Reformation in England; Nay, we know our own Tenuity, and the store of business enough, which we have to attend unto near home: Nevertheless, as we cannot cease to pray for, and seek their good as our own; so we cannot but rejoice with them to behold that open door which God hath set before them, and with that all their hearts were so far enlarged towards the Lord, and to his ways, as we hear his hand is enlarged towards them. Only being absent in the body, but present in spirit, we crave leave to bear witness to them, and with them; That if the Lord be pleased to prosper his work amongst them, it is possible to reduce the estate of the Congregations in England to such a reformation, as is suitable to the pattern revealed in the Gospel, according to the way of Primitive simplicity, described above.¹⁸¹

With deep humility, Cotton concluded that New England possessed the solution to England's troubles. He cajoled his English readers by appealing to the undisputed guidelines for Biblical ecclesiology. First, the true Church had to be consistent with the apostolic pattern. Second, the true Church had to exercise effective discipline among its members, which entailed the important task of determining whether the members had made an adequate profession of faith. Lastly, the true Church faithfully administered the sacraments of the Lord's Supper only to believers.¹⁸² Cotton was confident that an assessment of New England's polity according to these three parameters would vindicate Congregationalism, as the New

¹⁸⁰ The Greek word used here means "one who meddles in things that do not concern him, a busybody," see William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 39.

¹⁸¹ Cotton, *Way of the Churches of Christ*, 111.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 111–113.

England churches most consistently resembled the apostolic model and “primitive state of Churches.”¹⁸³

As Cotton embraced Congregationalism and moved closer towards separatist ecclesiology, he did not relinquish his conviction that English parishes were true churches. To demonstrate this point, one could examine Cotton’s 1636 sermon to the Salem Church, which was preached only a few years prior to his preaching from *Canticles*. Cotton’s sermon at Salem not only reveals his modified ecclesiology but, more importantly, demonstrates his continued loyalty to the Church of England. Cotton certainly moved closer to the separatist position when he adopted New England congregationalism, which is clearly seen in his Salem sermon. Cotton wanted to avoid any further “Mischief to all the Churches that have not attended to this Principle,” referring to the necessity of entering into membership to receive the sacraments.¹⁸⁴

At Salem, Cotton did not inform the congregation that he had completely abandoned his previous position and, though admitting that he had become aware of its erroneous aspects, did not recant his affirmation that there existed true churches in England.¹⁸⁵ He carried this belief into *Canticles* (1655) when he affirmed that the Lord was “present with . . . the English Parishes, even under the Hierarchy, where godly Ministers were, there was a row of good Christians. There Christ’s lips may be heard.”¹⁸⁶ Throughout the instructional portion of his sermon at Salem, Cotton

¹⁸³ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 110.

¹⁸⁴ Cotton, *Sermon . . . Deliver’d at Salem*, 4.

¹⁸⁵ See Ziff, *Career of John Cotton*, 97; Emerson, *John Cotton*, 42.

¹⁸⁶ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 153.

affirmed the Covenant of grace and its everlasting nature with God's people.¹⁸⁷ In fact, apart from Cotton's prefatory confession, his Salem sermon was primarily dedicated to exhortations on the perpetual nature of the Covenant and his conjunctive warning against separation.

Cotton argued that all were guilty of violating covenantal stipulations, but the ultimate requirement for maintenance of the Covenant was not man's fidelity to the Covenant but rather his fidelity to Christ; otherwise, the Covenant becomes simply rooted on works.¹⁸⁸ Cotton asked Salem Christians what type of covenant to which they adhered, whether grace or works. Believing that separation was based on the covenant of works, Cotton explained, "Then no marvel, tho' it do break and fail, seeing it stands upon duties, and keeping duties, and standing upon performance of duties, and being broken upon neglect of duties, this is but a Covenant of Works."¹⁸⁹

Cotton saw this covenantal truth in Adam and Israel and applied it to England. Moreover, he assured the congregation that although the "Everlasting Covenant" could be annulled "tho' we fail in Families, and in Churches . . . Christ be ours."¹⁹⁰ Cotton was essentially warning Salem not to base the Biblical practice of membership in exercise of the keys of the Kingdom on the belief that England's covenant had been broken, thus justifying separation from the English Church. He warned that if "you see the Church lie in Sin" and "will not touch her, then you Sin

¹⁸⁷ Cotton, *Sermon . . . Deliver'd at Salem*, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 25, 27, 32, 35, 36, 37, 40.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 25; see also 24, 26–27.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

against her, and have broken your Covenant.”¹⁹¹ He closed his sermon to Salem’s congregation with one final admonition:

I Pray you therefore consider it: I am marvellously afraid of Separation from Churches upon any breach of duty; they who do Separate for such causes, think they are sprinkled with the water of Separation: but believe it, they are Separated from Christ Jesus for ever, if they so live and so die. Therefore if you belong to Christ, He will show you it is not the water of Separation that will serve your turn, but getting Christ Jesus, and sitting closer to Him, and to your Brethren, by Admonishing and Reproving them, if you see them defiled. This will keep you clean, and your hearts clean, and your Souls comfortable: That the Lord hath made an Everlasting Covenant with you that shall never be Forgotten.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 38.

¹⁹² Ibid., 40.

Chapter Three: Images of the Beast: Prelacy and Presbyterianism

I. *Apocalyptic Confirmation: Resumption of the Fifth Vial*

On July 1638, William Fiennes, Lord Saye and Sele wrote to Cotton about something that he presumed Cotton already knew: that the “most remarkable” events were unfolding in Scotland.¹ Fiennes was likely alluding to the Covenanters’ resistance against Charles I and, more importantly, prelacy, which culminated in the Bishops’ Wars.² Men of the godly in England like Fiennes, who abhorred Laudian policies, harboured sympathy for the Scottish cause, and construed the developments in the north as the preliminary rumblings of reformation.³ Fiennes expected Cotton to share his enthusiasm for what God was accomplishing through the Kirk.

Cotton may or may not have known of the situation in Scotland when he received Fiennes’ correspondence. Whether he did or did not, Cotton most definitely shared Fiennes’ optimism. News from across the Atlantic sparked tremendous apocalyptic curiosity in Cotton. As Cotton supported any effort against prelacy, any resistance on a national scale, the most notable example of which was the Scottish opposition, was certainly worthy of investigation to determine if such events were of

¹ William Fiennes, Lord Saye and Sele, to Cotton, July 1638, in Cotton, *Correspondence*, 285. Correspondence from England to New England could have been received within two months; see David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 215.

² The Bishops’ Wars began in 1639.

³ P. H. Donald, “New Light on the Anglo-Scottish Contacts of 1640,” *Historical Research* 62 (1989), 221–31; see also *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Fiennes, William.”

eschatological proportion. Cotton turned to the only Biblical source that could aid him and satisfy his suspicion that the concentration of events in Scotland was of apocalyptic significance: the Book of Revelation.

Cotton's exegesis of this ultimate source of prophetic history validated what he had suspected: The storms that had clouded England in the 1620s and driven him and many others into exile in the 1630s were passing, allowing God's eschatological agenda to resume. Such events led Cotton to experience a renewed sense of New England's role in reformation. He believed that the time had arrived for the colonial churches to assist their native country, which would lead God's people into reformation. Although Cotton recognized that the hand of the Lord was working in Scotland, he believed that the Lord had anointed England, not New England, to head the charge against the Antichrist.

Nevertheless, New England's supportive role was not to be underestimated. The colonial churches would provide the exemplary ecclesiastical model of Congregationalism through which the millennium would dawn. Fiennes called New England a "City set upon a hill" that would aid in the "casting off of Bishops and reducing the Churches to their primitive and true power."⁴ Prophetic fulfilment across the Atlantic Ocean reassured Cotton and his fellow colonists that New England's church experiment was not in vain and would direct the Church towards the glorious days of the millennium.

Cotton intensely focused on expositing Revelation to not only confirm the eschatological nature of events in Scotland but also ascertain the manner in which they would be consummated. Cotton preached his expositions on Revelation in New

⁴ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 283.

England from 1639 until as late as 1641.⁵ It remains unknown how much of Revelation Cotton actually interpreted or even preached. Minimally, Cotton preached from six of Revelation's twenty-two chapters: chapters two, twelve, thirteen, fifteen, sixteen and twenty.⁶ Only his sermons on chapters thirteen, sixteen, and twenty were published. The high level of exegetic energy that Cotton devoted to Revelation demonstrates the tremendous interest he had in this apocalyptic source. It was important that Cotton first confirm to believers that Biblical prophecy was being fulfilled in their time. His next task was to inform New England what was to be expected and how God was going to use the colonies to achieve His divinely appointed end.

By 1638, two key events had transpired that suggested the possibility of apocalyptic fulfilment and urged Cotton to confirm whether or not those events were eschatological in nature. The first occurred 23 July 1637, when Scotland rejected Charles I's introduction of a modified Book of Common Prayer into the Kirk's

⁵ Cotton's sermons on Revelation were preached as Thursday lectures. Thomas Allen recorded that Cotton's sermons on Revelation 13 were preached in the eleventh and twelfth months of 1639 until the first and second months of 1640; see Cotton, "To The Reader," *Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, n.p. During the spring of 1641, John Winthrop noted sermons preached by Cotton on Revelation; see John Winthrop and James Kendall Hosmer, *Winthrop's Journal, "History of New England," 1630–1649* (1908; repr., New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1959), 30. Thomas Lechford mentioned Cotton's Revelation lectures sometime before Lechford set sail for England on 3 August 1641; see Lechford, *Plain Dealing*, 19.

⁶ Susanna Bell noted that she listened to a sermon Cotton preached on Revelation two, see Bell, *Legacy of a Dying Mother*, 48-49. Cotton referenced a sermon he had preached on Revelation 12 in his sermon on Revelation 13; see Cotton, *Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 1; see also Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 1: 271. Both Cotton and John Winthrop referenced a sermon Cotton preached on Revelation 15; see Cotton, "The First Vial," *Powring*, 1; Winthrop, *Winthrop's Journal*, 30.

liturgy.⁷ The Prayer Book was viewed as instrumental in the execution of the King's strategy to establish religious uniformity between England and Scotland based upon prelacy. Charles had inherited his father's belief that prelacy supported the monarchy's pre-eminent authority whereas Presbyterianism threatened and undermined it. Charles believed that Episcopacy would give him an effective means by which to rule over Scotland and maintain a firm grip over the Kirk.⁸ However, the Prayer Book was damned even before it was introduced at St. Giles. Propaganda, more so than the actual contents of the Prayer Book, was likely the primary factor in its failure; in fact, the Presbyterians did not even conduct an adequate examination of the Prayer Book.⁹ Aversion to the Prayer Book was fed by the widely accepted opinion that Laud was a crypto-Catholic, stoking fears of popery, and abetted by rumours that the Prayer Book was Roman Catholic in character and intent. Hence, it appears inevitable that the Prayer Book was to be rejected, confirmed by the fact that its introduction was immediately met with protests.¹⁰

⁷ The Prayer Book was introduced at St. Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh, Scotland.

⁸ Scholars have debated who was actually responsible for the contested portions of the Prayer Book. Kevin Sharpe argues that Scottish bishops were most responsible and that the sensitive contents were inserted without Charles' knowledge; see Sharpe, *Personal Rule*, 784–786. In contrast, Maurice Lee argued that William Laud, with the support of the King, was more instrumental; see Maurice Lee, *The Road to Revolution: Scotland under Charles I, 1625–37* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 184–222.

⁹ Gordon Donaldson, *The Making of the Scottish Prayer Book of 1637* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1954), 52, 69; see also Lee, *Road to Revolution*, 196–200. Even if the Prayer Book had been intensively scrutinized, Presbyterians would still have recognized the extensive power and authority it granted to bishops; see Margaret Steele, "The 'Politick Christian': The Theological Background to the National Covenant," in *The Scottish National Covenant in Its British Context*, ed. John Morrill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 33–34.

¹⁰ For a good discussion on the situation surrounding the introduction of the Prayer Book see David Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution, 1637–1644: The Triumph of the Covenanters* (1973; repr., Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 2003), 56–63.

The second major event, the signing of the National Covenant on 28 February 1638 at Greyfriars Kirk in Edinburgh, soon followed the rejection of the Prayer Book. The composition of and widespread subscription to the National Covenant, a declaration of Scotland's opposition to Episcopacy, was a response to England on a scale that equalled the Scottish reformers' composition of the Negative Confession of 1581, a declaration of Scotland's opposition to popery. The Covenant was not explicitly defiant but implicitly denounced prelacy. As David Stevenson describes, the radicals considered it a "manifesto for religious revolution" required for the complete elimination of Episcopacy.¹¹

A third significant event occurred soon after the uproar over the National Covenant. Although Fiennes most likely did not have this event in mind while writing to Cotton, it must certainly have reinforced Cotton's belief in the coming of

¹¹ David Stevenson, *The Covenanters: The National Covenant and Scotland* (Edinburgh: Saltire Society, 1988), 42. Interestingly the National Covenant extended an impression of consensus that was slightly deceiving. Although members of the Kirk did hold to widespread general agreement regarding the doctrine of grace, they were divided in regards to worship and liturgy; see David G. Mullan, "Theology in the Church of Scotland 1618–c. 1640: A Calvinist Consensus?," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 26, no. 3 (Autumn 1995), 595–617. The more Calvinist and puritanical ministers accused the ceremonialists of being Arminian and essentially Romish; see Peter Donald, "The Scottish National Covenant and British Politics, 1638–1640," in *The Scottish National Covenant*, 90; see also Roger Mason, "The Aristocracy, Episcopacy and the Revolution of 1638," in *Covenant, Charter and Party: Traditions of Revolt and Protest in Modern Scottish History*, ed. Terry Brotherstone (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989), 13–14; Steele, "The 'Politick Christian,'" 40. However, there were others like Robert Baillie who were conformists though not pro-Episcopacy; see Florence N. McCoy, *Robert Baillie and the Second Scots Reformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 30–31. Furthermore, Robert Mason depicts Baillie as one who "hankered after the good old days of James VI and who would have settled simply for 'limitations' or 'cautions' being placed on the nature and extent of the bishops' powers;" see Mason, "Aristocracy, Episcopacy and the Revolution," 13; see also Robert Baillie, *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie, Principal of the University of Glasgow, 1637–1662*, vol. 2, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1841), 2–5, 52–54, 178.

the Apocalypse in the late 1630s.¹² That event was the convening of the Glasgow General Assembly in 1638 after the Kirk had not hosted a general assembly in twenty years, the last having sat in Perth in 1618. The reason for the long delay was not a lack of need to hold a general assembly but rather because the Kirk did not hold the power to call a general assembly; only the monarch held the authority to do so. James' wariness of the Kirk led him to refuse to call an assembly, stifling the Covenanters' attempts at reform and adding to their increasing anxiety for reformation. However, they were now riding the wave of reformation that had arisen from the rejection of the Prayer Book and had seen strengthened by the National Covenant. Nevertheless, it remained true that only Charles could authorize an assembly, and the Covenanters were fully aware that to organize a general assembly without the King's consent would have been an indisputable act of war and aggression. As early as March 1638, the Covenanters had begun to inform Charles of their desire for a general assembly. To the Kirk's great surprise, on 27 July 1638, Charles acquiesced to the request and summoned a general assembly,¹³ an event inarguably more significant than both the rejection of the Prayer Book and the signing of the National Covenant.

¹² Based upon consideration of the dates and his close contacts and proximity to the situation in Scotland, there is a possibility that Fiennes may have been aware of the Covenanters' momentum leading up to the request and call of the General Assembly. Fiennes penned his letter to Cotton four months after the Scots began to ask Charles to summon a general assembly.

¹³ See Stevenson, *Scottish Revolution*, 88–126. Kevin Sharpe writes that by that time Charles had recognized that the National Covenant essentially stripped the king of any power over Scotland. In desperation, Charles began to grant concessions to the Covenanters, hoping to manipulate the Covenanters into illegalities and weaken their claim to legitimacy; see also Sharpe, *Personal Rule*, 791–792.

The Glasgow Assembly gave the Covenanters the opportunity to strengthen their denunciation of unbiblical Episcopacy. Focusing upon prelacy, their deliberations concluded that it was essentially abjured in the 1581 Second Book of Discipline, and therefore should be expelled. The Covenanters were simply applying what they believed Scottish reformers had declared over a half century ago. The delegates to the Glasgow Assembly also intended to correct the mistakes that had been made at the previous General Assembly in Perth, where James had masterfully manipulated the Assembly to accept the Five Articles that enacted popish ceremonies in the Kirk.¹⁴

Even prior to the Glasgow Assembly's commencement, its commissioners had been fully aware that this weighty and fully expected determination would be construed as a direct opposition to the crown and inevitably escalate into war. Although Charles may not have anticipated anything positive to result from Glasgow, the Assembly did in fact provide what the King had been hoping for and believed was his only remaining option: a lawful excuse to enter into war with the Covenanters. The perceived declaration of war in the Kirk's condemnation of the bishops initiated the first of the two Bishops' Wars in the early summer of 1639. Cotton, Fiennes, and many others interpreted Charles' failure to implement his vision

¹⁴ The Perth General Assembly canonized kneeling before communion, private baptism, private communion for those stricken with infirmities, confirmation by a bishop, and the observance of Holy Days. Mackay notes that the articles were not stringently applied. For a discussion on the reception and reaction to the articles see P. H. R. Mackay, "The Reception Given to the Five Articles of Perth," *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 19 (1977), 185–201.

of ecclesiastical uniformity¹⁵ as God providentially casting judgment on Antichrist Episcopacy.

Cotton applied the historical prophetic hermeneutic that he had learned well from Brightman's expositions by juxtaposing actual events in Scotland alongside Revelation prophecies. He concluded that the fifth apocalyptic vial, described in Revelation 16, was in full progress and being dispensed in unprecedented measure. Revelation 16 organized God's apocalyptic plan into seven consecutive stages of prophetic fulfilment. Each vial contained divine wrath and judgment that would be poured upon the Antichrist during a specific period in the Antichrist's reign, and thus administered at precise moments in history. Cotton concluded that the first four vials had been dispensed before 1637 and that the fifth vial had been initiated.¹⁶ While the rumblings of reformation in Scotland were certainly of eschatological character, they were an extension of a season of fulfilment that had already begun. Cotton determined that as the fifth vial had been dormant since the reign of Queen Elizabeth, nearly thirty years had passed since God last inflicted wrath upon the Antichrist.

Beginning with the reign of Henry VIII, Cotton located the historical events that indisputably correlated and fulfilled the first four vials of apocalyptic judgment.

¹⁵ Mason, "Aristocracy, Episcopacy and the Revolution of 1638," 7–8; Sharpe, *Personal Rule*, 792–794. See also Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *History of England from the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War, 1603–1642*, vol. 8 (London: Longmans, Green, 1884). For a good discussion of how Charles' decisions were affected by the counsel of others, particularly involving the situation with the Scots, see Peter Donald, *An Uncounselled King: Charles I and the Scottish Troubles, 1637–1641* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Regarding the King's responsibility see Sharpe, *Personal Rule*, 776. For an excellent account of the military details of the battles see Mark Charles Fissel, *The Bishops' Wars: Charles I's Campaigns against Scotland, 1638–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁶ Cotton, "The Fift Vial," *Powring*, 1–13.

According to Cotton, the first vial had been emptied through the work of the Protestant martyrs under Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary I. Those Christians who had suffered for the Lord had collectively cast divine wrath on the general antichristian state, composed of what Cotton described as the “lowest sort of vulgar Catholics” and “common sort of Catholics” who advocated popish beliefs, practiced Romish rituals, and placed allegiance unto papal authority.¹⁷ Regarding the second vial, Cotton praised William Perkins and William Ames and the “rest of the holy Saints of God” who had written against the Council of Trent and the teachings of Bellarmine, condemning those doctrines as “polluted and corrupted.”¹⁸

Cotton reserved the highest honour for Elizabeth, to whom he attributed the fulfilment of the third and fourth vials.¹⁹ Cotton believed the third vial had been cast upon the Roman Catholic clergy when Catholic priests were declared “Traitors and Rebels against the State.”²⁰ After pouring divine wrath upon the Catholic religion, Elizabeth had then proceeded to administer the judgment of the fourth vial upon Rome’s “light of the world, the flower of Paradise, the gate of Heaven”: the Pope.²¹ Cotton also recognized the contributions of the Swedish king Gustav Vasa (1523–1560) to the inauguration of the fourth vial, as Vasa had introduced Protestantism

¹⁷ Ibid., “The First Vial,” 3–4.

¹⁸ Ibid., “The Second Vial,” 20; see also Cotton, *Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 28–29. The Council of Trent was convened by the Roman Catholic Church in 1545 and continued until 1563. The ideals that emerged from Trent embodied what became known as the Counter-Reformation. Robert Bellarmine was an important Jesuit theologian who lived from 1542 to 1621.

¹⁹ Cotton disagreed with Brightman, who believed that the first three vials were all accomplished during Elizabeth’s rule; see Brightman, *Revelation*, 423–430.

²⁰ Cotton, “The Third Vial,” *Powring*, 8, see also 2–5. Cotton noted the composition of *Justitia Britanniae* by William Cecil, Elizabeth’s secretary.

²¹ Ibid., “The Fourth Vial,” 7.

into Sweden.²² However, Elizabeth had played a more significant role by continuing Vasa's work and completing the fourth apocalyptic stage when she tore down the "Pope's Supremacy . . . in Ecclesiastical affairs, which is the very Rule of the Churches of Christ."²³

Cotton approached the fifth vial with caution, initially displaying uncharacteristic reticence. Part of his difficulty lay in the fact that "it is generally conceived that the execution . . . hath not yet gone beyond the pouring out of the fourth Vial."²⁴ His concern, absent in his interpretations of the previous four vials, was due to the simple fact that the fifth vial was not completely fulfilled. Here the inherent challenge presented by Cotton's historical prophetic hermeneutic becomes apparent; the fulfilment of the fifth vial had not yet become history and, as the interpretation of Biblical prophecy was greatly aided once the events foretold had become history, Cotton was grappling with uncertainty. However, Cotton was certain that God would not leave the Church in darkness, especially at this most crucial period in prophetic history. Moreover, he was confident that the Lord's desire was to

²² Cotton did not actually name the Swedish ruler who contributed to the fourth vial. Cotton wrote, "Sweden began with one, and hath been followed: Queen Elizabeth in England, and others elsewhere;" see *ibid.*, "The Fourth Vial," 9. Deok Kyo Oh understood this as a reference to King Gustav Adolf of Sweden (1611–1632). Adolf was certainly an important figure for the Protestant army during the Thirty Years' War; see Oh, "Churches Resurrection" 77–78. However, Cotton's comment clearly referenced a Swedish ruler who preceded Elizabeth. Gustav Vasa occupied Sweden's throne from 1523 to 1590. Vasa, like Elizabeth in Cotton's description, opposed the Pope. Upon his accession, Vasa exiled the existing archbishop, who held ties with the previous ruler, the Danish king. In response to the ensuing discontent of the Pope, Vasa offered replacements; however, the Pope refused all of them. Ultimately, Vasa, being influenced by the Lutheran theologian Olaus Petri, appointed Petri's brother Laurentius as archbishop. Together they began to introduce Lutheranism to Sweden.

²³ Cotton, "The Fourth Vial," *Powring*, 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, "The Fift Vial," 2.

“lead his people into truth.” With this assurance, Cotton proceeded with “holy fear and reverence.”²⁵

However, Cotton did not believe that coming events surrounding the fifth vial had been completely left to conjecture. The meaning of the fifth vial was not entirely mysterious because he did not believe it was completely unfulfilled. Cotton’s interpretation was aided by what he observed as previously fulfilled portions of the fifth vial dating back to Elizabeth’s reign, as the Lord had not only exhausted two vials of judgment but also saw fit to begin another during the Queen’s reign. Those previously accomplished aspects of the fifth vial unveiled the identity of the distributors of wrath, whom Cotton identified as Thomas Cartwright and Theodore Beza. Both being outspoken in their criticism of prelacy in the English Church, Cotton described Cartwright and Beza as those who “did sprinkle some drops of this Vial upon this government.”²⁶ Cotton described how those attempts at reformation had been short lived due to the “power and strength of Episcopacy” that “drunk them up like the dry Earth.”²⁷

James I had the opportunity to cast a fatal blow and but failed to appropriately respond to the outcry for ecclesiastical reform at the 1604 Hampton Court Conference. However, Cotton believed that the Lord continued to tolerate this

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 4. Beza was a source of great encouragement and influence to both Scottish and English divines. Cartwright, who debated church polity with John Whitgift in what is known as the Admonition Controversy, benefited from Beza’s tutelage at the Geneva Academy; see Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?: Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London, Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 13–64.

²⁷ Cotton, “The Fift Vial,” *Powring*, 4.

movement and later poured “more drops” through Robert Parker and Paul Baynes.²⁸ Collectively, Cotton called those “Heavenly Ministers” the “Angel of God” who began fulfilment of the fifth vial, which was aimed at the reformation of church government and the downfall of Episcopacy, which had begun before Scotland opposed Charles.²⁹ The nature of the reform for which Cartwright, Beza, Parker, and Baynes called focused upon ecclesiastical polity, a fact that aided Cotton in interpreting the meaning of the fifth vial and convinced him of the eschatological importance of the Covenanters’ campaign against prelacy.

One senses a progression in the magnitude of significance from the first to the fifth vial. As previously described, Cotton interpreted that apocalyptic judgment had first been administered to common Roman Catholics by the first vial and then to doctrine by the second vial. Rome’s clergy, the third vial’s target, instrumentally used doctrine to cast the Antichrist’s control over the church. The fourth vial was aimed at an even greater form of authority—the papacy. Cotton reasoned that though Rome’s presence had essentially been expelled from England, the popish form of government endured in “Protestant Churches; where though the Doctrine, and worship of Popery be abolished, and the transcendent supremacy of his government, yet the form of his government, monarchical or sole and singular government by one, that is Episcopacy, is still continued.”³⁰ Cotton believed that the Antichrist craftily projected his “peerless authority” through prelacy and in the “singular sole authority,

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

and monarchical government” where he “sits chief and only Judge in Ecclesiastical causes.”³¹

Cotton disagreed with advocates of Episcopacy like Joseph Hall who distinguished between prelacy and Roman Catholicism.³² For Cotton, there was ultimately little difference between Episcopacy and popery, as Episcopacy essentially captured Rome’s “antichristian frame and form” and manifest in all “National, Provincial and Diocesan Churches.”³³ Episcopacy was the image of the visible Roman Catholic Church that the Antichrist had cast upon the whole earth, among “all Churches and Commonwealths . . . reserving still pre-eminency to their mother Catholic Church of Rome . . . as daughters are of their mothers.”³⁴ From this seat and through this authority, the Antichrist waged war upon the saints of God.³⁵ Recognizing that the Antichrist had disguised his rule, yoking God’s people throughout Europe to his deception, Cotton warned, “Now see the danger of this . . . He did not bring them to make one in number, but one in England, and one in Scotland . . . and in every Country . . . the very breath of the Roman Order; though not in so vast so measure, yet in a faire model.”³⁶

³¹ Ibid., 3; Cotton, *Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 4–5.

³² Joseph Hall, *Episcopacie by Divine Right* (London, 1641), 17–19, 259. Hall cited Augustine and other reformed sources to demonstrate that Episcopacy held Protestant lineage and not Roman Catholic. For Hall, corruption in the English Church did not indicate an entirely corrupt system.

³³ Cotton, “The Fift Viall,” *Powring*, 3–4, 5; Cotton, *Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 233.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 12, 34–35, 41–42, 50–3, 97–100, 223–229, 244.

³⁶ Ibid., 237. In Cotton’s opinion, recognition of Episcopacy’s Antichristian nature was essential. Denial thereof was enough to cause Cotton to oppose Thomas Lechford’s application for membership into the Boston Church. Lechford denied that the Antichrist had appeared in history and that all other relevant prophecies remained

Cotton praised the Covenanters for resuming the fifth vial, initiated by Cartwright and other English divines, in an unprecedented manner. He regarded the Kirk's stand against Charles I as unrivalled in history and the events that occurred between 1637 and 1639 as the culmination of the reformation in Scotland that had been developing for nearly a half a century. Around the same time that Cartwright and others had called for reform in England, John Knox and Andrew Melville had championed a similar cause in the north: a gradual expunging of Episcopacy from the Presbyterian Kirk.³⁷ It was not coincidental that Cartwright, Knox, Melville, and Walter Travers all spent significant time in Geneva, where they were tutored in the ecclesiastical model of Calvin and Beza. The initial "drops" of Cartwright and "more drops" by Parker and Baynes were turned into "whole Vials full of wrath . . . not drops alone, but . . . great showers . . . a flood" poured out upon the antichristian prelacy at the hands of the Kirk:³⁸ Cotton asked, "Episcopal government doth it now

unfulfilled. Lechford also believed prelacy was in direct succession of apostolic authority. See Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, Part I, 71; Thomas Lechford, *Note-Book Kept by Thomas Lechford, Esq., Lawyer, in Boston, Massachusetts Bay, from June 27, 1638, to July 29, 1641*, ed. Edward Everett Hale Jr. (Camden, ME: Picton Press, 1988), 48–50.

³⁷ The Kirk that emerged from the Reformation in Scotland, while based on the Genevan model, was in actuality a church composed of both Presbyterian and Episcopal elements. During the early part of the Scottish Reformation, this mixed ecclesiastical structure was acceptable. John Knox himself espoused a form of Presbyterianism that did not accurately replicate what Calvin had established in Geneva; see Gordon Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 170. Alan Macdonald describes the time Andrew Melville returned in July 1574 from exile in Geneva as "ripe" for Presbyterianism because the anti-Episcopal mood had gained enough momentum to stage a formidable resistance. However, by 1603, James and Episcopacy prevailed over Presbyterianism; see Alan R. MacDonald, *The Jacobean Kirk, 1567–1625: Sovereignty, Polity, and Liturgy*, St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 12–13.

³⁸ Cotton, "The Fift Viall," *Powring*, 4–5. What must be kept in mind is that Cotton's use of "Viall" in his reference to the Scottish contribution does not encompass the full dispensation of this stage of apocalyptic judgment on Episcopacy.

grow dark?” before answering, “Yea full of darkness. Is it not scotized, darkened and beclouded with a Scottish mist? So as that it growth base and vile, not only in the eyes of good people; nor of godly people alone, but of many civil, and orderly minds. . . . It be said that the Kingdom of the beast . . . be full of darkness.”³⁹

II. Presbyterianism: A Tang of the Image of the Beast

By attributing the initiation of the fifth vial to English divines such as Cartwright, Cotton had essentially limited the importance of Scotland’s apocalyptic contribution. Although Cotton had no intention of denying the Covenanters’ efforts, Cotton’s lack of acknowledgement not only denied Scotland’s role as the progenitor of the scheme of the fifth vial but also the Kirk’s power of consummating this stage of apocalyptic fulfilment. There is no doubt that Cotton was genuinely overjoyed when he heard of what God had accomplished in Scotland. However, Cotton believed that God had appointed the Kirk only a preparatory and supportive role in the Church’s victory over Episcopacy. The Scottish flood, Cotton described, had begun as drops of reformation drawn by Cartwright and others before returning to its place of inception, and now “flowed in England.”⁴⁰ In *The Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, Cotton elaborated upon this point:

Far be it from me to undervalue the brotherly assistance of the Scottish Churches and Commonwealth in working so great a deliverance for England. Yea I account their concurrence greater matter than assistance in this great work. Their exemplary piety and zeal, their courage, and confidence in rising up, and standing out against the invasion of Episcopal tyranny, and superstition did doubtless quicken and encourage England to stand for the like liberty in the like cause: and to put forth that zeal, which the Lord had kindled in the hearts of many for Reformation. And this was

³⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

more than an assistance, even a guidance. Afterwards the forwardness of the Scottish Nation to advance their Armies . . . against the Common Enemies of Church and State, was an Act of brotherly love never to be forgotten without due and thankful acknowledgement, and encouragement.⁴¹

Cotton did not turn his rejection of Scotland as the final contributor and consummator of the fifth vial into an opportunity to grant this role to New England. Rather, Cotton's interpretations led him to appoint England that coveted place in prophetic history. The English Independent, Jeremiah Burroughs, also elevated England to this coveted apocalyptic role though he was also deeply excited at what the Scottish resistance had sparked.⁴² The Covenanters' victories, though great, did not completely destroy prelacy, and Cotton warned the godly not to settle for those "former and late attempts against Episcopacy," for the full measure of God's wrath upon antichristian church government had not yet been inflicted.⁴³ His raising of common awareness of unfinished reformation was not intended to dampen apocalyptic hopes but to ignite them. He explained that the Scottish "flood" would pale in comparison to the final stage of the fifth vial, which would end Episcopacy's hold upon the Church. Cotton was convinced that England would lead God's people to this great victory. Reform, Cotton wrote, "will not rest here . . . I do conceive, and believe, that this Vial will go on from our Native Country to all the Catholic Countries round about them, until it come unto the very gates of Rome itself."⁴⁴ However, England needed, first, to recognise the antichristian nature of prelacy,

⁴¹ Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, 103.

⁴² Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 106.

⁴³ Cotton, "The Fift Viall," *Powring*, 6.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

second, expunge the Antichrist's authority by removing Episcopacy, and finally, institute Congregationalism, the only Biblical and true form of church government.

Cotton most likely recognized the obstacles that stood in the way of reform. He was likely aware that England had balked at the opportunity that God had laid at her feet, which would have led him to become deeply frustrated and despondent. On 3 November 1640, the convening of the Long Parliament sparked great optimism among the godly. Charles' summons of Parliament was intended to replenish his finances, which had been depleted by the Bishops' Wars. However, the godly had a different agenda, and took the opportunity to address long-awaited issues regarding reform. To the approval of many puritans, Parliament immediately addressed the charge of Charles' abuses of power during a reign marked by Laudian religious innovations. However, Parliament lacked consensus on any proposed resolutions, being especially divided over the issue of the church's settlement. Not only was Edward Dering's bill to remove prelacy root and branch rejected but Episcopacy's seeming demise brightened with the suggestion that Parliament restore a pre-Laudian Episcopacy that was thoroughly purged of popish innovations. Parliament had lacked any urgency to execute a program of reform until after the Earl of Strafford's execution in May 1641.⁴⁵

Although Cotton did not specifically mention any of these events, it is likely that he was aware of Parliament's ambivalence when he wrote about "sad

⁴⁵ David Scott, *Politics and War in the Three Stuart Kingdoms, 1637–49* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 25–6. For discussions on the root and branch petitions and bill see Anthony J. Fletcher, *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), 91–124; John Morrill, "The Religious Context of the English Civil War," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 34 (1984), 161. Anthony Milton notes that even Parliament's dealings with William Laud

considerations . . . taken up in England, whether it be not best to abandon all such thrones,” certainly a reference to the indecisiveness over Episcopacy’s removal.⁴⁶ Sometime between June and August 1641, John Winthrop recorded that Parliament had set up “a general reformation both of church and state, the Earl of Strafford being beheaded, and the archbishop (our great enemy) and many others . . . imprisoned and called to account.”⁴⁷ Cotton warned England that further negligence in effecting reform would incur grave consequences:

The Lord hath removed many oppositions of Reformation, and men have opportunity, if God give them grace, to lay hold of it, to strike in with Christ, and God may bear with them till Rome come to be more ruined; but if they stand out still and malign Reformation, and think the old Religion were better, and the old way of Government were better, I speak it from my text (not that I take upon me contingent Prophecies, but as the text speaks) they will not recover out of that State for a thousand years, and because they will not live a thousand years, they will die in that State, and so will their posterity, and all of their Spirit.⁴⁸

Cotton used the Covenanters’ faithfulness to their godly cause to challenge England in reformation. Scotland’s response to God’s call was exemplary. As a nation, Scotland had recognized the “vanity of Episcopacy,”⁴⁹ but Cotton had already made clear that the Kirk would not lead the Church into fulfilment of the sixth vial. England was God’s chosen nation, yet her people cowered in the midst of apocalyptic warfare. To Cotton, England’s refusal to decisively denounce prelacy was shameful in comparison to Scotland’s pervasive subscription to the National Covenant. Cotton wondered whether the English people’s hesitation at God’s

dragged on, reflecting the lack of urgency; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Laud, William.”

⁴⁶ Cotton, “The Fift Viall,” *Powring*, 5.

⁴⁷ Winthrop, *Journal of John Winthrop*, 353.

⁴⁸ Cotton, *Churches Resurrection*, 15.

invitation to end antichristian rule in the church was partly because they were so astonished by the Scottish measures that they were too overwhelmed to respond. Cotton's conjecture was reflected in his exhortation to the English to "take off that amazement . . . concerning the undertakings of the Scots."⁵⁰ The time had arrived for England to "strike a fast Covenant with . . . God to be his people," just as the Covenanters had done.⁵¹

Recognizing that the situation was very complex and delicate, Cotton divided the fulfilment of the fifth vial into two sub-stages: *identification* of the angel and *instalment* of the true Biblical polity. Parliament's failure to unanimously recognize prelacy's antichristian character was cause for great concern, as it had resulted in England's failure to decisively expel Episcopacy from the English Church and would further hinder England's ability to install and implement Christ's appointed government in the Church. The possibility existed that even if England purged prelacy, she may be deceived into replacing Episcopacy with another form of antichristian authority. Therefore, God's faithful must not be deceived into thinking that prelacy's demise had annihilated the beast and banished its image.⁵²

Episcopacy's birth in England was the result of the Antichrist's deception. Rome had deceived the world into believing that when the Pope's authority was banished, the Antichrist's presence and rule would be expunged from Protestant churches. Cotton had learned from his study of church history that the Church's failure to fully complete reformation could often be attributed to the misinterpretation of Scripture.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Cotton, "The Fift Viall," *Powring*, 11.

⁵¹ Cotton, *Churches Resurrection*, 16.

⁵² Cotton, *Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 3.

Cotton explained, “Christian Protestant Churches wrong themselves that leave any footprints of this government in their Churches . . . an image of this beast; can any bother tell his offence to such a church?”⁵³

Cotton feared that the Antichrist would attempt to replace prelacy with another form of government—Scottish Presbyterianism—that would enable it to continue its rule over the church. Granted, Cotton had not forthrightly denounced Scottish Presbyterianism in his Revelation expositions. His condemnation was subtle. One reason why Cotton was not explicit may have been because he recognized that the fifth vial was not complete. Hence, it was essential that Episcopacy be completely destroyed, much of which depended on the unity of the godly brethren. If prelacy was to be defeated Presbyterian and Congregational would have to set aside their differences and agree that the immediate goal of Episcopacy’s demise was one they all shared in common. In fact, this type of cooperation across ecclesiological lines was already occurring.⁵⁴ Cotton needed to tread very carefully not only to avoid confusing his listeners but to express a sincere recognition that the Scottish cause was godly. While Cotton never explicitly indicted Presbyterianism, there is no doubt that he would have classified the Kirk’s government, along with prelacy, as an antichristian form of church polity. As Presbyterianism had a national and hierarchical ecclesiastical structure, Cotton would have disqualified this form of

⁵³ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁴ Divines of all ecclesiological persuasions gathered in November 1641 at Edmund Calamy’s house and agreed to work together and quiet the polemical attacks. See Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 106; Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 36; Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 330-331. Webster accents the wide differences that were evidenced in that meeting; however, the fact that so many had gathered also demonstrates that there was some sense of unity and a common goal.

church government for its usurpation of authority. The keys, Cotton argued, had been placed into the hands of local churches.⁵⁵ Episcopacy illegitimately placed this authority into the hands of the bishops rather than the rightful hands of the congregation.

Cotton believed that Presbyterianism was guilty of such usurpation as well. Although Presbyterianism differed in that it granted power to a “company of Elders and Ministers” rather than bishops, it usurped the authority that God had originally granted to particular congregations and gave it to another and higher authority.⁵⁶ It is possible that had it not been for the prevalence of Presbyterianism, Cotton would have attributed more apocalyptic power to Scotland, but he believed it utterly foolish to simply exchange one antichristian government for another. Exhorting his English brethren to “desire that the Lord would keep us at such a distance, that we may never return to the image of . . . the beasts,”⁵⁷ Cotton warned that Presbyterianism bore a “tang of . . . and too much the image of the . . . Beast.”⁵⁸

Cotton desired to establish the fifth vial upon English Presbyterians like Cartwright because of their vision of ecclesiastical reform. Cotton did not identify Cartwright and his coreligionists as the progenitors of the fifth vial simply because they had campaigned for church reform; rather, he identified them because the type of church government in which they believed was both Biblical and consistent with the primitive and apostolic eschatological model that Cotton had described. Cotton’s list of divines included English divines besides Beza but not John Knox or Andrew

⁵⁵ Cotton, *Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven*, 5.

⁵⁶ Cotton, *Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 242.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Melville, the forerunners of Scottish ecclesiastical reform. Cotton would expectedly have preferred that Knox and Melville lead the reformation rather than Cartwright, Baynes, and Parker if his sole criterion had been the amount of success previously achieved.

The Scottish reformers had certainly enjoyed more success in their attempts to reform the Kirk than had their English counterparts in their attempts to reform the English Church. By 1640, English Presbyterianism, initiated by Cartwright and Walter Travers, was virtually nonexistent, never having been implemented on any level.⁵⁹ On the other hand, Presbyterianism in Scotland moulded the Kirk according to Calvinist and Bezan ecclesiology of the sixteenth century. Although the reform movement in Scotland was greatly opposed by James VI, it endured and eventually prevailed against Charles I.⁶⁰ Differences between English and Scottish Presbyterianism lay not only in the amount of success that each movement enjoyed but also in the distinct ideologies of the ecclesiologies. Alexander Gordon has described Scottish Presbyterianism as a dependent model within a hierarchical system whereas English Presbyterianism was an independent model consisting of a mutual consociation of independent churches with an emphasis upon independency.⁶¹

⁵⁹ See Polly Ha, “English Presbyterianism, c. 1590–1640” (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2006).

⁶⁰ Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions*, 199; see also Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 56–62. For the failure of the Presbyterian movement in England see Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 448–467.

⁶¹ Alexander Gordon, *Freedom after Ejection: A Review (1690–1692) of Presbyterian and Congregational Nonconformity in England and Wales* (Manchester: University Press, 1917), 151.

Cotton's placement of Beza alongside Cartwright, Parker, and Baynes suggests that he saw inherent differences between the church that English Presbyterians envisioned and the Kirk conceived by the Scottish reformers. In addition to English ministers, Scottish divines attended and benefited from Beza's tutelage as well. Knox and Melville were both attendants at the Geneva Academy and took back to Scotland important concepts that they implemented with a good amount of success. The difference lay not in what was taught by or learned from Beza but rather the manner in which it was applied. Whereas Cartwright and Travers had applied the Genevan concepts in a theoretical manner, Melville had applied them in a practical manner to serve as the basis of his model.⁶² Cotton's exclusion of the Scots when mentioning Beza supports the argument that Cotton recognized inherent differences between English and Scottish concepts of Presbyterian ecclesiology and considered the ideals of Cartwright, Parker, and Baynes to be more consistent with Beza than those of Knox and Melville. Most importantly, Cotton understood Congregationalism, which he believed was fully consistent with Cartwrightian ecclesiology, to be congruent with Genevan principles.

Cotton's most significant concern was a church's ability to establish and maintain purity. Scottish Presbyterians believed that their church polity was best equipped to guard the Church's worship and administration and the only system capable of effectually nurturing and cultivating true piety and religious affection in

⁶² W. M. M. Campbell, "Samuel Rutherford, Propagandist and Exponent of Scottish Presbyterianism: An Exposition of His Position and Influence in the Doctrine and Politics of the Scottish Church" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1937), 106. In December 1643, Robert Baillie wrote from the Westminster Assembly, "As yet a Presbytery to this people is conceived to be a strange monster;" see Baillie, *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, vol. 2, 117. This comment would not be

an individual believer. Moreover, they asserted that as Presbyterianism was *jure divino*, it alone was capable of guarding the church from plurality and heretical religions. Regarding Presbyterianism, Baillie wrote, “This kind of Government, other Reformed Churches with ease have kept themselves pure and clean of all . . . Heresies and Schisms.”⁶³ Scottish Presbyterians were equally concerned to create a pure church as their Congregational counterparts.⁶⁴ However, George Gillespie and Samuel Rutherford, Scottish delegates to the Westminster Assembly who were outspoken critics of Congregationalism, recognized the inherent deficiency in a church founded on a hierarchy. Gillespie believed the Church’s primary duty was to purify itself of hypocrites, and both Rutherford and Gillespie conceded that a national ecclesiastical body was not conducive to the goal of promoting purity in the Church.⁶⁵

Cotton contended that Presbyterianism and all other antichristian forms of church government were incapable of preserving purity in the Church.⁶⁶ The misappropriation of authority that inevitably resulted in the ineffectiveness of a

expected if the ideals of church government espoused by Cartwright and others had been indistinguishable from Scottish Presbyterianism.

⁶³ Baillie, *Dissuasive*, 8.

⁶⁴ Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 108.

⁶⁵ Coffey also argued that the similarities between Scottish Presbyterians and Congregationalists were more extensive. For example, Rutherford also supported conventicles. Moreover, Rutherford at one time disagreed with the General Assembly’s determinations and refused to submit to the overarching ecclesiastical body’s ruling, an act inconsistent with Rutherford’s own defence of Presbyterianism and the concept of Biblical authority invested in the General Assembly. See Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions*, 188–189, 197–223; see also James Kevin Culberson, “For Reformation and Uniformity: George Gillespie (1613–1648) and the Scottish Covenanter Revolution” (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 2003), 111–112, 162–167.

⁶⁶ Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, 20.

Church to cultivate holiness among believers was precisely what distinguished God's and the Antichrist's intentions for the Church. Many puritans were in agreement that the Lord certainly desired obedience and godliness in his people. Cotton believed that the purity of the congregation and its members was heavily dependent upon authority being properly allocated locally and not in any presbytery, synod, or assembly. He argued that only a given local body could properly enforce Biblical discipline and guarantee the purity of its own ecclesiastical body. Insisting that this could not be achieved efficiently or effectively by any detached group of divines,⁶⁷ Cotton rhetorically asked, "Must the offence stay till all the world be gathered together; or if it were meant of one Diocesan, or provincial Church, when will they meet?"⁶⁸ Congregationalism, in contrast to the inexpediency of a national church, "by the blessing of Christ doth speedily, safely, and effectually purge out such grievous and dangerous evils, as threaten the ruin of Church and State."⁶⁹

In response to Baillie's charge that Congregationalism, what Baillie preferred to label Independency, ultimately resulted in "bitter fruits," Cotton responded that, ironically, it had been the very polity of Scotland's scorn that had been the primary cause for England's "chief successes."⁷⁰ Regarding Presbyterianism's inability to preserve and cultivate purity in worship and doctrine, Cotton once responded to Robert Baillie,

If Presbyterianism Government had been established amongst us, should we not then have received all these Heretics, and erroneous persons, into our

⁶⁷ Cotton, *Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 13, 20–26, 31–32, 120–121, 241; see also Cotton, *Doctrine of the Church*.

⁶⁸ Cotton, "The Fift Viall," *Powring*, 8.

⁶⁹ Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, 84.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 103–104.

Church? Yes surely, for no member of the Commonwealth is excluded: well, therein our Congregational discipline brings forth no worse fruit, than their Presbyterianism.⁷¹

III. Cartwrightian Congregationalism

Cotton's scheme for the fifth vial did not elevate New England to the prominence enjoyed by England. However, the colonial churches were told that their part was still of the utmost importance. Cotton proclaimed to New Englanders, "Now is the time that God goes about to pour the vials of his wrath upon the Throne of the Beast, to dry up the Episcopacy."⁷² Moreover, he warned them that the Church was not to be deceived by Scottish Presbyterianism. Only the "true Church of God," which was "congregational only" and consisting of true believers in the purest churches would bind Satan and cast apocalyptic judgment.⁷³ Upon the prelacy's removal, only the "government of a Church of a particular visible Congregation . . . that form of Church estate, which Christ . . . instituted in his Word" would bring about the completion of the fifth vial.⁷⁴ The Antichrist would be defeated by the "Forces of Independents" and the saints would reign during the millennium through this government of Christ in the Church.⁷⁵ As Congregationalism was the only true form of church polity, all others inevitably shared attributes with antichristian

⁷¹ Ibid., 91–92.

⁷² Cotton, "The Third Sermon upon the Sixth Vial," *Powring*, 15.

⁷³ Ibid., "The Seventh Vial," 16; see also Cotton, *Churches Resurrection*, 10, 23. Cotton defined the Church as a "mystical body . . . whereof Christ is the Head" that consisted of "Saints . . . called out of the world . . . an united together into one Congregation . . . by a holy Covenant;" Cotton, *Doctrine of the Church*, sig. A2. See also John Cotton, *The True Constitution of a Particular Visible Church* (London, 1642), sig. A2; *Church Government and Church-Covenant Discussed*, 8–9.

⁷⁴ Cotton, "The Fift Viall," *Powring*, 8; see also 12.

ecclesiastical administrations.⁷⁶ Progress of eschatological reform depended on England's adoption of New England's way for Cotton.⁷⁷

Apart from any frustration Cotton may have had with England, he was filled with confidence that reformation was imminent, and this meant further progress for Congregationalism. He expected that further reports from England would be "ill news" of the Antichrist's "shamefulness discovered."⁷⁸ Cotton's reading of scriptural prophecies assured him that the efforts of the godly were certain to prosper and God's people could expect unprecedented days of glory "which other Nations have not attained to this day."⁷⁹ God's people were not to fear "Papal thunderbolts, when the Lord hath you under his hand."⁸⁰

Moreover, Cotton offered New England more to hope for than the basic assurance of reformation. The eschatological stage had been set in which the congregational polity of New England's churches would be vindicated as true Biblical and apostolic as they continued to powerfully contribute to apocalyptic reform through the nurturing of godliness among the saints. Cotton informed the

⁷⁵ Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, 103; Cotton, *Churches Resurrection*, 11, 18.

⁷⁶ Cotton, *Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 96.

⁷⁷ Susan Hardman Moore argued that by the mid-1640s Cotton recognized that a simple transporting of the New England polity to England would not work and a "different approach" was needed. See Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims*, 142, 268n118; see also Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 71-73. However, Cotton's hope to "congregationalize" his native country with the colonists' way of doing church was expressed in the later part of the 1630s into the early 1640s. There would have been greater optimism prior to 1644. Further, Cotton's comments in the mid-1644 do not completely eliminate the conviction that Cotton had that ultimately Congregationalism was the key to England's reformation.

⁷⁸ Cotton, "The Third Sermon upon the Sixth Vial," *Powring*, 15.

⁷⁹ Cotton, *Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 261.

colonists that the “blessing of God” would be “reached by us.”⁸¹ New Englanders identified themselves with the apocalyptic remnant of Israel that God had driven into the wilderness of America to establish a true church modelled after the primitive apocalyptic church, after which they would be called to redeem England.⁸² Again, Cotton looked to Sardis as his eschatological model, but this time to justify Congregationalism’s insistence on identifying true believers. God’s judgment on the Antichrist would only be achieved when the power of the keys of the Kingdom were firmly set in the hands of the elect.⁸³

But what could New Englanders do from their remote country that could be of any effect in the English Church so many miles away? Many who asked this question did not appear to receive any acceptable answers. The New England divines directed the colonists’ eyes towards England, instructing them not to forget the brethren they had left behind. For Cotton and his colleagues, it was extremely important to emphasize this point, as the colonists had been repeatedly charged with deserting the godly cause in England. William Hooke’s exhortation that New Englanders “fasten our eyes upon the calamities of our brethren in old England” was not only a call for New England to embrace England’s plight as its own but also reassure the English that the colonists had neither separated from nor forsaken their

⁸⁰ Cotton, “The Fourth Vial,” *Powring*, 20–21.

⁸¹ Cotton, *Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 261.

⁸² Francis J. Bremer, *Congregational Communion: Clerical Friendship in the Anglo-American Puritan Community, 1610-1692* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1994), 122.

⁸³ Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, 40–41.

native country.⁸⁴ The vast distance certainly dismayed some, who felt a sense of helplessness in their ability to assist their brethren across the Atlantic Ocean, a sentiment apparently shared in England.

While many of the English urged the New Englanders to return home and join the righteous cause,⁸⁵ Cotton adamantly rejected any suggestion that a return to England was the only legitimate form of active participation. If Cotton in any way believed that the more faithful response was to return, he most certainly would have set sail on the first embarking ship. In fact, Cotton was presented with what he likely viewed as a providential opportunity to return to England when he, along with Thomas Hooker and John Davenport, received an invitation to attend the Westminster Assembly. Returning to England in such a manner would have found Cotton at the heart of important ecclesiastical debates.⁸⁶ Again, for reasons unknown, Cotton declined the invitation, as did Hooker and Davenport. Perhaps New England's newly affirmed apocalyptic identity convinced Cotton that it was better to remain than to depart.

⁸⁴ Hooke's sermon was preached on 23 July 1640 and subsequently printed as William Hooke, *New Englands Tears for Old Englands Fears* (London, 1641), 9. See also *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Hooke, William."

⁸⁵ The news from Scotland from 1638 evoked mixed reactions from the colonists. Initially, many were optimistic. However, by 1640 this optimism had faded. Those who felt the need to return to England were those who particularly clung to hope; see Cressy, *Coming Over*, 199, 238–245; see also Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims*, 68. The most troubling aspect of this trend of people returning was less the number and more the quality of persons who set sail for England. Between 1641 and 1642, 14 out of the 114 university-trained men had embarked across the Atlantic; see William L. Sasche, "The Migration of New Englanders to England, 1640–1660," *American Historical Review* 53, no. 2 (January 1948), 260. See also Harry S. Stout, "The Morphology of Remigration of New England University Men and Their Return to England, 1640–1660," *Journal of American Studies* 10 (1976), 151–172.

⁸⁶ Members of Parliament to John Cotton, Thomas Hooker, and John Davenport, Summer 1642, in Cotton, *Correspondence*, 362–365.

Any uncertainty that his continued residence in New England could be helpful to English reformation would certainly have driven Cotton to leave the colonies. Cotton chose to heed the advice he had given to John Winthrop in 1630: “Forget not the womb that bare you, and the breast that gave you suck.”⁸⁷ In the 1640s, Cotton reminded the colonists, “Many of you were conceived even in Christ’s Chambers, or Congregations” in England.⁸⁸ Cotton’s belief that God had not forsaken the land where so many true believers had been born was confirmed by the promising news he received from England. But Cotton also reminded his fellow colonists that New England was a provision of God’s providence. The Lord had opened a “door of encouragements and opportunities” in America where there were “no winter-storms in the State, the liberty of Ordinances.”⁸⁹ Cotton anticipated that New England’s contribution would erupt into an “earthquake” that would cause even Rome to fall.⁹⁰ To those not convinced and resolved to return to England, Cotton urged, “Who have found Christ in this country, to hold fast Christ, and to carry him along with you into the Churches of your mother England.”⁹¹ God’s plan to defeat the Antichrist was not contained within geographical bounds. Cotton urged the colonists to share in his assurance that they could be just as effective in New England as in Westminster.

Cotton believed that prayer was the most powerful contribution of those in New England to the godly cause abroad. Cotton acknowledged that while the

⁸⁷ Cotton, *Gods Promise to His Plantations*, 18.

⁸⁸ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 67.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁹⁰ Cotton, “The Seventh Vial,” *Powring*, 16.

⁹¹ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 67.

colonists were incapable of giving any “word of advice,” they could lift “supplications to heaven” and “entreat the God of wisdom, and the Prince of Peace.”⁹² The colonists were not to think that they were mere spectators of apocalyptic drama, nor were they to underestimate the power of prayer, as prayer was in no way a lesser form of contribution. Indeed, intercession through prayer was an effective means through which God could destroy the Antichrist. Therefore, Cotton urged, “Let us therefore pray both night and day, in season, and out of season for our brethren in our native country, for whom God hath wrought all these great things, and for whom greater things yet remain to be done, for whom our work is to wrestle with God, that they may not perish for lack of knowledge.”⁹³

Prayer was a way in which New Englanders’ could testify to the “Government of Christ” and “bear witness against” all antichristian forms of church government.⁹⁴ A part of their witness was to beseech the Lord to enlighten England to recognize the “whole fabric, root and branch, of the man of sin . . . the number as well as the name . . . of the beast.” Again, this was imperative for Cotton because it appeared that Parliament was considering the adoption of Scottish Presbyterianism and the “combination of the two great Nations.”⁹⁵ The purity of the Church was at stake. Cotton assured the colonists that just as he was certain that God would accomplish all that was foretold in Scripture, so would the Lord mercifully answer New England’s prayers and prevent England from failing to distinguish between true and false church government. He therefore implored, “But pray we, that they may

⁹² Cotton, *Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 262.

⁹³ Cotton, “The Fift Viall,” *Powring*, 16.

⁹⁴ Cotton, *Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 241.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 262.

see . . . the true form of a Church of the new Testament. And also that Christ may be better known in . . . the . . . government in his Church, that they may see who are Papists, and who are the Saints of God, and who are counterfeit, that they discern between clean and unclean.”⁹⁶

Cotton recognized that his own apocalyptic witness of Christ’s true government entailed his own call as a preacher and teacher of God’s word. From the mid-1630s to the early 1640s, Cotton debated church polity with Scottish Presbyterians as well as English non-conformists. Tom Webster and Ann Hughes have demonstrated that there were intense discussions concentrated on the issue of church government even prior to 1641.⁹⁷ Cotton recognized that these deliberations were neither mere academic exercises nor simply discussions on ecclesiology but rather debates on the underlying and grander scheme of prophetic history. In his exchanges with Baillie and his colleagues, Cotton was certainly driven by the very principle he argued in *Canticles*: eschatology was the foundation of ecclesiology. For Cotton, discussions regarding *jure divino* ecclesiology were inherently about end times. Thomas Goodwin, who also understood the differences between Presbyterians and English Independents in eschatological terms, contended, along with Philip Nye, that Independency was the earthly manifestation of Christ’s temporal kingdom, as well as that the Genevan model, as interpreted and practiced in Scotland, was the

⁹⁶ Cotton, “The Seventh Vial,” *Powring*, 16.

⁹⁷ Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 286–288, 300; Hughes, *Gangraena*, 35. Rosemary Diane Bradley argued that between 1640 and 1643 the differences between Presbyterianism and Independency were “embryonic.” See Rosemary Diane Bradley, ““Jacob and Esau Struggling in the Wombe”: A Study of Presbyterian and Independent Religious Conflicts, 1640-1648” (PhD diss., University of Kent, 1975), 3.

agent through which the Antichrist would extend a suffocating grip through his authority over Christ's Church.⁹⁸

Advocates of Scottish Presbyterianism echoed this apocalyptic tone in their campaign against Episcopacy and for the Presbyterianization of England. The Covenanters recognized the eschatological implications of their opposition to Charles and prelacy, interpreting their successes as providential affirmations of Presbyterianism.⁹⁹ As expected, Rutherford believed that covenanted Scotland, not England, would lead God's people against the Antichrist.¹⁰⁰ The Covenanters' victories against Charles and advances in ecclesiastical reform greatly benefited the godly in England who long sought reform since the Elizabethan religious settlement. However, the Kirk was certainly not willing to passively allow England to adopt a form of church government other than Scotland's own.¹⁰¹ Rutherford was certain that victory over Antichrist would only be achieved through the complete embrace and implementation of Presbyterianism.¹⁰² Scotland's resistance was motivated by the preservation as well as the advancement of their Presbyterian way. As long as

⁹⁸ Rembert Byrd Carter, "The Presbyterian-Independent Controversy with Special Reference to Dr. Thomas Goodwin and the Years 1640–1660" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1961), 121, 125–8; Geoffrey Fillingham Nuttall, *Visible Saints: The Congregational Way, 1640–1660* (1957; repr., Weston Rhyn: Quinta Press, 2001), 148. *Canticles* (1642) demonstrated Cotton's recognition of the correlation between eschatology and ecclesiology. It is possible that Cotton's understanding developed with the aid of Thomas Goodwin, who preached on this theme in his sermons on Revelation during the 1630s. For a discussion on Goodwin's ecclesiology see Thomas Michael Lawrence, "Transmission and Transformation: Thomas Goodwin and the Puritan Project, 1600–1704" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2002).

⁹⁹ Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 101–126; S. A. Burrell, "The Apocalyptic Vision of the Early Covenanters," *The Scottish Historical Review* 63, no. 135 (1964): 5, 10, 16, 19, 21.

¹⁰⁰ Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions*, 255.

¹⁰¹ Sharpe, *Personal Rule*, 819–821; MacDonald, *Jacobean Kirk*, 12–13, 173.

England was not Presbyterian, the Kirk perceived their neighbours to the south a threat; thus, the Scots believed that the Presbyterianization of England would ensure the Kirk's survival and preservation.

J. L. Kim argued that Scotland's pursuit of uniformity had been a conscious agenda since the days of the Scottish reformation.¹⁰³ The Kirk shared the king's desire for religious uniformity, but built upon a Presbyterian platform rather than Episcopacy. Presbyterian uniformity was understood apocalyptically in the sense that the existence of non-Presbyterian churches demonstrated the vitality of the Antichrist, and Biblical prophecies foretold the utter demise of Satan's hold and presence in the world. Scottish Presbyterians were certainly aware that it would have been eschatologically irresponsible and unfaithful to the cause of Christ if England was left under the yoke of prelacy or handed over to schismatics, separatists, and Independents.

At the Westminster Assembly, Baillie expressed deep concern over the Scots' ability to convince the Independents of instituting Presbyterianism, believing that their failure to sway the Independents would cause a "very troublesome schism."¹⁰⁴ However, at the same time Baillie confidently anticipated that England would ultimately adopt Presbyterianism and that New England Congregationalists would

¹⁰² Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 103.

¹⁰³ Joong-Lak Kim, "The Debate on the Relations between the Churches of Scotland and England during the British Revolution (1633–1647)" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1997).

¹⁰⁴ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, 122. The Scottish delegates to the Westminster Assembly did not have voting privileges. See also Campbell, "Samuel Rutherford, Propagandist and Exponent of Scottish Presbyterianism," 105; Wayne Renwick Spears, "Covenanted Uniformity of Religion: The Influence of the Scottish Commissioners upon the Ecclesiology of the Westminster Assembly," (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1976), 50–51.

acquiesce to the “national assembly” and “government of all the rest of the Reformed Churches.”¹⁰⁵ In his correspondence Baillie wrote, “If God bless, the Independents will either come to us, or have very few to follow them.”¹⁰⁶ Baillie’s preface to his polemical work against Independency and schismatic ideologies included a detailed criticism of Cotton in an eschatological context. Baillie wrote that the “Prince of Darkness” had bewitched “many learned Divines . . . in maintaining by Word and Writings the grossest abominations of that Romish Idol.”¹⁰⁷

Cotton had the difficult task of convincing English non-conformists, who had come to believe that New England espoused a separatist ideology, that England’s adoption of Congregationalism would consummate the fifth vial. A polity associated with schism held no hope for consideration in England. English critics of New England were men who once stood in solidarity with New England ministers prior to the latter’s departure to the New World. During the 1630s, a rift had developed between New England divines and English non-conformists. This rift grew by the circulation of reports and rumours throughout England that the colonies were exercising radical practices in their churches, which greatly disturbed English non-conformists.

Cotton’s deviation would have been especially disturbing, considering he was once very outspoken against New England’s controversial behaviour. As previously discussed, Cotton had recanted his original views in a sermon before the Salem

¹⁰⁵ Robert Baillie, *The Unlawfulness and Danger of Limited Episcopacy* (London, 1641), 23.

¹⁰⁶ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, 118.

¹⁰⁷ Baillie, *Dissuasive*, 9.

congregation.¹⁰⁸ Sometime in 1637, John Dod and John Ball, along with eleven other English ministers, wrote to their New England “Brethren,” insisting on justification for supposed sectarian practices that, if truly practiced, were “groundless and unwarrantable.”¹⁰⁹ These English ministers wrote that New England had only recently “embraced certain new opinions, such as you dislike formerly,” and pleaded with them to reconsider their practices.¹¹⁰

In order to allay the fears of the English critics of New England, Cotton demonstrated that Congregationalism was the fulfilment of the ecclesiastical vision of Cartwright, Baynes, and Parker within an apocalyptic context.¹¹¹ Surprisingly,

¹⁰⁸ See Chapter Two; Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, 18. Robert Baillie believed Cotton had been converted the separatist opinion by John Robinson; see Baillie, *Dissuasive*, 55.

¹⁰⁹ The English ministers contested the New England’s requirement of membership into a local church in order to be permitted to the Lord’s Table and membership of parents into a local church as a prerequisite in order for a child to receive baptism.. For the actual letter sent to Cotton and other New England ministers, see Cotton, *Correspondence*, 263–266. For a good discussion about letter and the debated New England practices see Carol G. Schneider, “Roots and Branches: From Principled Nonconformity to the Emergence of Religious Parties,” in *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith*, ed. Francis J. Bremer (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1993), 179–181; Webster, *Godly Clergy*, 303.

¹¹⁰ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 264–266. For a discussion on Cotton and the Salem Church see Hall, “John Cotton’s Letter to Samuel Skelton,” 478–480; for Cotton’s apology to Salem see Larzer Ziff, ed., *John Cotton on the Churches of New England Edited by Larzer Ziff* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 41–42. It is possible that the English non-conformists may have also intended to distance themselves from New England’s schismatic tendencies; see Carol G. Schneider, “Godly Order in a Church Half-Reformed: The Disciplinary Legacy, 1570–1641” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1986), 65–69. 1 Corinthians 5 speaks of church discipline and its application to immoral persons in the church. 1 Corinthians 5:12 reads (King James Version), “For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within?” See also Cotton, *Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven*, 44.

¹¹¹ Cotton’s deliberate correlation between Congregationalism and Cartwright and his coreligionists may also have been motivated by Cotton’s opposition to Scottish Presbyterians. Robert Baillie saw Cartwright as an English orthodox authority and

approximately two years passed from the time New England ministers received the charges against them from England to the time they composed and sent a response. Perhaps their defence was finally spurred by the eschatological context that had emerged. The response, composed by Richard Mather, was written around the time Cotton was preaching from Revelation.¹¹² Whether or not there was a connection between Cotton's Revelation sermons and Mather's response, both intended to demonstrate the consistency of New England's views and practices within English orthodoxy. Mather wrote that New England ecclesiology was not "disallowed by Orthodox Writers of the Reformed Churches" and that the "same is taught by others also."¹¹³ The divines to whom both Cotton and Mather referred were the same honoured sources cited by all English non-conformists. Cotton believed that the consistency between Cartwright's views, particularly those extracted from 1 Corinthians 5, and the writings of Baynes and William Ames presented clearly evidenced this consistency.¹¹⁴ Cartwright's call for the English Church to return to an apostolic form was grounded in two considerations: the congregation held the right

believed that Cotton "went beyond Cartwright, and the Presbyterians." See Baillie, *Dissuasive*, 12, 55.

¹¹² The response published in *Church Government and Church-Covenant Discussed* (London, 1643) was reprinted in 1644. See also Cotton, *Correspondence*, 270–271.

¹¹³ *Church Government and Church-Covenant Discussed*, 57. Interestingly, New England divines not only rooted their justification of baptism in Cartwright's teaching but also in John Ball's; see *Church Government and Church-Covenant Discussed*, 12–13. Schneider noted that Ball in fact shared many common ideals of church polity with New England ministers. In many ways, Ball was a staunch supporter of congregationalism, himself being heavily influenced by Ames; see Schneider, "Godly Order," 178.

¹¹⁴ See Cotton's preface to John Norton, *The Answer: To The Whole Set of Questions of the Celebrated Mr. William Apollonius, Pastor of the Church of Middelburg Looking toward the Resolution of Certain Controversies Concerning Church Government Now Being Agitated in England*, trans. Douglas Horton (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 17.

to elect its own ministers and the structure of the apostolic church was not that of Episcopacy. Prelacy, according to Cartwright and his coreligionists, violated the Scriptural principles of parity and authority. Prelacy unbiblically stripped authority away from ministers and lay members of a particular congregation and transferred it into the hands of select bishops. Moreover, Cartwright believed that the word of God mandated Presbyterianism only on the local level.¹¹⁵

Cotton related Cartwright's justification of a congregation's right to elect its own minister in his very first homily in New England, praising the colonial churches as queens for this very reason.¹¹⁶ New England churches justified their practice of stringent and exclusive membership standards on tenets expounded by Parker, Baynes, and Ames,¹¹⁷ who had instructed Cotton on the concept of a "particular visible Church of a Congregation . . . by the light of the Word" that essentially was rooted in the concept that the "visible Church" was to be composed of "visible Saints."¹¹⁸ From Baynes, Cotton had learned that individual congregations were to be

¹¹⁵ Cartwright first presented his revolutionary ideals on ecclesiastical reform in his inaugural address upon his appointment as the Lady Margaret Divinity Professor at Cambridge in 1569. See A. F. Scott Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism, 1536–1603* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), 25–27; see also Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 106.

¹¹⁶ Cotton's first sermon delivered on New England soil likely entailed a praise of the colonies' exercise of the queenly prerogative of selecting its own ministers. See Chapter Two; also see Winthrop, *Journal of John Winthrop*, 95–96.

¹¹⁷ Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, 136, 344–348; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Parker, Robert"; Robert Parker, *An Exposition of the Pwring out of the Fourth Vial* (London, 1650), 8; Sprunger, *William Ames*, 201.

¹¹⁸ Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, 13. Richard Mather also acknowledged the contributions of Ames and Parker; see Richard Mather, *An Apologie of the Churches* (1643), 41. In addition to detailing the relationship Ames shared with New Englanders, his fondness and affinity with certain persons, and their pursuit of ecclesiastical fidelity to Scripture, two interesting points also are worth noting. First, Ames intended to relocate from the Netherlands to Massachusetts, though he never actually made the journey. Second, upon his death his wife and three

autonomously governed while reserving the freedom to enter into fraternal consociations with other churches. Baynes believed that this was an accurate summation of Genevan ecclesiology for the sake of peace and order and not a canonical mandate. Baynes also agreed with Cartwright that Scripture only insisted on hierarchy at the local level.¹¹⁹

Cartwright's ideals were articulated vaguely enough for Cotton to incorporate those principles into Congregationalism's strict and exclusive practices.¹²⁰ Cotton did not adopt all of Cartwright's reforms and convictions in an unmodified form but rather refined Cartwright's vision. Ultimately, Cotton was convinced that in every sense, Congregationalism was Cartwrightian:

The form of Church-government wherein we talk doth not differ in substance from that which Mr. Cartwright pleaded for. For two things chiefly there be wherein such as are for a Congregational way, do seem to differ from Presbyterians: 1. In matter of their Churches; they would have none allowed but visible Saints. 2. In the exercise of Church-censure, they

children made their way to New England; see Sprunger, *William Ames*, 200–2, 254–8.

¹¹⁹ Paul Baynes, *The Diocesan Tryall* (1621), 13, 15, 21, 83–84. Baynes wrote that local congregations are “independent each of other.” For more on Robert Parker see F. B. Carr, “The Thought of Robert Parker (1564?–1614) and His Influence on Puritanism before 1650” (PhD diss., University of London, 1965); Alice Clare Carter, *The English Reformed Church in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century* (Amsterdam: Scheltema and Holkema, 1964); Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, “Parker, Robert.” For a biography of Paul Baynes, see Samuel Clarke, *The Lives of Thirty-Two English Divines* (London, 1677), 22–24; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Baynes, Paul.” Another example of the similarity in ecclesiastical policies between Scotland and New England was the application of elders in the local congregation; see William M. Abbott, “Ruling Eldership in Civil War England, the Scottish Kirk, and Early New England: A Comparative Study in Secular and Spiritual Aspects,” *Church History* 75, no. 1 (March 2006), 38–68.

¹²⁰ Stephen Brachlow argued that Cotton is correctly understood in the tradition of Cartwright and not John Robinson; see Stephen Brachlow, “The Elizabethan Roots of Henry Jacob's Churchmanship: Refocusing the Historiographical Lens,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36, no. 2 (April 1985), 228–254; see also Bradley, ““Jacob and Esau Struggling in the Wombe”,” 11–13.

leave that power to the Elders and Brethren of the same Church whereof the delinquent is a member. And in both these we find Mr. Cartwright's footsteps going plainly before us.¹²¹

IV. Conclusion

Cotton was not completely successful in his attempts to convince English ministers that Congregationalism was the fulfilment of the Cartwrightian and Elizabethan vision of ecclesiastical reform. On one front, the fulfilment of the fifth vial ushered in the demise of Episcopacy. On another front, a polemical battle was being waged in England between Scottish Presbyterians and New England Congregationalists. Cotton understood that both struggles equally held apocalyptic stakes. Further, both were being fought in his native country.

Cotton and his fellow New England divines defended their ideals and practices through their numerous polemical writings. Although the colonies could not boast the history that Presbyterianism had enjoyed in Scotland, the New Englanders were confident that they had demonstrated Congregationalism's ability to guard the Church's purity and endure potentially destructive controversies.¹²² Moreover, the New Englanders had shown their English counterparts the validity of consociation when they cooperated to articulate their defence against the charge of separatism to the mutual benefit of all individual churches throughout the colonies. However, the most convincing polemic was yet to come. The following chapter argues that the understanding of providence, above all else, would discredit Presbyterianism and prove Congregationalism to be the one true Biblical polity.

¹²¹ Cotton, *Way of Congregational Churches Cleared*, 27.

¹²² See Michael Winship, "'The Most Glorious Church in the World': The Unity of the Godly in Boston, Massachusetts, in the 1630s," *Journal of British Studies* 39, no. 1 (January 2000), 71–98.

Chapter Four: Singing the Eschatological Song of Moses & the Lamb

I. *Confounded Cotton: Charles I, Godless Tyrant or Godly Martyr?*

On 30 January 1649 Charles I was executed for “High Treason and other high Crimes”.¹ A sombre cloud loomed over that winter’s day. Even for those who claimed any sense of victory there must have been an accompanying element of sobriety. Charles was no ordinary street criminal or commoner that stood guilty and condemned but the King of England, Scotland, Ireland and New England. Perhaps few, if any, that day were absent of the uneasiness of sending the monarch to the scaffold in what Wilbur Abbott labelled “judicial murder”.² In 1650, Cotton pronounced his approval of the King’s execution before his fellow New Englanders

¹ See S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War: Volume 4, 1647-49* (repr., New York: AMS Press Inc., 1965), 309. For an account of the trial and execution see C.V. Wedgwood, *The Trial of Charles I* (London: Collins, 1964), chap. 6 and 7.

² Oliver Cromwell, *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell: Volume 1, 1599-1649*, eds. Wilbur Cortez Abbott and Catherine D. Crane (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 752. Abbott and Crane argued that any impartial person observing that day could only come to the realization that what they witnessed was “judicial murder”. This is not to suggest that advocates of regicide were regretful of their decisions. They most certainly experienced joy in the sense that it was necessary for political, religious reasons or both. But it is simply to suggest that death is an extremely somber experience especially when it is the monarch of your nation. It was not until very late did Cromwell understand the means to the inevitable end of removing the king. There had been the suggestion of replacing him with one of his sons. Cromwell demonstrated much reticence in the two years prior to the execution, see John Morrill, “Conclusion: King-Killing in Perspective,” in *Murder and Monarchy: Regicide in European History, 1300-1800*, ed. Robert von Friedeburg (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 297-298; John Morrill and Philip Baker, “Oliver Cromwell, the Regicide and the Sons of Zeruah,” in *The Regicides and the Execution of Charles I*, ed. James Peacey (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 14-35.

in the Thanksgiving sermon.³ Cotton was not alone and accompanied by John Winthrop Jr., Roger Williams, Henry Dunster and John Hull each with their own respective endorsements. The Congregational brethren stood in solidarity over this controversial issue at a time when English Presbyterians sought to publicly exonerate themselves from the guilt of regicide.⁴

News of the execution could have reached New England's shores in as early as two months. New Englanders would have been bombarded with an exposure to a plethora of opinions condemning or condoning the each and every event. Indications are that the earliest reports were received in May or June of 1649.⁵ Reports of the King's execution were most certainly accompanied and followed by a flood of printed opinions of contrasting positions. As a result of the freedom of censorship from 1640-41 polemical pamphlets were being printed in tremendous quantities. Moreover, by the end of the 1640s printers had published tens of thousands of titles representing all factions of the ideological spectrum. During Charles' trial, the High Court of Justice's proceedings were printed in an effort to inform the public of the reasons why the King was being tried. Each and every step of both the trial and

³ Bremer, "In Defense of Regicide," 117-124. The actual date of Cotton's delivery of this sermon is unknown. The earliest possible date would have been November 1650 based on the date of the execution and the approximate two month period it would have taken for the news to reach the colonies. Cotton's letter to Cromwell demonstrates the intention to speak against opposing opinions. If Cotton were this knowledgeable of events and opinion in England it is only safe to assume that the other colonists were told the same information.

⁴ Bremer, *Congregational Communion*, 176. Thomas Hooker, prior to his departure from England, pronounced in a sermon that earthly kings were also accountable to God and that ultimately any, including a monarch, who "rejected God, so God will reject him." See Hooker, *Danger of Desertion*, 13. Hooker most definitely had Charles I in mind.

⁵ Bremer, "In Defense of Regicide," 103; Cressy, *Coming Over*, 213-215.

execution were documented and printed. The people were constantly kept abreast as to what occurred.⁶ Each new day promised fresh news and information and there was no shortage of interested persons with anxious minds ready to digest the most recent developments.⁷ New Englanders rivalled the anticipation and hunger for the most recent updates. In fact considering the delay they may have actually been more eager than their English counterparts. All the while, people from both sides most certainly would have been questioning whether or not the king would actually be judged guilty of the accused crimes and if so would his accusers dare to inflict punishment, let alone behead him. The shock that New Englanders resonated after those across the Atlantic was that the unthinkable had happened. Their king was dead.⁸ Shock brought with it confusion that was brewing for some time. Thomas Hutchinson recorded,

⁶ An effort was made to make the trial public to accommodate for the people. Obviously not everyone could be permitted to attend. The south end of Westminster Hall was selected. One particular advantage was that this site was that it allowed a large number to observe but did not enable them to hear much of what was actually being said. In fact, though it was impossible for anyone to reach Charles, anyone participating in the trial, even Cromwell, could easily have been a target of anyone who wished to take aim from the galleries. Identification of the spectators was never checked. See Wedgwood, *Trial of Charles I*, 109-110.

⁷ Those in England were subjected to a steady flurry of reports. But the colonists were left to await the next shipment. The autumn and winter of 1648 were particularly slow times for incoming reports from England. And the news of Charles' death reached Massachusetts by the spring of 1649; see Cressy, *Coming Over*, 252-253.

⁸ New Englanders most certainly were not provided all the printed materials that those in England had access to. However it is simply suggested that the wide spectrum of opinions would have been conveyed. Amos Tubb, "Printing the Regicide of Charles I," *History* 89, no. 296 (Oct., 2004), 500-24. See also Jason Peacey, "Reporting Revolution: A Failed Propaganda Campaign," in *The Regicides and the Execution of Charles I*, ed. Jason Peacey (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 161-180.

The confusions at this time in England were matter of concern and grief to many people in the colonies. There is no doubt that they concurred in sentiment in point of religion with the prevailing party in England, but I find scarce any remarks of approbation of the tragical scene of which this year they receive intelligence...that by their later letters they conceive the whole heavens are overshadowed, the Scots hang like a black cloud (45000 in number) upon the borders, the King fled from the army to the Isle of Wight, the agitators turned levellers, intending to bring in a kind of parity among all conditions, none to have above 300, none under 10 l. per annum⁹

Providence served as cipher to unravel this tangled scene of opinions. This doctrine was commonly employed by all persons throughout the seventeenth century, in various ways and degrees, to interpret news of the world around them and the events in their private lives. Regarding the death of their monarchy, what was to be understood of God's will? On the one hand it could have been construed positively as an act of God's favour. The Lord removed Britain's greatest impediment to reformation. On the other hand it was equally legitimate to interpret this as a sign of impending divine judgment. Few sins could rival the murder of the Lord's earthly vicegerent which could quickly incur divine wrath.¹⁰

Charles' death certainly did nothing to subdue the flow of propaganda. Parliament in particular launched an aggressive polemical campaign to justify why the king had been tried and executed, one that reaped a good amount of success.¹¹ The wave of news upon New England's shores brought with it the voices of propaganda from all directions. Cotton was well aware of the varying opinions of

⁹ Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay*, vol. 1 (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 156-157.

¹⁰ For discussions on the doctrine and uses of providence see David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York: Knopf, 1989); Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹¹ Tubb, "Printing the Regicide," 500-524.

Oliver Cromwell. Upon hearing of King's execution, Cotton penned a letter to Cromwell. Cotton consoled Cromwell,

I am not ignorant that you suffer no small dishonour in the tongues of many, not only as a sectary, but as out of your calling, being sat on work (as is pretended) by an usurped power, and yourself (with the army) exercising a power destructive in some cases to the privileges of parliament, and the liberty and safety of the kingdom.¹²

Cotton's knowledge of the events and the debates surrounding the King's execution indicate that he had become well versed in the pertinent discussions. Moreover, it is likely that Cotton's fellow colonists were aware of the relevant issues as well.

Cotton's approval and interpretation that Charles' execution was the providential hand of God against ungodliness was a bold commitment in the midst of great controversy. Many portrayed the King's execution as the honourable death of a martyr. Polemics that condemned regicide were rooted in Charles' own memoirs, *Eikon Basilike*, printed posthumously only a week after the execution. *Eikon's* importance and impact cannot be overstated. It was reprinted thirty eight times in 1649 alone. Andrew Lacey believed there was ample support to the theory that Charles actually read John Foxe's Book of Martyrs while in captivity. Charles then mediated the spirit of persecution that pervades Foxe's work in his memoirs and consciously modelled himself after the Elizabethan's martyrs. Charles' self projection climaxed in his personal identification with the greatest martyr in Scripture, Christ.¹³ Kevin Sharpe argues that *Eikon* was so successful in establishing

¹² Cotton to Oliver Cromwell, 28 July 1651, Cotton, *Correspondence*, 459. The effects were such that they even lingered throughout the Interregnum, see Cressy, *Coming Over*, 254.

¹³ Andrew Lacey, *The Cult of King Charles the Martyr* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 9-10, 12-13, 52, 85, 110-111. In the Christ-like reference he referred

the late king as a martyr that even John Milton's response against it failed to combat this image. As a result a compelling sense of fear and national sin had been cast upon the people.¹⁴

The legend of Charles' the martyr could not be contained within England's shores. It preyed on anyone and everyone, whether in the British Isles or in New England, who possessed even a meagre concept of divine appointment in the monarchy. One could not resist the temptation to minimally entertain the notion that it was a deliberate and wrongful death. The bare guilt rested on the belief that it was not the people's right to cast judgment on the king. This was God's alone. Many of the colonists were brought up under James who, more than his predecessors,

specifically to the Scots selling him to Parliament at Newport in 1646, see Charles I, *Eikon Basilike: The Pourtraicture of His Sacred Maiestie in His Solitudes and Sufferings* (London: 1648), 179. Charles Carlton agrees that Charles read Foxe's work and that it consciously played into *Eikon*, see Charles Carlton, *Charles I: The Personal Monarch*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1995), 341.

¹⁴ Kevin Sharpe, "'So Hard a Text'? Images of Charles I, 1612-1700," *Historical Journal* 43, no. 2 (Jun., 2000), 392. Sharpe described this "evidence" of fear after 1649 as "legion". John Milton, *Eikonklastes in Answer to a Book Intitl'd Eikon Basilike, the Portraiture of His Sacred Majesty in His Solitudes and Sufferings* (London, 1649). While Sharpe may be regarded as one who tends to sympathize where other scholars may criticize Charles there is still the presence of this type of sentiment affected by Charles and the conception of the king as a martyr. See also *A Miracle of Miracles: Wrought by the Blood of King Charles the First, of Happy Memory* (London, 1649). This contains a story reminiscent of the power contained in Roman Catholic relics. The story is of a girl who was healed by applying a handkerchief to her sores which had been dipped in Charles' blood the day he was beheaded. Other sources are *An Elegy Upon the Most Incomparable K. Charls the I. Persecuted by the Two Implacable Factions Imprisoned by the One and Murthered by the Other* (1648); *The English Episcopacy and Liturgy Asserted by the Great Reformers Abroad, and the Most Glorious Royal Martyr the Late King His Opinion and Suffrage for Them* (London: 1660); *King Charles the First, No Man of Blood but a Martyr for His People* (1649); Thomas Long, *Moses and the Royal Martyr (King Charles the First)* (London: 1684); *The Subjects Sorrow or, Lamentations Upon the Death of Britains Josiah, King Charles, Most Unjustly and Cruelly Put to Death by His Own People, before His Royal Palace White-Hall, Jan. 30. 1648* (London: 1649).

established the pre-eminence of imperial kingship in matters of state and religion upon Biblical precedents.¹⁵ Charles simply learned that which his father had expounded in print for his English subjects to digest and exercised through his rule over them. James, after David of the Old Testament called kings “Gods...because they sit upon God his throne in the earth.”¹⁶ He is a father to all his loyal subjects.¹⁷ The king possessed the right to place any burden or yoke upon his people whether they are “slavish and servile” and “although you shall grudge or murmur: yet it shall not be lawful to you to cast it off”.¹⁸ The fundamental premise was that kings derived their authority and powers from God alone. Hence it was to God alone that they were accountable. J.P. Sommerville described that this was even widely accepted among the early Stuart clergy. This most certainly would have been disseminated from pulpits throughout the country to the common citizen.¹⁹

However, the idea of Charles’ martyrdom was matched with a flurry of pro-regicide pamphlets. Polemics involved in the King’s death were not isolated to the pivotal years of 1648 and 1649. Parliament experienced a long process of desanctifying the king in order to justify its drawn out opposition against the

¹⁵ James Cramsie, “The Philosophy of Imperial Kingship and the Interpretation of James VI and I,” in *James VI and I: Ideas, Authority and Government*, ed. Ralph Houlbrooke (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 58.

¹⁶ King James VI, *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (Edinburgh, 1598), sig. B3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5, sigs. C1-C3. James was clear that rebellion against any tyranny was never warranted or justified for “we never read, that ever the Prophets persuaded the people to rebel against the Prince, how wicked so ever he was.”

¹⁹ See J. P. Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots: Politics and Ideology in England, 1603-1640*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1999), 12; J.P. Sommerville, “Absolutism and Royalism,” in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700*, ed. J.H. Burns and Mark Goldie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 354.

throne.²⁰ Cotton's own high esteem for the monarchy, stemming from his regard for James and even more so for Elizabeth, was perhaps directly swayed by Parliaments efforts. Charles was commonly perceived within a typological Davidic succession by virtue of the association of Solomon with James. Yet by the early 1640s a demonstratively growing impatience with an ungodly prince and suggestions of revolutionary opposition began to surface.²¹ Yet Cotton made clear that the king was shamefully executed a tyrant and did not suffer the noble death of a martyr. Cotton staunchly defended regicide against the contention that it lacked Biblical forensic support.²² He mustered a defence from Scripture that justified lawful opposition against tyrants. An oppressive ruler's actions could be held accountable against the Biblical canon. A martyr was one who stood in fidelity to Biblical laws and was persecuted for this, not for infidelity to God's word. However to Cotton the matter was indisputable. Charles was not faithful in executing his duties that in fact the King oppressed those who obeyed Scripture's mandates. In Cotton's opinion, the King had utterly failed to "lay a firm foundation of a safe peace, either to church or commonwealth."²³ While King James was adamantly opposed to rebellion against

²⁰ Robert Zaller, "Breaking Vessels: The Desacralization of Monarchy in Early Modern England," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 29, no. 3 (Autumn, 1998), 764-6.

²¹ Chapter One discussed how Cotton understood James as a type of Solomon and in this sense he simply completed what his predecessor the David like Elizabeth left unfinished. The Biblical text tells us that though David requested of God to build the Lord's temple, he was told that it would be his son, Solomon and not David (1 Chronicles 28:1-6) Charles also saw himself in this Davidic succession as well. Only he identified himself with faithful kings like David and Josiah, see Lacey, *Cult of King Charles*, 109. Cotton on the other hand correlated him with kings like Amaziah who fell "away from god & to Bring great & public Calamities upon the state they put him to Death", see Bremer, "In Defense of Regicide," 117.

²² Ibid.

²³ Cotton to Oliver Cromwell, 28 July 1651, Cotton, *Correspondence*, 459-60.

tyranny he too defined this oppressive rule in this fashion.²⁴ Cotton's experiences during Charles' rule, which drove him into exile to New England, perhaps eased Cotton into this anti-tyrannical position.

Initially, upon hearing of Charles' execution, Cotton was confounded and perplexed by the event. He most certainly would not have been thrown in utter disarray like the common folk due to his firm conviction of God and the truths disclosed in Scripture, particularly pertaining to prophetic history. However, Cotton was surely not completely unaffected. John Hull noted in his journal that Charles' execution was a strange act. Though Hull could not begin to speculate, he was certain that somehow God would bring about a positive result from this terrible act in a way only He was capable of.²⁵ Like Hull, Cotton may have been certain that the end would bring good results the manner in which it unfolded seemed very peculiar and virtually indiscernible. Cotton's optimistic millenarian outlook guaranteed this much. That regardless of what the immediate future held the ultimate end was bright. The lingering question was whether regicide was a sign of England's regression from or progression towards reformation. Cotton required further providential confirmation.

At least a year and a half separated the King's execution and Cotton's public declaration of approval. The delay was partially due to the very nature of his

²⁴ *King James His Judgement of a King and of a Tyrant* (1642), esp. sig. A1. This work was composed from extractions taken from a speech James had given at Whitehall in 1609. A king becomes a tyrant when he fails to "preserve safe and sound the Laws and Subjects of the Kingdom: but Tyrant overthrows and destroys all Laws of the Kingdom, and all the Rights, liberties, and Privileges of the true natural liege people". Interestingly it was printed in 1642 perhaps as a charge that Charles wasn't even following his father's words.

²⁵ Bremer, "In Defense of Regicide," 103.

historico-prophetic hermeneutic which was based on the interpretation of past historical events in light of recent history. Cotton attempted to assess their Biblical value and properly correlate them with the relevant prophecies as accurately as possible. Cotton argued that even the faithless were able to anticipate the next day's weather simply by the appearance of the evening's sky yet incapable of anticipating the coming of the Lord. Similarly, regardless of the fact that Cotton was trained as a teacher and preacher of God's word, one thing that distinguished saints from hypocrites was the ability to interpret the signs of the times regarding God's visitations.²⁶

During the early 1640s, at the outbreak of the first civil war, Cotton did not hesitate to make public his interpretation of those circumstances. Upon hearing of the war Cotton was clear regarding its significance. The church needed to expel prelaty and the King repent for misleading the church and commonwealth. Exuding confidence Cotton charged New England,

When He gives us an opportunity, then is the time; when the iron is hot, then strike; Entreat God, that when he puts a prize into their hands, that they then may learn to get wisdom, and not in their hearts turn to tolerate arrogant designs, and such as are ugly in the sight of God: When God wounds he head of Enemies, and casts shame upon them, and hath rescued his people from them, if Churches shall again comply with them, then what will the end of that be? It is a fearful thing, such king of Heads go to perdition²⁷

Preaching from Canticles, Cotton made clear that he sided with Parliament, along with the Army, and not the King. Cotton declared that it was Parliament and

²⁶ See John Cotton, *Gods Mercie Mixed with His Justice* (London, 1641), 108-135. It is a collection of sermons preached in the 1620s. Matthew 16:1-3: "And he said unto them, when it is evening, ye say it will be fair weather, for the sky is red." This quotation of the Bible is taken from Cotton's work.

the Army that stood for reformation and not the King. His expositions on Canticles and Revelation demonstrate his uncompromising abhorrence of the monarchy's ecclesiastical polity of choice, episcopacy. What enabled him to assert this with such confidence, even before the conclusion of the battles, was his belief that those battles were prognosticated in the very text of Biblical prophecy. God had already indicated the outcome of the war in his word and the Lord's people would be victorious.

Cotton wrote

Christ will rule in the midst of his enemies ... To behold this fulfilled even in our days also, in the Parliament, in the Army, so long as they attended this work ... They have found heavenly and divine protection and glory ... verified in this country.²⁸

While 1642 carried great optimism the subsequent years did little or nothing to fulfil Biblical promise. Cotton cited Presbyterianism as the cause of this modesty. In the previous chapter it was suggested that in one respect Cotton ultimately considered Presbyterianism no different from Episcopacy. Both were hierarchical governments that stripped the local congregations of their right to exercise divinely appointed authorities. To plot both on an ideological spectrum, with reformed and popish extremes, Cotton certainly would have located episcopacy closer to popery than Presbyterianism. Yet from this point of view Presbyterianism was certainly not as Biblical or reformed as Congregationalism. Presbyterians were impeding reformation's progress. During the first civil war Cotton praised both Parliament and the Army for their cooperative efforts in championing the reform cause against the Antichrist. However by the end of the decade Cotton praised only the Army as

²⁷ Cotton, *Exposition Upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 45.

²⁸ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 155.

having stood undeterred. Parliament had abandoned this agenda. In 1646 upon the conclusion of the first civil war the Presbyterians in Parliament, led by Denzil Holles, moved to disband the Army, eventually characterizing it as an enemy of the state. In turn this produced a highly contentious situation.²⁹ By 1647 the Long Parliament adopted Presbyterianism upon the recommendation of the Westminster Assembly. The optimism offered in the events of the early 1640s was left unfulfilled. However, disappointment was offered another glimmer of hope near the close of the decade. Only this time Cotton sought to be absolutely certain indeed the time had arrived and progress would be uninhibited.

II. Divine Providence and the Battle of Dunbar

Cotton believed he found the confirmation he required to squelch any lingering doubts over Charles' death in divine providence. For Cotton and all other Calvinists, providence was paramount.³⁰ According to Calvin providence was "that by which God idly observes from heaven what takes place on earth, but that by which, as keeper of the keys, he governs all events."³¹ Championed by Calvin, this teaching assured the church that God was both omnipresent and involved in every aspect of life and at all times. Dictated by divine will, all things transpired for a

²⁹ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 460. Cotton's approval of Pride's Purge of Parliament in 1648 suggests that he believed the stunting of reformation was due to the Presbyterians.

³⁰ An early work by Cotton on the subject of providence is Cotton, *Gods Mercie Mixed With His Justice*.

³¹ Blair Worden, "Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England," *Past and Present* 109 (Nov., 1985), 60. Worden saw Puritans as all foundationally employing a basic Calvinist understanding of this doctrine. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* ed. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1 (London: Collins, 1986), 201-2.

purpose. Providence not only permeated all existence but for Cotton and Calvinists alike, every aspect of theology. Even from the days before he resolved to sail off to New England's shores, Cotton believed New England had been founded on providence. He impressed his confidence that God was with John Winthrop and company when they set sail for the New World. Cotton himself was lured to Massachusetts by this very assurance three years later in 1633. Providence secured the New World as a land of refuge from Laudian persecution. From the moment Cotton embarked on the perilous journey across the Atlantic to the wilderness of New England, providence served as the framework and grid through which he understood this next and uncertain stage of life. New Englanders followed suit as they clung to the same teaching which ensured that the American wilderness was a fulfilment of divine providence.³² Further, providence also manifested itself beyond the simple daily mundane occurrences of Cotton's life. Like most others during the seventeenth century, it found special relevance and application on a much grander scale, revolution.³³

Charles' execution created a profound conundrum for Cotton and many others. What was Cotton to think of it? While Biblical teaching could be moulded to

³² David Cressy, "The Vast and Furious Ocean: The Passage to Puritan New England," *New England Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (Dec., 1984), 511, 521. More on Cotton's references to providence see Cotton to a Minister in England, 3 December 1634, Cotton, *Correspondence*, 182-183; Cotton, *Gods Promise to His Plantations*.

³³ In addition to revolution, most people recognized the dictates of divine providence upon personal decisions and political situations, see Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, 9-10; Worden, "Providence and Politics," 55. Providence also determined the resolve for many to return to England from New England. The most concentrated movement occurred at the start of the first civil war, tapering off during its course. It later increased again towards the end of the 1640s. The confidence centered on the figure of Cromwell for many New Englanders, see Sasche, "Migration of New Englanders to England," 251-78.

serve the purposes of advocates and critics of regicide alike, providence alone ultimately possessed the resolution. Providence, Calvinists believed, sometimes demonstrated itself in positive affirmations, in the form of victory, as well as in negative denunciations, in the form of wrath and judgment. The question for Cotton was this: how would God, in providential terms, respond to regicide? Cotton did not expect God to remain silent on this tragic and monumental event. The Lord would answer the many unsettled issues that loomed over England in those days; offering clues regarding the apocalyptic significance of the godly revolution and the immediate and future course of the church.

The intensity of Cotton's search for answers and clarification was such that it caused him to deviate from a strict Calvinist understanding of providence.³⁴ The highly charged eschatological consciousness of the seventeenth century demanded constant interpretation of events to determine the meaning of the times in order to accurately project the church's future. Hence, Charles' death would certainly result in grave consequences whether in the church's favour or not. Again, God would not be silent and His people would unequivocally be certain of whether He approved or not. However, Calvin believed that the knowledge of God invested in general

³⁴ Ronald J. VanderMolen, "Providence as Mystery, Providence as Revelation: Puritan and Anglican Modifications of John Calvin's Doctrine of Providence," *Church History* 47, no. 1 (Mar., 1978), 27-39. Thomas Beard constructed what was to become the most prevalent view employed by Puritans. He provided moral exhortations based on God's providence through as he tracked it through the course of historical chronology. Beard wrote "it is necessary that the justice of our great God, to whom all sovereign rule & authority belongs, and who is the Judge over all the world, should either manifest itself in this world", see Thomas Beard, *The Theatre of Gods Judgments* (London, 1598), sig. B3. Beard begins *Theatre of Gods Judgments* with a treatment of Biblical figures who became objects of divine wrath because of their rebellion against God. But the work moves beyond the historical parameters of Biblical chronology. History, for Beard, became a form of special revelation.

dispensations of providence were “vague and confused” to man primarily due to sinfulness. While God was constantly involved in an individual’s life it was always veiled.³⁵ It was impossible to interpret the Lord’s will accurately. For Calvin this was not to be taken lightly. The consequence, Calvin believed, was grave - the misconception of the very being of God.³⁶

However, Cotton believed that providence was evident and interpretable in history. For Calvin, the Biblical text was a form of providence and in distinction from all other manifestations it alone was interpretable. Only that which the inspired authors of Scripture detailed could be verified and understood. Cotton went further and endeavoured to determine whether or not Charles’ death fitted this criterion. He agreed with Calvin that all events were not special revelation. But like Thomas Beard, Cotton did track secular history through Biblical chronology. The task was to identify those events in secular history that corresponded with actual prophecies

³⁵ Jean Calvin, *Calvin’s Calvinism: A Defense of the Secret Providence of God*, vol. 2, ed. Henry Cole (London: Wertheim and Macintosh, 1856), 5; VanderMolen, “Providence as Mystery,” 30-33. Calvin’s view provided “few absolute certainties,” see Margo Todd, “Providence, Chance and the New Science in Early Stuart Cambridge,” *Historical Journal* 29, no. 3 (Sep., 1986), 701.

³⁶ For secondary treatments on Calvin’s theology of providence see VanderMolen, “Providence as Mystery,” 28-33. A key figure in his understanding of providence was William Ames. He had opportunity to hear Ames’ deliver a sermon at Christ’s College in 1609 when Cotton was a fellow at Emmanuel. The subject was the use of cards and dice, see Cotton, *Correspondence*, 391. For a description of Ames’ sermon which Sprunger calls the “his most memorable” see Sprunger, *William Ames*, 22-26. Ames was already on bad terms for a previous sermon he had preached. But this sermon apparently decisively suspended him from all ecclesiastical duties and academic degrees. What brought about Ames’ release was his condemnation of the college’s permission to students to play cards and dice during the Christmas season. But the issue that Cotton would have been more gripped by in the sermon was that Ames argued for the use of die to settle disputes when all other alternative resolutions were inadequate. The use of lots and die did not fall under an independent and neutral category of chance but under providence. This sparked a

disclosed in Scripture.³⁷ Hence, Cotton determined whether this particular episode in English history matched any of Revelation's prophecies. Cotton had already identified the 1640s and 50s as the time of the fifth vial and the destruction of the beast in the defeat of prelacy.³⁸

Again, Cotton believed that Scotland provided the stage upon which God providentially revealed his will at the Battle of Dunbar on 3 September 1650. To Cotton, the outcome of that military engagement between England and Scotland convincingly resolved the dilemma of uncertainty over Charles' execution. There was no doubt for Cotton that God had declared that the death of Charles the tyrant was not only warranted, but in accordance with God's plan, His apocalyptic plan. God's people had been vindicated. Charles' trial and execution were justified. That great victory at Dunbar was the one event that drove Cotton to his bold affirmation of regicide in his Thanksgiving sermon.³⁹ Further, the Lord demonstrated that he stood with Cromwell and England. Moreover, in Cotton's interpretation, the Lord's presence dwelled among all those who stood for the Congregational way.⁴⁰

debate with Thomas Gataker who Ames charged believed that contingencies stood outside providence see Todd, "Providence, Chance and the New Science," 704-11.

³⁷ Thomas Beard's view on providence was the most widely used among Puritans. See VanderMolen, "Providence as Mystery," 27.

³⁸ See Cotton, "The fift Viall," *Powring*.

³⁹ Bremer, "In Defense of Regicide," 105. Bremer noted that news of Charles' fall certainly stirred discussion but there is little that is indicated regarding their content. Public statements only began to emerge once the string of consecutive victories had been experienced by the Commonwealth's army, signaling the approval of the Lord.

⁴⁰ Dunbar did not convince Cotton that Charles was guilty of certain crimes. Rather it determined whether those crimes were rightly punishable by execution. Calvin was often cited for both justification and discouragement of revolution. Calvin believed that God would employ a tyrant to discipline his people as well as use his people to judge a rule and reform a nation. While Calvinist doctrine contained elements of revolutionary ideology it also emphasized forbearance and perseverance

Cotton longed for compelling signs that God's apocalyptic agenda was progressing and Dunbar provided this in abundance. As part of the Scots' outrage against regicide, on 5 February 1649, they proclaimed his son Charles II king.⁴¹ The Kirk stood as a threat to the liberty that accompanied the dawning of England's republic. Further, Cromwell suspected Scotland would not simply sit idly, and would only continue to pursue their original agenda of establishing religious unity under the rubric of Presbyterianism. Hence, on 22 July 1650, in pre-emptive fashion, Cromwell invaded Scotland.⁴²

On 3 September 1650, God revealed his will as clear as could be. Successful military campaigns were always translated as signs of Providence. But Dunbar was no ordinary victory. The stakes were eschatological in proportion. Moreover,

in times of persecution. For any Calvinists, the question as to whether revolution was justified was never a simple one to answer. See William R. Stevenson Jr., "Calvin and Political Issues," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 181-186. Stevenson notes that more than legitimacy in uprisings the gospel called for perseverance and trust in God. Calvin believed that private persons did not possess the right to resist rulers who had been placed in their positions of authority by God. Yet Calvin does qualify this by granting provision of resistance to lesser magistrates; see Ralph Cornell Hancock, *Calvin and the Foundations of Modern Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), 71-72. Cromwell was also confronted by those who more rigidly applied a Calvinist understanding of providence. However Cromwell was not swayed in his position, see Blair Worden, "Oliver Cromwell and the Sin of Achan," in *History, Society and the Churches Essays in Honour of Owen Chadwick*, ed. Owen Chadwick, Derek Beales, Geoffrey Francis and Andrew Best (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 127.

⁴¹ It was not until 1 January 1651, after many attempts at negotiations with the Scots, that Charles II was actually crowned their king at Scone.

⁴² R. Scott Spurlock, "Sectarian Religion in Scotland: The Impact of Cromwell's Occupation (1650-1660)" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2005), 10-22. He argues that religion played a fundamental part in reason to invade Scotland between in 1650. Another source is C.H. Firth, "The Battle of Dunbar," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society New Series* 14 (1900), 19-52.

certitude was grounded on the convincing nature of Cromwell's triumph.⁴³ The saints' forces, led by Cromwell, marched into battle. God's army assumed the offensive position against the Antichrist hoping to continue successive blows upon the beast. Cromwell's victory at Dunbar was nothing less than monumental. Everything about it, from the surrounding circumstances to the manner in which it unfolded, demanded nothing but the greatest celebration and rightly evoked impenetrable confidence. Blair Worden describes, the English, though plagued by a deep sense of desperation caused by depleted supplies and morale, goaded the Scots at Dunbar to engage in battle. Even before the march to the Scottish border began, the campaign showed unpromising signs. From the beginning Thomas Fairfax strongly opposed the expedition and when asked to lead the invasion he declined and opted for retirement from military service.⁴⁴ But in the end, their cause would not be thwarted. It was as one historian describes "Cromwell's most one-sided victory". It was a clear and overwhelming demonstration that God's favour was with the English.⁴⁵ The best of the Scottish army had been defeated in less than an hour. And Cromwell estimated that his army had suffered no more than twenty casualties. The

⁴³ Worden, "Providence and Politics," 81-82.

⁴⁴ Blair Worden, *The Rump Parliament, 1648-1653* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 226.

⁴⁵ I.J. Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland, and Scotland, 1645-1653* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 398. David Stevenson describes that for Scotland it Dunbar was a disaster which immediately resulted in panic in Edinburgh, see David Stevenson, *Revolution and Counter Revolution 1644-51, rev. ed.* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2003; reprint, 2003), 150.

Scots suffered approximately 3000 casualties and lost 10,000 as prisoners in comparison to the meagre loss of about thirty men to the English.⁴⁶

The motivation to invade Scotland struck a deep chord of agreement with Cotton. Cromwell, from the moment he entered Scotland, attempted to justify to the Scots the reasons for England's invasion. The Scottish people did not understand why they were being invaded by those they collaborated with against the King and Royalists. Moreover, it was a peculiar scene; the forces representing two godly nations seeking the same end of reformation throughout the land, lined up against each other. Further, the Presbyterianism of the Kirk was shared by many of the England's own divines. And the doctrine of providence clarified everything. Based on this teaching God had sent the English to liberate the Scots. Charles II, supported by the Scottish allegiance, would have continued the enslavement of their own people and extended the yoke of Presbyterianism upon the whole kingdom.⁴⁷ And in Cotton's own words, "The Scots, whom God delivered into your hands at Dunbar ... we have been desirous (as we could) to make their yoke easy."⁴⁸ England had already been liberated. The time had come to ensure its continuance and emancipate their brethren in the north from the enslavement of the beast.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Oliver Cromwell, *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell: Volume 2, The Commonwealth, 1649-1653*, eds. Wilbur Cortez Abbott and Catherine D. Crane (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 1939), 315-32.

⁴⁷ Spurlock, "Sectarian Religion in Scotland," 16-21. The threat was not only perceived strictly from a Scottish origination, rather there was also a fear of an alliance between Scottish and English Presbyterians, see, Worden, *Rump Parliament*, 226.

⁴⁸ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 461.

⁴⁹ The Independent minister Peter Sterry likened Scotland's deliverance at Dunbar to that from popery, see Peter Sterry, *England's Deliverance from the Northern Presbytery Compared with Its Deliverance from the Roman Papacy* (London, 1652).

Divine providence secured the victory. For God had already determined that the English would inflict defeat upon their enemies. This was indicative of the battle's outcome. In providential and apocalyptic terms, God's saints had conquered the army of the Antichrist. Like Cotton, Cromwell and the English Army also viewed Dunbar through the lens of providence. On the battlefield the Scots raised the banner of Covenant and the English theirs of Providence. Under each the people were rallied and united for their respective causes. But it is incorrect to understand the ideological allegiances too rigidly. To say that providence had no place among the Covenanters is inaccurate.⁵⁰ The Scots were as much Calvinist as the English. This meant that they too believed providence dictated everything, especially the battle at Dunbar. Both sides trusted that providence would declare their cause true with victory. It is helpful to be reminded that providence could manifest itself in positive as well as negative ways. The mere absence of the term "providence" does not indicate the Covenanters opted to deny or ignore its relevance at Dunbar. Whether or not Calvinist divines explicitly state its presence, providence was always assumed. On a popular level the English had already employed it as the banner of their cause. After the tragic defeat at Dunbar, Samuel Rutherford described Cromwell's cause as "unjust" in "persecuting the people of God". Moreover, the

⁵⁰ The difference in the use of providence between the English and Scottish at Dunbar is a reflection of the dynamics of polemics rather than actual differences in theology. In other words, it is inaccurate to say that the English believed in providence while the Scots did not, or that the former regarded it more highly than their counterparts. Spurlock accents the English use of providence at Dunbar in contrast to the Scottish highlight of the Covenant. Spurlock did not intend to suggest any absence of providence in the theological reasoning of the Kirk at Dunbar. However, the point to be made is there was an equal sense of providence among both the English and Scottish. See Spurlock, "Sectarian Religion in Scotland," 16-22.

reason for England's victory was the sins that infiltrated the Scottish army.⁵¹ This simply was another way to indicate that Scotland was on the receiving end of negative providence. And God had cast judgment upon them.⁵²

Cromwell's victory at Dunbar emboldened Cotton to confidently justify Charles' execution and condemn his sins against God and England.⁵³ Anyone who looked to Dunbar for providential responses to Charles' execution would have expected a Scottish victory if regicide was divinely condemned. However, the Scottish defeat and Cromwell's victory undeniably indicated to Cotton that regicide was just. In sum, Cotton charged the King with the guilt of negligence to preserve

⁵¹ Samuel Rutherford, *Letters of Samuel Rutherford. With Biographical Sketches of His Correspondents*, vol. 1, ed. Andrew A. Bonar (Edinburgh: W.P. Kennedy, 1863), 354-5.

⁵² Rutherford seems to be struggling between two positions and interpretations of providence. On the one hand he is convinced that, speaking of the English, "their way as a carrying on of the mystery of iniquity; for Babylon is a seat of many names". And then later he wrote that the present circumstances seemed positive for the English but their day of wrath was soon approaching, "sad and terrible day of the Lord upon England...how little of God so we see, and how mysterious is He!" see Rutherford, *Letters of Samuel Rutherford*, 359-60. John Coffey writes that for Rutherford Dunbar caused him to become utterly confused regarding his understanding of providence, see Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions*, 225, 249, 250-253. Robert Baillie wrote, "by our own negligence, had overthrown us...the Lord's hand now upon us", see Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, vol. 2, 106. Alexander Jaffray was taken prisoner during the battle. He was later convinced by both Cromwell and Owen upon discussions of the rightfulness of Independency. Perhaps much of the compelling evidence was the sign of providence against the Kirk at Dunbar. Jaffray recalling the events described it the "dreadful appearance of God against us at Dunbar, after so many public appeals to him – we were [not only] so visibly forsaken", see Alexander Jaffray, *Diary of Alexander Jaffray Provost of Aberdeen, One of the Scottish Commissioners to King Charles II, and a Member of Cromwell's Parliament to Which Are Added Particulars of His Subsequent Life, Given in Connexion with Memoirs of the Rise, Progress, and Persecution of the People Called Quakers in the North of Scotland among Whom He Became One of the Earliest Members*, 3rd ed., ed. John Barclay (Aberdeen: George & Robert King, 1856), 62.

⁵³ Bremer, "In Defense of Regicide," 119-120.

and maintain purity of religion. The monarch failed in his basic duty. Christian princes were not only required to affirm that ultimately God ruled the nation but they were to model their rule after divine sovereignty as well. They were to “consult and provide for the maintenance of the State and people” and “preserve Religion pure.”⁵⁴ In fact the king’s personal interests, his life and honour, conditional upon the adherence to this primary concern.⁵⁵ Cotton once argued that a Christian commonwealth, when properly erected, is founded upon the very principles “received and established among the people of *Israel*.” Officials and their constituents together were bound in covenant unto God. Every aspect of the commonwealth was to be subjected to obedience to the Lord. Even its people, by virtue of their citizenship were bound to the king’s cause. People possessed the authority and responsibility of electing magistrates who would accept and fulfil this duty.⁵⁶ Further, the Prince was called to defend against any onslaughts by antichristian forces.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Cotton, *Abstract of Laws*, 2-3.

⁵⁵ Bremer, “In Defense of Regicide,” 119-120. When Cotton expounded upon the articles of the Solemn League and Covenant he argued that the king’s safety was not secondary but tertiary. The first was “to provide for the worship of god & purity of Religion, against popery & prelacy & the Second article was to preserve the Liberty & Safety of the people against tyranny” and then the king’s safety was next. Glen Burgess, “Regicide: The Execution of Charles I and English Political Thought,” in *Murder and Monarchy: Regicide in European History, 1300-1800*, ed. Robert von Friedeburg (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 233. John Cotton, *A Discourse About Civil Government in a New Plantation Whose Design Is Religion* (Cambridge, 1663), 14. Cotton, *Abstract of Laws*, 2-3.

⁵⁶ Cotton, *Discourse About Civil Government*, 14-15.

⁵⁷ John Cotton, *Christ the Fountaine of Life* (London, 1651), 34-35. See also J.S. Morrill, *The Nature of the English Revolution: Essays* (London: Longman, 1993), 295-298.

Charles' failure was most convicting when considered against the backdrop of Cotton's apocalyptic scheme. By virtue of his recognition of Elizabeth's apocalyptic contribution, Cotton infused grave eschatological importance in the monarchy's capacity. Cotton established the Queen as the standard all others would be held to. Not only did Elizabeth exert herself a credible head of state but one who willingly accepted and spearheaded God's end times plan. Charles did not only prove deficient in comparison to his father but most of all he had fallen far short of the Elizabethan bar.⁵⁸ The comparison did not simply reveal that Charles was far from an ideal prince. The King reversed all that God had accomplished through the Queen against the Antichrist.⁵⁹ Charles was committed to Elizabethan episcopacy that his father had reinforced.⁶⁰ However Charles chose to embellish the antichristian elements of the church against the development of its praiseworthy accomplishments. In Cotton's estimation Charles' had not preserved but decomposed the church so much so that it compelled an unrestrained association with the Antichrist. In the 1620s, under the oppression of ceremonial conformity, Cotton did not identify prelacy with the beast. However, by as early as the late 1630s, under Charles personal rule, Cotton became convinced that the Church of England's polity embodied its image. So assured was Cotton that he, like many others, did not call for a restoration of the Elizabethan or Jacobean ecclesiastical

⁵⁸ C. V. Wedgwood, *Oliver Cromwell and the Elizabethan Inheritance* (London: Cape, 1970), 6-9.

⁵⁹ In a lesser comparison, Elizabeth delivered the godly from the Catholic Queen Mary while Charles was steering the church in the opposite direction. Rather than pursuing a direction towards a greater reformation he reversed its course towards a reunion with Rome.

⁶⁰ Sharpe, *Personal Rule*, 276-280.

ways, which he previously deemed tolerable, but a complete overhaul of the Church.⁶¹

Charles, from this throne, and through his prelates engaged in the Antichrist war against the Lord's saints.⁶² Episcopacy enabled Charles to wield control over the church and determine the character of its doctrine and worship. To Cotton and fellow puritans this is exactly what the king had done but not towards a more Biblical expression but in the likeness of popish religion. Godly divines did not object the concept of royal supremacy in times of reformation. It enabled a central agent to enact the necessary changes avoiding contention amongst divisive and competing parties. Yet it potentially could introduce heresy and steer the church's direction away from Biblical principles with ease.⁶³ Cotton was convinced this is exactly what happened. Cotton's indictment against episcopacy in his earlier sermons on Revelation expressed this deviation. Hence, to dissociate Charles from prelacy and free him from its guilt would have contradicted this previous assessment and undermined the legitimacy of New England's Congregationalism.

The manner in which events unravelled could not have been more ideal for Cotton. Reformation would have suffered a grave setback should the King have

⁶¹ Morrill, *Nature of the English Revolution*, 56.

⁶² Cotton, *Exposition Upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 12-13. The beast waged war against the saints. Charles was so committed to episcopacy because he realized that when Presbyterianism was a part of the negotiations, that he would have to adopt it for three years, he refused. He knew, as did Elizabeth and James, that it would have stripped him of his control, see Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots*, 9; David Underdown, *Pride's Purge : Politics in the Puritan Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 106-12; Michael B. Young, *Charles I, British History in Perspective* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 162-3. Charles' opposition to Presbyterianism paled in comparison to his opinion of Independency.

⁶³ Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots*, 194-195.

remained to rule, and kept episcopacy intact as the polity of the national church. The efforts of the Scots in the Bishops Wars and Parliamentary victories over Royalists in the civil war would have been wasted. Further, for Cotton, had Presbyterianism been successful at Newport in brokering an agreement with the King to replace prelacy with presbyteries, synods and a general assembly, prophecies would be unfulfilled. Charles' refusal to accept this concession was providential. And at the hands of an Army of Independent loyalties led by a Cromwell of Independent convictions, the king was removed and Presbyterianism avoided.

More than any other the New Model Army occupied the most pivotal role within Cotton's perception of providence's unfolding drama. Dunbar, as important as it was, was only the climactic moment of the Army's mission. Theirs was a journey that was hard fought and riddled with opposition and controversy. Yet in overcoming all obstacles the Army experienced overwhelming success. Between 1642 and 1645 their victories owed much credit to the sufficiency of their supplies. But underlying all of this was the conviction that God stood amongst them and blessed their cause. In providential terms finances, clothing, food and other materials were indicators that the Lord stood amongst them.⁶⁴ Cotton recognized and applauded their cause from the inception of the first civil war. Alongside Parliament, they stood for true reformation and the establishment of God's kingdom erected in discipline; opposed to sin and blasphemy which the King and Royalists propagated.

⁶⁴ Gentles, *New Model Army*, 118-119; Derek Hirst, *England in Conflict, 1603-1660: Kingdom, Community, Commonwealth* (London: Arnold, 1999), 239-240; Mark A. Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 179. Considering the shortage of supplies that the English had at Dunbar, the victory there was even more impressive and to the soldiers most encouraging.

Their cause guaranteed success. But victory was contingent upon whether they stayed this course.⁶⁵

By 1651 it was evident to Cotton that the Army alone had proven the only true faithful force. The Army supported Parliament's Vote of No Addresses on 11 February 1648, ceasing discussions with the King.⁶⁶ Charles could not be trusted.⁶⁷ Cotton saw this as the last united front between Parliament and the Army. However the cooperation shared since 1642 quickly broke down. Cotton wrote,

Sundry people are offended at that & they Supply the house with more Burgesses, who for ends Best known to themselves Did Reverse this Act, & Devise How they may Restore the king Again upon his own Concessions, & though they could Not Do it all the Day long: yet they kept up the Rest of the house the most part of the night, wearied with Long watching & tedious & impetuous Speeches, & then Began to think the kings Concessions was Safe to be Rested in to Settle A firm peace⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Bremer, "In Defense of Regicide," 121. Also see Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 155; Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966), 13.

⁶⁶ After failed attempts at establishing a settlement with the king, Parliament voted to cease negotiations. This was the final demonstration of unity between Parliament and the Army, who had discussed the issue of the king's lack of trustworthiness during the Putney debates of 1647. Cotton was specifically arguing against people who agreed with the Scots that the purge essentially provided a minority representation that essentially dictated and determined the outcome of the king.

⁶⁷ Morrill, *Nature of the English Revolution*, 33-44; John Morrill, "Rhetoric and Action: Charles I, Tyranny, and the English Revolution," in *Religion, Resistance, Civil War*, ed. William Lamont, Gordon J. Schochet (Washington, D.C.: Folger Institute, 1990), 91-114.

⁶⁸ Bremer, "In Defense of Regicide," 121. Underdown lists the sixteen members that were added to Parliament, see Underdown, *Pride's Purge*, Appendix A.

But the Army construed this as a “prevarication” of the previous consensus vote and moved to restore the house.⁶⁹ Hence, on 6 December 1648 the Army purged Parliament of the members who instigated the deviation.

Cotton thoroughly endorsed the purge of Parliament. Against any debate as to the legitimacy of the army’s recent actions he asserted,

And therefore, when the army discerned, not only their own safeties, but the safety of religion and state, and their cause and victories given in defence thereof, all of them given away in that prevarication, I know not how they could have approved their faithfulness better to the state and cause, then by purging the Parliament of such corrupt humours, and presenting the king to public trial.⁷⁰

This statement vindicated the original move to cease negotiations with the King in the vote of no addresses. Cotton implied that Presbyterians were ultimately responsible for causing Parliament to digress.⁷¹ The irony then was the army was not the enemy of the state but Denzil Holles and others who originally made the charge.⁷²

Critics of the Revolution charged the Army with the crime of unlawfully subjecting Charles to trial and inflicting the penalty of execution. Cotton agreed that the Army was certainly most responsible for these events. However they were not deeds to be celebrated and not denounced. Through all the jostling for power and

⁶⁹ Bremer, “In Defense of Regicide,” 121.

⁷⁰ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 460.

⁷¹ This may not have come as a complete surprise considering Cotton was already very clear about his opinion regarding Presbyterianism and opposed to its establishment in England.

⁷² See Austin Woolrych, *Soldiers and Statesmen: The General Council of the Army and Its Debates 1647 – 1648* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 1-54. The army had not become active in the politics of revolution until the spring of 1647, see Kishlansky, *New Model Army*, 179-181.

authority the Army alone bore the Lord's cause to "free this our Native Land and Nation from all Tyranny" to which Charles stood as its greatest impediment.⁷³ And Cotton concurred. During the deliberations and squabbles, when the Army was pitted against Parliament, they continued to stand as steady bearers of providence.⁷⁴ With prelacy already expelled, Charles' restoration would have undermined and reversed all that the saints had achieved.⁷⁵

Cotton understood the Army's role in covenantal terms. So often it was the case that a single covenant consisted of various stipulations which were in fact contradictory to one another. Or in other situations multiple covenants were agreed upon to which a circumstance could arise where obedience to one is disobedience to the other. In either case it was impossible to maintain every stipulation without in effect breaking another. Cotton argued that in these convoluted situations there must first be the determination of the one unconditional and most fundamental proviso. Once this has been identified the parties are then free and innocent to violate all other opposing aspects. This, above all others, must be maintained at all cost.

⁷³ *A Declaration of the Engagements, Remonstrances, Representations, Proposals, Desires and Resolutions from His Excellency Sir. Tho: Fairfax* (London, 1647), 9. He also deflects the charges that the soldiers were simply mercenaries. Cotton recognized that finances were certainly an issue. Yet what dictated their services was not the promise of pay rather it was their conscience that bound them in continual fidelity the English people, see Cotton, *Correspondence*, 460. For the issue of financial arrears and the Army see I.J. Gentles, "The Arrears of Pay of the Parliamentary Army at the End of the First Civil War," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 48 (1975).

⁷⁴ Part of Cotton's lack of trust of the king may certainly have stemmed from the king's dealings with both Parliament and the Army when they were arguing over the future of the king. He attempted to barter deals with both sides.

⁷⁵ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 459-460.

Preservation of the king's life would have infringed upon the most principal requirement of establishing pure worship and religion against Popery and prelacy.⁷⁶

But further if the Covenant was Conditional, or Coordinate with other Articles (as it is Commonly taken to be) then the article concerning the kings safety Cometh but in the third place: the first article of the Covenant was to provide for the worship of god & purity of Religion, against popery & prelacy & the Second article was to preserve the Liberty & Safety of the people against tyranny & the third is to provide for the kings Safety & honor. Now if this be an article in the third place, then the two former must

⁷⁶ Bremer, "In Defense of Regicide," 118-120. Charles' life was a third consideration in the hierarchy of covenantal stipulations. The first was for the establishment and maintenance of true religion and the second the protection of the liberty and safety of the people (119). Spurlock notes that prior to the actual engagement at Dunbar, both the English and Scottish recognized the necessity to justify their positions in regards to the Solemn League and Covenant which was established between Parliament and Scotland in 1643, see Spurlock, "Sectarian Religion in Scotland," 50-52. The English believed that they were relieved of its obligation when the Covenanters agreed to enter in the Engagement with Charles in 1648, see *A Declaration of the English Army Now in Scotland Touching the Justness & Necessity of Their Present Proceedings in That Nation*, (London, 1650), 4-5, *A Declaration of the Parliament of England in Answer to the Late Letters Sent to Them from the Commissioners of Scotland* (London, 1648), sig. A3. The Scots were guilty of breaking the Solemn League and Covenant and "forfeited all Privileges" by virtue of their invasion of England in 1648, see *The Scots Apostacy, Displayed, in a Treacherous Invasion of the English against the Law of Nations, and During, Not Only a Common League, but an Extraordinary Compact and Covenant with the Parliament of England* (London, 1648), sig. A. For the Presbyterian view on implication of covenant infidelity see John Vicar, *A Caveat for Covenant-Contemners and Covenant-Breakers* (1648). This was later reprinted in 1650 to condemn Cromwell and the English invasion. The English employed the same argument as those Covenanters who opposed the Engagement. George Gillespie and Samuel Rutherford were among the minority who opposed those Covenanters who entered into the Engagement. They believed it was an infringement of the Solemn League and Covenant. When Gillespie lied on his deathbed, Rutherford urged him to condemn the Engagers. They agreed that these had to be purged from the Kirk in order to avoid divine judgment upon Scotland. In other words, they wanted to escape providence in the form of wrath, see Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions*, 219, 248. Polemically the English raised the banner of Providence and the Scots that of the Covenant, see Spurlock, "Sectarian Religion in Scotland," 16-56. On another perspective for both, providence would determine, through the outcome at Dunbar, who was faithful to the Covenant. For a good discussion of the English and the concept of covenant see Edward Vallance, *Revolutionary England and the National Covenant: State Oaths, Protestantism and the Political Nation, 1553-1682* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), esp. 83-160.

have the precedence & preeminence & if the king Cannot be Restored with prejudice to the purity of Religion, & Restoring of prelacy [or] inclination to popery or if he Cannot be Restored without prejudice of the Liberty & Safety of the people: they must Now of Necessity Be excused, from maintaining the third article which Comes But in the third place, & presupposeth the other two to Be Maintained & preserved.⁷⁷

At Newport, the Army was capable of sifting through covenantal confusion. While others sought at all cost to restore Charles and avoid a drastic fate the Army alone recognized the primary covenantal premise.⁷⁸ Common soldiers proved more faithful than magistrates.⁷⁹

The Lord's presence among a military force could only be validated on the battlefield. Apart from victory against an opposing army, how else would God manifest providence through soldiers? Cotton blessed the godly warfare and that God's people were to "make use of Earthly weapons against Earthly enemies."⁸⁰ The Army defeated the Royalist forces proving God's condemnation against prelacy. But Charles' execution, that the Army was most instrumental in orchestrating, transpired after the end of the second civil war. If the Army was as responsible as Cotton believed then they would be judged in battle. If the execution stood contrary

⁷⁷ Bremer, "In Defense of Regicide," 119-120.

⁷⁸ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 460. In fact a primary covenantal stipulation of the king was to fight their battles, in the manner God would fight for His people. Cotton recognized that Charles had neglected this duty and in ultimately this cause was burdened by Cromwell and the Army, see *ibid.*; Cotton, *Christ the Fountaine of Life*, 34-35.

⁷⁹ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 154-155. Quentin Skinner recognized the importance of covenant in revolutionary ideology; see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought: Vol. 2, The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 235-238. Also see Jane E.A. Dawson, "Trumpeting Resistance: Christopher Goodman and John Knox," in *John Knox and the British Reformations*, ed. Roger Mason (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

⁸⁰ Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 182.

to God's will England certainly would not have been victorious at Dunbar, let alone so decisively. Had God favoured the Kirk's polity, the Scots would not have met defeat against Cromwell. And if the Army had illegitimately exercised its might in purging parliament to secure their interests against the nations, again, the Lord certainly would have revealed this at Dunbar. Dunbar had validated regicide which in turn cast divine approval on the Army's positions between 1647 and 1648. In Cotton's eyes divine providence had spoken. Moreover, the Lord's message was indisputably clear it was believed that the remainder of their campaign would reap the same results. There was no reason to doubt the Lord's clear presence with the English. Cromwell wrote to Arthur Haselrig,

We have no cause to doubt but, if it shall please the Lord to prosper our endeavours, we may find opportunities both upon Edinburgh and Leith, Stirling-Bridge, and other such places as the Lord shall lead unto, even far about our thoughts; as this late and other experiences gives good encouragements.⁸¹

III. Unbridled and Boundless Optimism

The victory of the saints over Charles, prelacy and Presbyterianism was decisive. Cotton deemed Charles' death no ordinary casualty in the battle between Antichrist and God's saints. It is possible that Cotton had made his bold interpretative speculation that "about the time of 1655" the beast would suffer a great blow and the greatly anticipated conversion of the Jews would occur, after the victory at Dunbar.⁸² Regardless, Cotton was so convinced by the news from Dunbar that only one response could equal the momentous occasion: the singing of the Song

⁸¹ Cromwell, *Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell: Volume 2, The Commonwealth*, 327.

of Moses.⁸³ Its lyrics and melody were reminiscent of the greatest episode in history of God's people when they were delivered from slavery in Egypt. Compelled by the weight of ten plagues Pharaoh released them from their bondage. However, as soon as the King of Egypt had expelled them he retracted this decision. With Pharaoh's chariots in pursuit, God's people walked through the Red Sea which the Lord had divided for safe passage. Once all the Israelites were safely across their enemies were drowned in its depths. They were firmly set on the path to the Promised Land. This was the situation for the first singing of the Song of Moses.⁸⁴ That episode however paled in comparison to its eschatological counterpart. Moses' Song as described in Revelation cast the vision of the end and a heavenly abode. And the victory involved in this latter occasion referred to that end of conflicts between God's saints and the Antichrist.

Cotton described the eschatological Song of Moses as an

acknowledgement of the great works of god, & the justice & truth & holiness of his ways; Secondly an encouragement to all men to fear & glorify the Lord: whereof he Giveth three Reasons: first from the gathering of Nations to worship him: all Nations shall Come & Worship thee. thirdly from the manifestation of his Judgments, for thy Judgments are made manifest. For the singers they are described first By their exploits: these saints had gotten victory over the Beast⁸⁵

⁸² Cotton, *Exposition Upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 93.

⁸³ Cotton selected a single verse as his text for the Thanksgiving sermon, Revelation 15:3, "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

⁸⁴ Exodus 15. Cromwell and others in attempting to interpret the Lord's deliverances turned to the Old Testament for answers. The Exodus paradigm offered a key framework through which to understand their experiences, see Worden, "Sin of Achan," 125.

⁸⁵ Bremer, "In Defense of Regicide," 110.

This single verse was carefully and specifically selected. The Apostle John cast the vision of the elect of the Lord singing the song once they “had gotten victory over the beast” (Rev 15:2). Victory was achieved and it was time for the church to enjoy its fruits. Elsewhere he described this as a “transcendentally excellent”⁸⁶ song in which the voices of the saints were accompanied by the Harps of God. It was anticipated as the culmination of Christ’s jealous love for his people, one that drove him to overcome death on the cross.⁸⁷

The thanksgiving sermon Cotton preached in 1650 was intended for both individual reflection and more importantly a corporate celebration. God had remembered His people. More importantly, God had not forgotten New England. On one level the sermon was directed to English saints, praising them for their efforts. On another level Cotton’s sermon was intended to encourage New England colonists. Victory over prelacy was for the independence of congregations. And victory over Presbyterianism affirmed God’s judgment upon ecclesiastical institutions that illegitimately yoked the people of God and un-biblically bound their consciences. These, Cotton believed, were only affirmed in the New England way. With this affirmation, they were to continue with vigour knowing full well that God would bless their work.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Cotton, *Canticles* (1642), 250.

⁸⁷ See also Cotton, *Canticles* (1655), 224.

⁸⁸ Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 28-29. Cromwell would have been keen on the interest New England had on the events in England. After Dunbar, Hugh Peter, who was closely associated with Cromwell, believed all obstacles had been removed and the commonwealth could begin to be constructed according to the pattern laid out by New England’s founding fathers, see

Cotton's thanksgiving sermon and the selected Scripture text are better appreciated when contrasted with the jeremiad rhetoric. Scholars continue to argue the character of these sermons and the nature and definitions of them. There is something very telling from the simple selection of the Biblical text.⁸⁹ The fact of Cotton's confidence is proven by the very selection of a text from Revelation rather than from an Old Testament prophetic book. He intentionally opted against the latter because of the inherent cautionary tone in such passages. They made for less optimistic sermons. Sacvan Bercovitch described the Jeremiad that "Even when they are most optimistic, the jeremiads express a profound disquiet...their affirmations betray an underlying desperation – a refusal to confront the present, a fear of the future".⁹⁰ Bercovitch argues that compared to its earlier European counterpart the threat was transformed into celebration.⁹¹ It is not to debate the positive tone in a jeremiad. The point simply to be made is that the most optimistic sermon is one that speaks of finality and lacks the threatening impression of conditions.

Raymond Phineas Stearns, *The Strenuous Puritan: Hugh Peter, 1598-1660* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1954), 365.

⁸⁹ See Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives*, 298-343. For other discussions on the Jeremiad see Sacvan Bercovitch, "Cotton Mather," in *Major Writers of Early American Literature*, ed. Everett H. Emerson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972), 93-150; Perry Miller, *The New England Mind : From Colony to Province* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), 27-40; John D. Seelye, *Prophetic Waters : The River in Early American Life and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 235-7.

⁹⁰ Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, xiv. Bercovitch intended to reverse the negative perspective of the jeremiad that Perry Miller held in *New England Mind*. Although Bercovitch applies this to the American scene, the principles that he identifies in this form of rhetoric are rightly applied to its general exercise during this period, whether in New England or England. Bercovitch saw that Miller's limitation was that it limited the "pervasive theme of affirmation and exultation," and that there was an "unshakable optimism" ; see Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, 6-7.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

John Owen was invited to preach to Parliament for the first scheduled fast sermon after Charles' execution for which he selected a text from the book of Jeremiah.⁹² Scholars have correctly recognized the eschatological content in this sermon. Owen declared that the king's judgment was a dispensation of providence. While he certainly must have been optimistic by Charles' execution, he clearly demonstrates restraint in directly addressing the previous day's event.⁹³ Peter Toon writes that although Owen approved of the regicide his message was to warn Parliament to be directed towards prudence and responsibility with the blessings God had bestowed on them.⁹⁴ Implicit in Owen's jeremiad, which it is rightly classified as, is that character of Old Testament prophetic literature. Its aim is, as the Biblical prophets understood theirs to be, was to warn the people of God. The nation stood at

⁹² The similarity between Cotton and Owen enable a helpful comparison between the two. Like Cotton, Owen was an Independent, he believed in an earthly millennium, and approved of the execution of Charles I, see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Owen, John." For Owen's eschatology see Noel Henning Mayfield, *Puritans and Regicide: Presbyterian-Independent Differences over the Trial and Execution of Charles (I) Stuart* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 99-104. John Cardell was also invited to preach.

⁹³ See John Owen, *The Works of John Owen: Volume VIII*, 3rd ed., ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 243-279.).

⁹⁴ Peter Toon, *God's Statesman: The Life and Work of John Owen, Pastor, Educator, Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1971), 21-32. See also Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Religion the Reformation, and Social Change* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 310-311. Amos Tubb argued that Owen's sermon focused more on human fallibility rather than the justice of the cause, see Tubb, "Printing the Regicide," 505. What may be said in general is that Owen intended to present an exhortation to the response of the execution rather than an exclusive presentation of the praise of God's providence in bringing the king to justice.

a crossroads where they were exhorted to abandon corruption and sin and salvage themselves as the people of God.⁹⁵

However in Cotton there were no intimations or threats. Cotton intentionally selected his text not only for its celebratory tone but also its accent on the agents of victory being the saints and people of God. Previously in the early 1640s Cotton cast this same vision. The Beast would be defeated by God's people, the elect. Individuals would contribute in powerful ways. And collectively the elect would gain victory over their enemy. Cotton understood this verse as a vindication of the ecclesiastical polemic that was woven into his earlier apocalyptic sermons. Congregationalism would lead the victory over Satan. And as it was argued earlier this is most faithful to Scripture's description of the church throughout history and also to the image of prophetic fulfilment. For "these saints had gotten victory over the Beast," "the people of god that had gotten victory over popery".⁹⁶

Dunbar's benefits spread far and wide. Its sufficiency extended beyond the Atlantic to offer vindication to New England for its way. The Lord had removed a mighty obstacle that obstructed reformation's path. This encouraged New England's labours as well as fortifying its future prosperity. In his Thanksgiving sermon,

⁹⁵ John F. Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament: Puritanism During the English Civil Wars, 1640-1648* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 180, n. 75. Although Wilson does not explicitly classify the sermons at Parliament as Jeremiads he wrote, "Perry Miller's dictum regarding the "Jeremiad" as it developed in New England later in the century may be appropriate with reference to the sermons preached before the Long Parliament between 1640 and 1648." There is no reason to exclude Owen's sermon from Wilson's point as well. Egan, in his study of Nathaniel Ward and the Jeremiad, believed that the similarities between the two are striking, see James Egan, "'This Is a Lamentation and Shall Be for a Lamentation': Nathaniel Ward and the Rhetoric of the Jeremiad," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 122, no. 6 (1978), 401, nt. 8, 402.

⁹⁶ Bremer, "In Defense of Regicide," 110, 112.

Cotton praised the Lord for this work. And the colonists were exhorted to sing the Song of Moses and celebrate the might and power of the Lord. Around that time Cotton took occasion to make this sentiment known to the one person God appointed to lead the onslaught against Antichrist, Oliver Cromwell.

On 28 July 1651 Cotton penned a letter to Oliver Cromwell.⁹⁷ They neither met before nor had there been previous communication between the two. But each would certainly have been familiar with the other. While Cotton's knowledge of Cromwell is expected the other reverse may not be. It is possible that Cotton's lingering reputation and writings as a leading New England Independent polemicist would have contributed to Cromwell's knowledge of Cotton. However it is more likely that Cromwell received first hand testimonies from Hugh Peter and Henry, who were both close to Cotton.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 458-461.

⁹⁸ Peter was no stranger to Congregationalism, New England and Cotton. He was the pastor at the Church in Rotterdam, Netherlands, which exercised congregational principles. In 1635 he set sail for New England. In 1636 Peter along with Cotton, Vane, Thomas Shepard and three others composed a committee intended to construct a body of laws for the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Peter returned to England and soon became a chaplain during the civil war. He worked closely with Cromwell as was very active, especially in his preaching in support of the Charles' execution; see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Peter, Hugh." Henry Vane had sailed with Peter to New England. During his stay in Massachusetts Peter built an addition to Cotton's home and stayed there, see Winship, *Making Heretics*, 50. Winship goes on to imply that they certainly would have spent much time together even shared many meals. See also John Wilcock, *Life of Sir Henry Vane the Younger: Statesman & Mystic (1613-1662)* (London: Saint Catherine Press, 1913). John Owen, who was close to Cromwell as well, may have been another person who spoke well of Cotton. Although Owen and Cotton did not share a friendship there was perhaps an unspoken fraternity between the two. They most certainly shared many similar theological convictions. Owen was converted to Congregationalism as a result of reading Cotton's *Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven*, ironically during Owen's attempt to discredit congregational ecclesiology. Further, Owen, in print, defended Cotton against a charge that Cotton's ideals promoted schism. See John Owen, *A Defence of Mr. John Cotton From the imputation of selfe contradiction charged on him by Mr.*

In corresponding to Cromwell, Cotton possessed two keen intentions. First, Cotton sought to encourage and affirm the Lord General's particular role in God's redemptive plan. Second, and more importantly, Cotton intended to acknowledge this as a sign of his loyalty to Cromwell's program, as Cotton had perceived it. Although Cotton surely had not conceived of Cromwell as eventually occupying England's throne his words give the impression of an attempt at securing a monarch's favour.⁹⁹ It is reminiscent of his successful attempt twenty years prior when Cotton secured royal favour through Bishop John Williams. Cotton credits Cromwell for the "great works of god, & the justice & truth & holiness of his ways".¹⁰⁰ Cotton wrote,

I must acknowledge you, not only for the eminency of place and command which the God of power and honour hath called you unto; but also for that the Lord hath sat you forth as a vessel of honour to his name, in working many and great deliverances for his people, and for his truth, by you; and

Dan Cawdrey (Oxford, 1658). Owen would have been an excellent witness to the value of Cotton's thinking.

⁹⁹ Granted I am not suggesting that Cotton in anyway conceived of the notion that Cromwell was to become king to rule the nation as a monarch but simply recognized the grave importance Cromwell embodied as the most powerful man in all of Britain. A helpful way to look at his public persona is to compare him to John Pym. J.H. Hexter described Pym as single handedly being the mastermind and responsible for the erecting a Parliament formidable enough to oppose the King. And that to Stephen Marshall and others, Pym embodied the very cause they labored for. Further, it is not a simply analogy between two figures but that in fact Oliver Cromwell inherited that which Pym had labored so hard in such a short period of time for, see J. H. Hexter, *The Reign of King Pym* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), 3, 135-136. For all intents and purposes whether or not Cotton associated the monarchy with Cromwell is perhaps irrelevant. He looks to Cromwell to maintain a godly nation. Cotton believed that Cromwell had led the saints into godly battle. This was the position occupied by kings. The Biblical concept of king not only included concepts of rule but also consisted of a military aspect as well.

¹⁰⁰ Bremer, "In Defense of Regicide," 110. Cotton would have also, like most others, both his enemies and advocates that he was the most powerful man in Britain, see Austin Woolrych, "The Cromwellian Protectorate: A Military Dictatorship?," *History* 75 (Jun., 1990), 208.

yet helping you to reserve all the honour to him, who is the God of salvation, and the Lord of hosts, mighty in battle.¹⁰¹

Cotton, along with John Eliot and others were convinced that Cromwell had led the defeat of the Antichrist. And this was worthy of recognition and honour.¹⁰²

Providence not only mobilized and protected the godly army but raised a godly ruler to lead the Lord's people. Cotton was convinced that the army's godliness was a reflection of the character of their leader, Oliver Cromwell. The effect was twofold. On the one hand Cromwell's devotion to Biblical obedience and piety warranted the emulation of his soldiers. And on the other hand their faithful service to the Lord was achieved through loyal devotion to their leader. Moreover, this was no ordinary commander of godly forces; rather it was the one they believed would fulfil apocalyptic prophecies.¹⁰³

In Cotton's mind, Cromwell not only possessed a particular and prominent role in apocalyptic drama but under Cromwell's leadership, Cotton envisioned boundless potential for England. Cromwell's agency in prophetic fulfilment did not cease at Dunbar. Cromwell was integral in the destruction of the beast's image, prelacy, in the victory over Charles. Cotton, convinced that the fifth vial had essentially been dispensed, began to look beyond it to the sixth vial: the drying up of the Euphrates River. This vial intended to apply divine judgment upon the revenues that financed the Turks and Rome in their deeds of idolatry, murder, sorcery,

¹⁰¹ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 459.

¹⁰² John Eliot and Thomas Mayhew, *Tears of Repentance or, a Further Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New-England* (London, 1653), sig. A2.

¹⁰³ Lamont, *Godly Rule*, 137.

thievery, and fornication. And Cotton interpreted the angel responsible for this, not as the Jews as others had, but Christian states led by ten Christian kings.¹⁰⁴ Cotton expressed this to Cromwell in a subsequent letter encouraging him to pursue Hispaniola as direct fulfilment of this prophecy. Cotton guaranteed a victorious and successful campaign.¹⁰⁵ This clearly demonstrates the intense apocalyptic significance Cotton believed had been invested in Cromwell. Cotton shared his enthusiasm with Cromwell to affirm if not establish an apocalyptic self consciousness in his service to the Lord.¹⁰⁶ Cotton's prophetic vision for Cromwell

¹⁰⁴ Cotton, "Sixth Vial," *Powring*, 14-20. Revelation 17:16-17.

¹⁰⁵ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 461-462. Bush wrote that this was intended to further confirm Cromwell's role in the defeat of Antichrist. But in fact Cotton was already confirmed. None more was needed. Hispaniola in other words was already believed to be theirs. See also James Robertson, "Cromwell and the Conquest of Jamaica," *History Today* 55, no. 5 (May, 2005): 15-22, esp. 17. Roger Williams was also aware that Cotton had influenced Cromwell regarding this prophecy, see Roger Williams, *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams, Volume 2* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), 285. See also Kupperman, "Errand to the Indies," 70-99.

¹⁰⁶ Frank Strong, "The Causes of Cromwell's West Indian Expedition," *The American Historical Review* 4, no. 2 (Jan., 1899), 228-45. Profoundly impacted by Cotton's words, Cromwell sent troops to Hispaniola in 1654. However the mission was a disaster. Timothy Venning, *Cromwellian Foreign Policy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 23, 80-81. These soldiers consisted of beggars, deserters, and thieves, basically the type of soldier officers sought to ride their regiments of. According to Venning, the purpose of maintaining the best troops in England was for the purpose of security. In light of what has been proposed if Cromwell was that convinced of Cotton's interpretation regarding the outcome of the expedition to Hispaniola then the fact that he sent troops that he certainly would not have expected any good results from because of a slight over confidence. Cromwell needed his best troops in England, and with God's hand blessing Cromwell's every step, certainly he would bless them even with inferior troops. He had blessed them with a tremendous victory at Dunbar with an overmatched army. Describing the defeat Cromwell wrote, "the Lord hath greatly humbled us". It had been the first defeat of the New Model Army. He attributes the loss to both their sins and the "misguidance of some", which most likely meant Cotton's encouragements. Yet the impression is that he viewed it as an incorrect interpretation. And if this is the case then his self consciousness regarding eschatological prophecies remained intact, see Oliver Cromwell, *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, vol. 2, eds. Thomas Carlyle and S.C. Lomas (London: Methuen, 1904), 471.

was the apex of his eschatological journey which began when he first opened Revelation to unveil its mysteries approximately ten years prior. During the early 1640s, Cotton sensed the dawn of the millennium was very near and determined to the best of his ability that in 1655, a little over a decade into the future from that time,

there will be then such a blow given to this beast, and to the head of this beast ... as that we shall see a further gradual accomplishment and fulfilling of this Prophecy here ... yet a more full accomplished shall be when the Church shall be delivered from this whore of Rome, and the Church of the Jews shall be called again.¹⁰⁷

Originally, Cotton disclosed this interpretation with great caution, for he did not see himself a “Prophet, nor the Son of a Prophet to foretell things to come.”¹⁰⁸ However, by 1651 Cotton had every reason to believe that his bold prognostication was soon to come true.

To Cotton, Cromwell was an apocalyptic king. God had appointed him for this very purpose. To every failure of Charles’ Cromwell met with success. Historians have described Charles as duplicitous, indecisive, obstinate and inconsistent.¹⁰⁹ Cromwell, however, exhibited godly resolve and humility.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Cotton, *Exposition Upon the Thirteenth Chapter*, 93.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Maurice Ashley, *Charles I and Oliver Cromwell a Study in Contrasts and Comparisons* (London: Methuen, 1987), 178-181.

¹¹⁰ Cromwell was offered the throne in 1657 but he declined it and uttered that while he had helped to tear down Jericho’s walls he would not raise them back up. It is a reference to Joshua’s victory over Jericho in the Old Testament, Joshua 5; see also Worden, “Oliver Cromwell and the Sin of Achan,” 125-145. Although this occurred after Cotton’s death it is a good demonstration of the humility that Cotton suspected and recognized in Cromwell and would later be verified. Cromwell would not waver from the cause. J.S.A. Adamson argues that by the summer of 1651 Cromwell believed he would become prince of England. Although Cromwell’s attitude

Cromwell's intentions were always a subject of great controversy. His advocates praised him for leading a godly revolution. Yet his critics and enemies charged him with coveting Charles' crown and murdering the king for it.¹¹¹ There was the negative opinion by both Levellers and Royalists that Cromwell, although he had not assumed in any formal or official capacity the pre-eminent seat of rule in the country he was in essence already exercising its duties. One Leveller pamphleteer went as far to entitle his work, "The Character of King Cromwell".¹¹² There is no doubt as to where Cotton sided in this debate. There is even a sense in which, like many others in that day, Cotton may have regarded Cromwell in a typological kingly role.¹¹³ Regardless of whether this was actually intended by Cotton in or interpreted by Cromwell from the letter the implication from Cotton's belief that Cromwell was instrumental in the dispensing of the apocalyptic vials is clear. Cotton's certainty

towards the crown may have been ambivalence he may have considered it due to his reliance upon Providence, see J.S.A. Adamson, "Oliver Cromwell and the Long Parliament," in *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution*, ed. John Morrill (London: Longman, 1990), 91.

¹¹¹ Although Cromwell had had assumed the pre-eminent seat of rule in any formal or official capacity, both Levellers and Royalists had cast charges against him that in essence he had already assumed the monarchy's duties. One Leveller pamphleteer went as far to entitle a work, "The Character of King Cromwell". See also Anon., *A Coffin for King Charles: A Crown for Cromwell: A Pit for the People* (London, 1649); Cromwell, *Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell: Volume 2*, 182.

¹¹² Ibid. Bush believed that Cotton's intention in writing to Cromwell was concern and a means of pastoral ministering during this volatile period, see Cotton to Oliver Cromwell, 28 July 1651, Cotton, *Correspondence*, 459.

¹¹³ Many of Cromwell's contemporaries who looked favorably on him allegorically connected him with Moses, David, Joshua, Gideon, Judah and Josiah, see John Morrill, "Cromwell and His Contemporaries," in *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution*, ed. John Morrill (Harlow: Longman, 1990), 271-3. Andrew Marvell, who was a poet for Cromwell referred to him with Davidic allusions and describing Cromwell's rule as contributing to the fulfilment of apocalyptic prophecy, see J.A. Mazzeo, "Cromwell as Davidic King," in *Reason and the Imagination: Studies in the History of Ideas 1600-1800*, ed. J.A. Mazzeo (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 45-54.

that Cromwell would dry up the Euphrates was rooted in the prophecy that the angel of the sixth vial was a company of Christian kings.¹¹⁴

But to Cotton the most attractive and compelling attribute of Cromwell was his religion. His ideological loyalties made his “kingly” role compatible with Cotton’s eschatology. In the end, victory in battle did not validate the leader. Charles and royalists were inflicting defeat upon the parliamentary troops before they secured the Scots’ assistance. Yet Cotton was adamant that this was not the right cause because of prelacy and the king who defended it. But in Cromwell the victory was providential because the cause was for reformation and its leader a godly ruler. Further, in Cromwell, Cotton found someone who shared ideals akin to his own.

Historians have correctly recognized that Cromwell’s ideology remains elusive.¹¹⁵ It is correct to recognise that there is scanty written or printed material indicating the exact nature of Cromwell’s thoughts. Yet Cotton would not have been without an opinion as to where Cromwell’s political and religious loyalties lay. His perception of Cromwell’s character would have been forged by the policies he endorsed, the battles he engaged in, and perhaps most telling the company of

¹¹⁴ In addition to the figurative perception of Cromwell as occupying a kingly capacity there is the prophecy of the sixth vial. The angel of this vial was 10 Christian kings, see Cotton, “The sixth Vial,” *Powring*, 20. Throughout Cotton’s thanksgiving sermon he argues for the justice in Charles’ trial and execution from Biblical examples and principles. It is possible the citations of OT precedents reflect an understanding that Charles’ monarchy stood in relation to the Biblical monarchy or concept and hence with his approval of the regicide, Cromwell’s as a legitimate succession of, see Bremer, “In Defense of Regicide,” 117-122.

¹¹⁵ George Drake, “The Ideology of Oliver Cromwell,” *Church History* 35, no. 3 (1966), 259. Cromwell’s Independency must be carefully qualified, see J.C. Davis, “Cromwell’s Religion,” in *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution*, ed. John Morrill (Harlow: Longman, 1990), 183-185.

associates and advisors he kept close to him.¹¹⁶ For example, in 1644 Cromwell co-sponsored the “Accommodation Order” with Henry Vane which granted Independent churches full liberty under the law.¹¹⁷ This certainly would have met with Cotton’s approval. Cromwell led an Army which was considered on the side of Independency that defeated a Presbyterian Kirk at Dunbar. But most promising was the presence of two advocates of Independency, Hugh Peter and John Owen.¹¹⁸ In fact it may be argued that Cotton was so convinced that Cromwell stood with Congregationalists and the New England way that Cotton expected his correspondence and counsel to Cromwell to be well received.¹¹⁹ Hence, there would have been no question that

¹¹⁶ Francis J. Bremer, *Puritan Crisis : New England and the English Civil Wars, 1630-1670* (NY: Garland Publishing, 1989), chap. 6; Bremer, *Congregational Communion*, 178; Sarah Gibbard Cook, “The Congregational Independents and the Cromwellian Constitutions,” *Church History* 46 (1977), 335-57.

¹¹⁷ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Sir Henry Vane the Younger.” It was received with scorn from Presbyterians, Robert Baillie called it ‘liberty for sects’ see Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, vol. 2, 231, 235-6.

¹¹⁸ George Drake argued that Cromwell was an Independent, see Drake, “Ideology of Oliver Cromwell,” 259-272. One can appreciate J.C. Davis’ argument that any certainty that Cromwell was Puritan, Calvinist and Independent may be questioned and critiqued. And that in fact the identity of ideology remains elusive. He makes a valid point that at one time Cromwell was willing to accept a Presbyterian settlement in parliament in April 1649, see Davis, “Cromwell’s Religion,” 189. In this light Cromwell does not come across as the great champion to man the Independent’s opposition against Presbyterianism. But Cotton may or may not have been aware of this and what was demonstrated was Cromwell’s victory over Scotland and the Kirk’s Presbyterian way. Further such beliefs of toleration and liberty of conscience may have been viewed by Cotton as akin to his own views. The elusive nature of his thinking may prove frustrating for historians to overcome yet it proved advantageous for Cromwell to such key figures as Cotton in demonstrating himself one of Cotton’s own. See also Peter Gaunt, *Oliver Cromwell* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 21-23. He described Cromwell as baffling, even after all the examination is complete. It may be said that what historians Davis critiques have canonized regarding Cromwell’s religion is simply an impression. But that this impression is what was to Cromwell’s benefit regarding New England and Cotton.

¹¹⁹ It must be kept in mind that Cotton’s first letter to Cromwell was the first contact between the two.

Cromwell would champion the New England cause and continue to lead the apocalyptic forces of God against the Antichrist.¹²⁰ Cotton ended his letter to Cromwell by exhorting him to covenantal faithfulness. Cotton certainly did not mean to imply that all others were no longer bound to adhere to God's stipulations. However, there is a powerful sense of Cromwell's representation for the church particularly when Cotton exhorted Cromwell, "Go on therefore ... to overcome yourself ... to overcome your army ... and to vindicate your orthodox integrity to the world."¹²¹ Cotton did not show any traces of doubt in his mind that Cromwell was God's chosen "vessel of honour"¹²² to lead the Church and the army of the Lord in victory over Antichrist. The chain of events from the late 1630s to Cromwell's victory at Dunbar confirmed to Cotton that the millennium was very near and the church was soon to enter into eternal glory. He shared this exhilarating vision with New Englanders as he closed his thanksgiving sermon.

Let us look at all these Blessings & mercies & Salvations as purchased to us By the Blood of the Lamb. It is the Lamb that Bought them, the Lamb that fought them, the Lamb that wrought them. It is him & him Alone that hath purchased & procured all these Deliverances & therefore Let Us forever Bless his Name & Let this Day be a Beginning of Blessing the holy name of the Lord & the Lamb that he that hath thus Begun to work Salvation & Deliverance may still Carry one the Same from one generation to Another.¹²³

¹²⁰ Mayfield, *Puritans and Regicide*, 83-90.

¹²¹ Cotton, *Correspondence*, 461.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 459.

¹²³ Bremer, "In Defense of Regicide," 124.

Conclusion

The evidence provided in this study clearly demonstrates that for John Cotton, England always held prominence in his vision of the unfolding of prophetic history. Chapter One showed that, in the earliest stages of his career, through sermons on Canticles, Cotton merged the concept of England's covenantal standing with God and the idea of a faithful remnant dispersed throughout parishes as he began to flesh out his understanding of the Bible's message of the end of time. Cotton's primary intent was not the exploration of the manner in which prophetic history would unfold and the identification of apocalyptic precursory signs that would indicate the arrival of the millennium. Rather, Cotton was more concerned and motivated to affirm England's true and elect status as a church and confirm her prominence in eschatological fulfilment. The result was the casting of an optimistic apocalyptic vision that anticipated England's rise from her slumber under popish ceremonies to lead the worldwide onslaught against Antichrist. Chapter Two discussed the events that surrounded Cotton's expulsion from England. This reconsideration of those circumstances discredited any suggestion that Cotton saw his transition to New England as part of an exclusive errand, or anything other than exile. Cotton set sail for the New World because his conscience was convinced that such a move was not an abandonment of the true and elect English Church. Contrary to the claims of Zakai, Oh and others, Cotton had not forsaken England and replaced her envied position in prophetic history with an infant group of American colonies. This conviction was made possible by the belief that God had remained covenantally faithful to England. Moreover, after nearly a decade in New England Cotton

returned to the same book he used to affirm England's elect status, during the 1620s, Canticles. Even after New England had erected a pure church committed to the uncompromised obedience of Scriptural ordinances and worship Cotton re-affirmed that England had not been forsaken by the Lord. But, the revisit of Canticles during the early 1640s was intended to include a clearer subordinate role for New England's non-separating Congregationalism. New England had not replaced England. Rather, the colonies and their way of conducting church had proven itself to be the divinely prescribed form of government of the earthly visible church. New England had become a beacon to England to shine bright the path she was to take during the difficult times under the hegemony of Laudian Arminians in the English Church. Chapter Three built on Chapter Two's argument by making the case that Cotton not only believed prelacy was the image of the beast but he was also convinced that Scottish Presbyterianism was in essence no different from Episcopacy. Though Cotton praised the contributions of his brethren from the northern country in the godly resistance against Episcopacy, Cotton identified the apocalyptic agent that would consummate the victory over Antichrist as New England's church government that preserved the liberty and freedom of every particular true congregation, not the Kirk's hierarchical and national polity. However, when at a time when it seemed most conducive to elevate New England's importance in divine eschatological drama Cotton maintained his original regard for England. Hence, from Revelation, as Cotton had from Canticles, he affirmed England's elect status but also added that the way to apocalyptic reform was the adoption of New England Congregationalism. Chapter Four contended that Cotton saw confirmation and validation of all his prophetic interpretations in the execution of Charles I and the godly victory over the

Scots through Oliver Cromwell at Dunbar. Cotton became convinced that God was not only with England and but also that New England's church way was the only polity prescribed in Scripture.

This study strongly supports revisionist arguments of Miller's 'errand' thesis by demonstrating that New England's most prominent pastor and teacher did not hold to an exclusive divine consciousness of his own role and the colonies' in the unfolding of prophetic history. Part of Rosenmeier's concern in his study, "Eaters and Non-Eaters" was to expand the "focus from preacher to congregation."¹

Research tends to focus on theology that was conceived in the minds of theologians, extended through printed works and exhorted on pulpits with little concern to bring this to bear on the lives and minds of the people who occupied the pews. A legitimate question to ask is, how did Cotton's eschatology, particularly as it has been argued in this study, affect the outlook of the people who were both members and non-members of New England's churches? It is likely then that many, following their pastor, did not see their New England invested with an exceptional role in history. Even further, how then did colonists understand eschatology and how did it impact and shape their lives? David Hall explored this question through his discussion on providence.²

The findings of this study certainly have not exhausted every possible consideration on all relevant theological and historical strands within Cotton's eschatology. Chapter One and Two interacted with the Canticles' sermons in a comparative study. However, a more in-depth analysis would be a welcome and

¹ Rosenmeier, "Eaters and Non-Eaters," 151.

² Hall, *Worlds of Wonder*.

worthwhile study. The rich apocalyptic theology contained in both of these sets of sermons may more profoundly be unveiled when the expositions are juxtaposed alongside each other. Moreover, this study suggests a re-examination of the manner in which Cotton was influenced by Thomas Brightman's eschatology. Scholars have generally and simply accepted the fact that Cotton was influenced by his mentor. I have argued that Cotton's adoption of Brightman's interpretations grew over time that in fact during the 1620s Cotton disagreed to a certain extent with Brightman's apocalyptic polemical strategy. There were clear differences that distinguished Cotton's interpretations from Brightman's. Moreover, scholars like Zakai have assigned Brightman's theology, particularly his Laodicean doctrine, prominence and importance in their descriptions of New England's errand. However, these presentations are founded on the interpretation that Cotton applied a separatist reading of Brightman in order to justify his own errand theory for New England. If Cotton, as this thesis demonstrates, did not promote a New England exclusivity apart from England and that the colonial churches' held a sincere belief that their churches had not separated from the English, which moulded their own apocalyptic self consciousness, then what are the ramifications upon today's understanding of Brightman's theology as well as Cotton's own reading of Brightman's commentaries? It would be worth re-examining Brightman's apocalyptic theology in the light of revision scholarship.

The impact of this study extends into considerations of other prominent theologians of the early modern period, particularly those who were influenced by Cotton's theology. I have already noted how Thomas Goodwin embraced congregationalism because of Cotton. The correlative nature between ecclesiology

and eschatology that has been shown in Cotton's apocalyptic theology may prove useful in better understanding the millennial ideals of these two theologians. Interestingly, Goodwin turned to Revelation soon after he began to align himself with Independency. Gribben has already observed the connection between Goodwin's ecclesiology and eschatology. But perhaps there is more than can be reaped.³ John Owen, like Goodwin, was also converted to congregationalism through Cotton. Owen set out to refute Independency and vindicate Presbyterianism. After perusing through several works he selected Cotton's work, *Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven* to critique. The result was the opposite from what Owen intended. Ultimately Owen became convinced of Cotton's arguments and went on to become a staunch supporter of congregationalism.⁴ Owen's eschatology has remained elusive. Unlike Cotton, Goodwin and other congregational thinkers who engaged with the Bible's apocalyptic texts, Owen did not produce a commentary on canonical prophetic sources. Perhaps, like Calvin who also avoided composing a commentary on Revelation, Owen wanted to avoid producing speculative theology. But perhaps the correlation between the nature of the church and the end time that this thesis suggests may help researchers to extract more from this subject that Owen seemed so guarded about. Gribben observed, like in Thomas Goodwin's commentary on Revelation, the correlation between ecclesiology and eschatology in Owen.⁵

³ Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 45-49.

⁴ John Owen, *A Review of the True Schisme* (London, 1657), 35-36.

⁵ Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 109.

Moreover, this type of research into Owen's theology may be of great interest in light of the recent renaissance that Owen research has received.⁶

Lastly, this thesis encourages further exploration into the correlative relationship between eschatology and soteriology. Scholars will certainly continue to express great interest in Cotton, the Antinomian Controversy, both historical and theological dimensions. Implicitly, Cotton's relentless fidelity and insistence on maintaining England's election, especially during the darkest days, reflected a soteriology that was indisputably grace-centred. R.T. Kendall argued that Cotton's understanding of soteriology in New England was the eventual result of a transition towards a more Calvinist position.⁷ The timing suggests that as Cotton saw less to establish England's elect between c.1630 and c.1640 he was compelled to uphold his native country as true upon divine grace alone. Hence, the soteriology that nearly branded Cotton a heretic in the Antinomian Controversy may have been directly tied to his eschatological perspective of England's covenant with God. The systematic nature of Cotton's theology proposes many possibilities in gaining a more firm grasp of the intricacies of this profound thinker.

⁶ For a two recent works on John Owen's theology, see Kelly M. Kopic, *Communion with God: Relation Between the Divine and Human in the Theology of John Owen* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007); Carl R. Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007). Neither are devoted to Owen's eschatology. For an article devoted to the subject of Owen's eschatology see, Christopher R. Smith, "Up and Doing: The Pragmatic Puritan Eschatology of John Owen," *Evangelical Quarterly* 61 (Oct., 1989), 335-349.

⁷ Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism*, 110-117, 167-183.

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