Compass Life Adult Sunday School

Pastor Pete

April 26, 2020

**“The Men Who Brought Christ to America”**

**John Cotton**

**I. Pastor John Cotton (1585-1652)**

John Cotton was born in Derby on December 4, 1585, the son of a lawyer, Roland Cotton, and Mary Hurlbert. His parents were sympathetic to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Cotton entered Trinity College, Cambridge, at the age of \_\_, graduating with a bachelor’s degree in 1603. He was not yet converted. He said later that he inwardly rejoiced when he heard death bells toll for William Perkins, for Perkins’s strong preaching on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ “laid siege to and beleaguered [Cotton’s] heart.” Cotton attended Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he earned his master’s degree in 1606. During the next six years, according to his friend and biographer, Samuel Whiting, Cotton was “head lecturer and dean, and catechist,” and “a diligent tutor to many pupils.” In the midst of those years, Cotton was converted under the ministry of Richard Sibbes, whose sermons convinced him that he had been building his salvation on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ prowess rather than on Christ alone. Through Sibbes’ sermons on regeneration, Cotton embraced God’s promises of salvation. Cotton’s conversion had private and public consequences, for he could no longer use the elegant pulpit style that had impressed others. Denying his natural inclinations, he opted for Perkins’s method of plain style preaching. Cotton obtained a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Emmanuel College in 1610, and later that year was ordained at Lincoln. In 1612, he became vicar of the large parish church of St. Botolph’s (\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) in Boston, Lincolnshire, at the age of twenty­ seven, and remained there for twenty ­one years. John Cotton had a big decision to make? Comply, Rebel, or Leave.

**II. The Massachusetts Bay Colony of 1630**

The passengers of the Arbella who left England in 1630 with their new charter had a great vision. They were to be an example for the rest of the world in righteous living. Future governor John Winthrop stated their purpose quite clearly: "We shall be as a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the eyes of all people are upon us. "The Arbella was one of eleven ships carrying over a thousand Puritans to Massachusetts that year. It was the largest original venture ever attempted in the English New World. The passengers were determined to be a beacon for the rest of Europe, "A Model of Christian Charity," in the words of the governor. Puritans believed in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This doctrine holds that God is all-powerful and all-knowing; therefore, the fate of each individual soul is known to God at birth. Nothing an individual can do or say could change their ultimate fate. Puritans believed that those chosen by God to be saved — \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ — would experience conversion. In this process, God would reveal to the individual his grace, and the person would know he was saved. Only the elect could serve as Church \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. If a person were truly saved, he would only be capable of behavior endorsed by God. These "living saints" would serve as an example to the rest of the world. During the early years, ministers such as John Cotton carefully screened individuals claiming to have experienced conversion. The colony needed more than a fervent church to survive. Many dissenters — Christian men and women who were not converted — also lived within the ranks of Massachusetts Bay. Towns such as Marblehead were founded by non-Puritan settlers. The Puritans allowed this for the sake of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Many skills were necessary for a vibrant economy. An elected legislature was established, echoing the desire for self-government already seen in other English colonies. Although ministers were prohibited from holding political office, many of the most important decisions were made by the clergy. In 1636, Harvard College was instituted for the purpose of training \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. By the end of the 1630s, as part of a "Great Migration” of Puritans out of England, nearly \_\_\_\_\_\_ more Puritan settlers came to Massachusetts, and the colony began to spread. In 1691, Plymouth colony, still without a charter, was absorbed by their burgeoning neighbor to the West. The great experiment seemed to be a large success for the first few decades. In the end however, worldly concerns led to a decline in religious fervor as the 1600s grew old.

**III. John Cotton and the First Church of Boston**

In 1630, Cotton preached his famous farewell sermon, “God’s Promise to His Plantation” for John Winthrop and the Massachusetts Bay Company at the dock before they sailed for the New World. During the farewell sermon, Cotton told the company that their mission was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and that they should try to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the Native-Americans to Christianity. In 1631, Cotton and his wife contracted malaria. Over the course of a year, John Cotton slowly recovered but his wife died. Eventually Cotton decided to leave England for the colonies. He remarried and boarded the “Griffin” for the trip to Boston. Just before his arrival, the people had been holding a special season of fasting and prayer, urging their covenant with God as a reason why he should send them a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, to be unto them, like Hobab to the tribes of Israel, “as eyes in the wilderness.” Their supplications were answered in the gift of this “able minister of the New Testament.” Mr. Cotton was then about forty-eight years of age, and ripe in wisdom, knowledge, experience and grace. At his coming, his services were called for in different directions. His great capacities for usefulness were considered to be the common property of the whole colony. The magistrates and other leading men designated him to be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the First Church in Boston, of which the Rev. John Wilson was then Pastor. His labors in the pulpit and elsewhere were exceedingly great, and the power of God mightily attended them, and crowned them to the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of numerous souls, and the edification of thousands. Under the wise counsels of the noble and devout Winthrop in the State, and those of Mr. Cotton in the Church, the community prospered to such a degree, as to make the grateful inhabitants apply to them the words of the Psalm, “Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” Mr. Cotton knew how to touch the keys of the human heart, so as to draw out responsive and accordant notes. The church which he governed, with one or two exceptions, so peacefully, was organized of very discordant materials. Many of the members were strongly inclined to most of the forms of the national Church of England, in which they had been bred, and others were speculative and adventurous reformers who scarce knew how to be subject to any settled rule. But the patient sagacity of their teacher was marvelously successful in training them to habits of agreement and order. In 1642, he declined an invitation from England to represent New England’s interest at the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in London. In fact, after fleeing England, Cotton never returned to his home country again. In 1648, Cotton helped write a statement with Richard Mather and Ralph Partridge that was adopted by the New England churches and endorsed by the Massachusetts General Court. This statement, named the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, introduced the Congregational Method of church government known as “the New England Way.” He also wrote Spiritual Milk for Babes, published in 1646, and it was used for another 150 years as a primer for young people. In 1652, while preaching at Harvard College, Cotton caught pneumonia and died. He was buried in tomb with other clergymen at King’s Chapel Burying Ground in Boston, Massachusetts.

**IV. John Cotton on Congregationalism and Church Structure**

The Puritans who settled Colonial New England were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who believed in congregational church government and that the church should include only regenerated persons as full members. Because of this, they became known as Congregationalists and their churches became known as Congregational churches. In New England, Congregationalism was the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ religion—Congregational churches were supported financially by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and, in Massachusetts, only Congregational church members could \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. In the 1640s, Congregationalism came under increased scrutiny from English Presbyterians, who were gaining power as a result of the English Civil War. As Calvinists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians were nearly identical in their beliefs with the exception of church \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Presbyterian polity gave authority to elders rather than to church members. In addition, Presbyterians did not insist upon a regenerate church membership and allowed all "non-scandalous" churchgoers to receive the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. In 1645, local Presbyterians led a protest against Massachusetts' policies on church membership and voting. They threatened to take the complaint to Parliament, provoking fear among colonial leaders that the English government might intervene to force Presbyterianism on New England. The Cambridge Synod led by John Cotton was called in response to these attacks on Congregationalism.

**5/3 “The Men Who Brought Christ to America (Nicolaus von Zinzendorf)”**