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JOHN COTTON



MR. JOHN COTTON, as in the formal address of his time this distinguished early American divine was called, was born at Derby, England, Dec. 4, 1585, and died at Boston, Mass., Dec. 23, 1652. He was educated at Cambridge, England, and at an early age obtained a fellowship at Emmanuel College there, with a lectureship, and preferment as dean and catechist. He had a high reputation for learning, was a good classical scholar, and notable by his acquaintances with Hebrew. While at college he imbibed Puritan doctrines, and when he became vicar of St. Botolph's, at Boston, in Lincolnshire, he was influential in educating many young men for the ministry, and indoctrinated them with his views of a reformed church. His theological opinions and espousal of Calvinism brought him into trouble with his bishop, and he also fell under the displeasure of Archbishop Laud, who summoned him to appear before the High Commission Court, at London; but, unwilling to obey the summons, Cotton left his church at Boston, where he had labored for twenty years, proceeded to London, and, after a short period in concealment, he took ship for the New World, arriving at Boston, New England, Sept. 8, 1633. Here he became identified with the Massachusetts Bay Colony and was appointed by the magistrates of the town to the pastorate of the First Church at Boston, a connection which Mr. Cotton maintained till his death, nearly twenty years later. Those years in the colony were years of great activity on the part of Cotton. Besides his labors as teacher of his congregation, he engaged in controversial warfare with Roger Williams and others, while at the same time he exercised an almost autocratic influence in the secular affairs of the colony. The vast amount of admiration which his contemporaries paid him does not seem to have turned his head, and while he exacted from everyone a great respect for his office, he was not without the grace of personal humility. His principal writings include "The Bloody Tenet Washed and Made White in the Blood of the Lamb;" "A Brief Exposition upon Ecclesiastes;" "The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven;" "The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared;" "The Way of Life;" "Treatise Concerning Predestination;" "The New Covenant;" "Meat for Strong Men;" "Spiritual Milk for Babes." His extraordinary popularity in his own time is now somewhat difficult to understand, for his writings are marked by great simplicity in thought and style.

SERMON ON GOD'S PROMISE TO HIS PLANTATIONS

[This sermon holds the same place in relation to the Massachusetts colony which Robinson's famous sermon at Delfthaven holds in relation to the Plymouth colony. It was the farewell sermon to Winthrop's company, as Robinson's sermon was the farewell to the Pilgrim Fathers.]

"Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more."—2 Sam. vii, 10.

IN THE beginning of this chapter we read of David's purpose to build God an house, who thereupon consulted with Nathan about it, one prophet standing in need of another's help in such weighty matters. Nathan encourageth