Samuel Petto (c.1624–1711): A Portrait of a Puritan Pastor-Theologian

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There are probably few students of English Puritanism and Reformed orthodoxy who recognize the name of Samuel Petto. Very little is known about this obscure Puritan. While in recent years various historical studies have referred to him in connection with his nonconformist ecclesiology,[1] as well as his works on eschatology,[2] pneumatology,[3] witchcraft (a subject of growing interest in both Old and New England during the seventeenth century),[4] and covenant theology,[5] secondary literature devoted to Petto is practically non-existent. Although he was not as prolific a writer as some of his contemporaries, he nevertheless wrote on a vast number of theological subjects and may have had a more substantial role in the development of British covenant theology than his present obscurity suggests. For example, his 1674 work, *The Difference Between the Old and New Covenant Stated and Explained*, was endorsed by the preeminent Puritan

1 See F. J. Bremer, *Congregational Communion: Clerical Friendship in the Anglo-American Puritan Community* (Northeastern University Press, 1994), pp. 191-248; and R. P. Gildrie, *The Profane, the Civil, and the Godly* (Penn State Press, 2004), p. 191.

2 See D. Brady, *The Contribution of British Writers Between 1560 and 1830 to the Interpretation of Revelation 13.16-18 (the Number of the Beast): A Study in the History of Exegesis* (Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), pp. 17, 119, 215-16; and K. G. C. Newport, *Apocalypse and Millenium: Studies in Biblical Eisegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 5, 57.

3 See D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: OUP, 2008); C. Gribben, *God's Irishmen: Theological Debates in Cromwellian England* (Oxford: OUP, 2007); I. Harris, *The Mind of John Locke: A Study of Political Theory in Its Intellectual Setting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and esp. G.F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

4 See N. Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 122-3; and G. Geis, I. Bunn, *A Trial of Witches: A Seventeenth-century Witchcraft Prosecution* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 140-1, 206-7.

5 There is a brief reference to Petto's covenant theology and understanding of the nature of conditionality in the covenant of grace in R. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 106-7.

John Owen (1616–83), who wrote the forward to this book and called Petto a 'Worthy Author' who laboured 'with good success'. [6] Moreover, in 1820, twenty-nine Scottish ministers and theologians called for Petto's book to be republished, 'entirely approving and recommending it, as a judicious and enlightened performance'.[7] The purpose of this essay is to give a biographical sketch of Samuel Petto. It pursues the questions of who he was and what he accomplished in his time.

Samuel Petto lived and ministered during the turbulent era of England's seventeenth century. Born in 1624, his upbringing and education paralleled the controversial reign of Charles I (1600–49), who, from his coronation in 1625 until his Parliament-ordered execution in 1649, remained openly opposed to the Puritan plea for further reformation in the Church of England.[8] Though his parentage is unknown, Petto may have

6 J. Owen, preface to Samuel Petto, *The Difference Between the Old and New Covenant* (London, 1674), no page number given. Owen also wrote a preface to Patrick Gillespie's work *The Ark of the Covenant Opened* (1677), which was one of five volumes Gillespie wrote on covenant theology.

7 A list of the names, as provided by the publisher of the 1820 reprint, included Dr. M'Crie of Edinburgh, Professor Paxton of Edinburgh, Rev. George Moir of Edinburgh, Dr. Pringle of Perth, Rev. James Aird of Rattray, Rev. Matthew Fraser of Dundee, Rev. Adam Blair of South Ferry, Rev. W. Ramage of Kirriemuir, Rev. James Hay of Alyth, Rev. Alexander Balfour of Lethendy, Rev. David Waddell of Shiels, Rev. Patrick Robertson of Craigdam, Rev. J. Ronaldson of Auchmacoy, Rev. John Bunyan of Whitehall, Rev. James Millar of Huntly, Dr. Kidd of Aberdeen, Rev. A. Gunn of Wattan, Rev. Niel Kennedy of Logie Elgin, Rev. Hector Bethune of Alness, Rev. Hugh Ross of Fearn, Rev. Thos. Monro of Kiltearn, Rev. John M'Donald of Thurso, Rev. A. Stewart of Wick, Rev. John Monro of Nigg, Rev. Isaac Kitchin of Nairn, Rev. David Anderson of Boghole, Rev. Thomas Stark of Forres, Rev. Simon Somerville of Elgin, Rev. Robert Crawford of Elgin. *The Difference Between the Old and New Covenant Stated and Explained* (Aberdeen: Alexander Thompson, 1820).

8 As C. Trueman points out, "The literature on Puritanism is vast and contains no real consensus on what exactly is the defining feature of a Puritan." See Trueman, *John Owen*, 2. According to C.V. Wedgwood, the term 'Puritan,' originally, "had no definite and no official meaning: it was a term of abuse merely." See Wedgwood, *The King's Peace* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), p. 95. Prominent figures in England often used the term pejoratively. See, for example, William Shakespeare's derogatory treatment of the term in his 1602 play, *Twelfth Night* (New York: Bantam, 1988), 2.3.139-52. Likewise, King James I, in a letter to his son Charles, explicitly called Puritans "pests of the Church" possessed by "a fanatic spirit." See Anonymous, *A Puritane Set Forth in His Lively Colours* (London: n.p., 1642), pp. 2-3. Both of these quotes are found in K. M. Kapic and R. C. Gleason [eds.], *The Devoted Life:*

descended from the Peyto family of Warwickshire and been related to the English Cardinal William Peyto (d.1558/9), who once served as confessor to Princess Mary (1516–58).[9] Some have suggested that he was possibly the son of Sir Edward Peto (d.1658), whose family were staunch supporters of Parliament during Charles's rule.[10]

While the identity of his birthplace and parents remains uncertain, and no information is available on his childhood and adolescence, one

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An Invitation to the Puritan Classics (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), p. 15. For more on the sometimes difficult task of defining the terms "Puritan" and "Puritanism," see B. Hall, "Puritanism: The Problem of Definition," in G.J. Cuming, ed., *Studies in Church History*, vol.2, *Papers Read at the Second Winter and Summer Meetings of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (London: Nelson, 1965), pp. 283-96; and M. Watts, *The Dissenters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, repr.1985); D. M. Lloyd-Jones, "Henry Jacob and the First Congregational Church" in *Puritan Papers*, vol.4, pp. 173-97. For the purposes of this essay, I will use the terms 'Puritan' and 'Puritanism' to refer to those Calvinistic Protestants in England (whether Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or Independent) who desired further reformation in the Church of England in the areas of liturgy, preaching, and polity. For more helpful studies on Puritanism in general, see C. Burrage, *The Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research (1550-1641)*, 2 vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967); C. Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century* (New York: Shocken Books, 1964); G. Nuttall, *The Beginnings of Nonconformity* (London: J. Clarke, 1964); idem, *Visible Saints: The Congregational Way, 1640-1660* (Weston Rhyn: Quinta Press, 2001); J.I. Packer [ed.], *Puritan Papers*, idem, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990); P. Toon, *God's Statesman: The Life and Work of John Owen* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1971); A. Woolsey, "Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: A Study in Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly," 2 vols., Ph.D. dissertation (University of Glasgow, 1988); M. Dever, *Richard Sibbes: Puritanism and Calvinism in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2000).

9 Writing in 1893, W. W. Hodson points out that one Mr. George Unwin, "of the well-known London Publishing Firm," who was a lineal descendent of Petto, believed that Petto "was the son of Sir Wm. Petto, or Peyto, of Cesterton, Warwickshire, and states that the family was an old Norman one." See W.W. Hodson, *The Meeting House and the Manse; or, The Story of the Independents of Sudbury* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893), p. 53.

10 See W.A. Shaw's entry on Petto in Sidney Lee [ed.], *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 45 (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1896). On Sir Edward Peto, see T. Mowl and B. Ernshaw, *Architecture Without Kings: The Rise of Puritan Classicism under Cromwell* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 125.

thing is clear about Petto's early years: he grew up amid a series of events that undoubtedly helped shape his nonconformist convictions as a young man.[11] In 1625, Charles married the Roman Catholic Henrietta Maria. Three years later, the King appointed his advisor, the Arminian William Laud, as bishop of London, and in 1633, to the highest ecclesiastical position in England (save the crown itself), the Archbishop of Canterbury.[12] Showing little tolerance for those with Puritan or Calvinistic convictions, Laud reverted, albeit more aggressively, to a more anti-Puritan policy like that of Archbishops Richard Bancroft (1604–11) and John Whitgift (1583–1604). He banned preaching on the doctrine of predestination, demanded that ministers wear the surplice, required the *Book of Sports* to be read from every pulpit on Sundays, and oversaw the violent treatment of nonconformists such as William Pryne (1600–69), whose ears were cut off and face was branded with the letters 'SL' (for seditious libeler).[13] In 1638, the Scottish Presbyterians adopted the National Covenant in defiance to the King. In 1642, with its Long Parliament in resolute rejection of Charles's claim to rule by *iure divino*, England erupted into Civil War. The following year, Parliament called the Westminster Assembly.

PETTO'S TRAINING AND SOURCES

Those were difficult years for anyone with Puritan convictions, particularly a young Englishman entering university to prepare for the ministry. It is unclear when Petto came to hold such convictions for himself, but his education at Cambridge during the 1640s must have played a role in this. Records indicate that he entered St. Catharine's College (or Katherine Hall) as a sizar, a term used for Cambridge students who were granted a 'size' or ration of food and lodging free of charge due to financial hardship.[14] His education at the bachelor's level would have centered on the *trivium*, namely, grammar, rhetoric, and logic, as well as immersion in the

[11] In this study, I refer to the terms 'nonconformist' and 'nonconformity' as pertaining to the act of refusing to conform to the prescribed liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer and practices and polity of the Established Church.

[12] On Laud's life see H. Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud*, Second Edition (London: MacMillan, 1940; reprint London: Phoenix Press, 2001).

[13] Prynne himself said the letters more appropriately stood for *stigmata Laudis*, "the marks of Laud." Other celebrated Puritan victims of Laud's persecution include John Bastwick (1593–1654), Henry Burton (1578–1648), and John Lilburne (d.1657).

[14] This fact raises the question about his lineage. Would a member of a prominent family such as the Peytos of Warwickshire or the son of Sir Edward Peto be admitted to Cambridge as a sizar? The circumstances are unknown.

Latin and Greek classics, participation in academic debates, and thorough training in philosophy.[15] To complete an MA, his schooling would have included the subjects of the *quadrivium*, that is, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy, as well as public disputing and lecturing. Petto matriculated on March 19, 1645 and graduated BA in 1647, although some records indicate, albeit without a date, that he also obtained his MA.[16]

An advanced education that included astronomy may help explain Petto's interest and proficiency in this field later in life. Theology, however, was clearly his chief focus as a student. John Twigg points out that, since the late fifteenth century, St. Catharine's, along with Queens' College and Jesus College, was intended to encourage theological studies and became a centre for the subject.[17] During the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, St. Catharine's became associated with Puritanism. In 1626, Richard Sibbes (1577–1635) was appointed Master of the school, and served in that capacity until his death.[18] Sibbes was superseded by Ralph Brownrigg (1592–1659), who, though a Calvinist in theology and nominated to the Westminster Assembly, was ejected in the Parliamentary purge of Cambridge in 1645 on account of his royalist commitments. Brownrigg was replaced by William Spurstowe (c.1606–66), a Westminster divine and one of the five men who wrote Puritan tracts against Episcopalian polity in 1641 under the pseudo-name and acronym 'Smectymnus'.[19] It was during the eras of Brownrigg and Spurstowe that Petto obtained his theological education at St. Catharine's.

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15 For more on the typical course of studies for an undergraduate student at Cambridge, see J. Twigg, *A History of Queen's College, Cambridge 1448-1986* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 98-103.

16 See the entry on Petto in A.G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised: Being a Revision of Edmund Calamy's Account of the Ministers and Others Ejected and Silenced, 1660-2* (1934, Oxford: Clarendon Press, repr.1988), 388 in which he is listed as graduating BA in 1647. Stephen Wright, however, in his entry on Petto, states he 'was admitted as a sizar at St Catharine's College, Cambridge, on 15 June 1644, matriculated on 19 March 1645, and graduated MA'. Wright does not list a date for Petto's BA or MA. See S. Wright, 'Petto, Samuel (c.1624-1711)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004). Moreover, Hodson also referred to Petto as holding an MA, but, like Wright, did not give a date. See the dedication page in Hodson, *The Meeting House.*

17 Twigg, *A History of Queen's College*, p. 104.

18 See Dever, *Richard Sibbes*, pp. 34-48.

19 Smectymnuus stood for the initials of five Puritans: "SM" for Stephen Marshall (c.1594–1655), "EC" for Edmund Calamy (1600–66), "TY" for Thomas Young (1587-1655), "MN" for Matthew Newcomen (1610–69), and "VVS" for William Spurstowe.

Given his Protestant and Calvinistic education at Cambridge in the 1640s, it is not surprising that in his writing he referred approvingly to the works of John Calvin (1509-64), Richard Sibbes (1577-1635), William Bridge (1600-70), Samuel Bolton (1606-54), John Owen, the *Heidelberg Catechism*,[20] and, as was common among the Reformed orthodox, cited patristic and medieval writers in support of his arguments.[21]

PASTOR AND AUTHOR

Petto was ordained to the ministry in 1648 and installed as rector of Sandcroft (or St. Cross) in the deanery of South Elmham, Suffolk. Probably shortly after his ordination, he was married to a woman known only as Mary. Together they had five children, whom they supported on Petto's salary of £36 per year.

In 1654 Petto published his first book, a work on pneumatology titled *The Voice of the Spirit, or An Essay Toward the Discoverie of the witnessing of the Spirit by opening and answering these following weighty Queries.* With this was an appended piece, *Roses from Sharon or Sweet Experiences reached out by Christ to some of his beloved ones in this wilderness.*[22] These works dealt with the doctrine of assurance as related to the Spirit's sealing of the believer, a topic of particular interest to many English Puritans. Like William Perkins (1558-1602),[23] Richard Sibbes

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[20] See *DBONC*. He refered to Calvin on pages 176 and 228, Sibbes ('Dr. Sibs') on 44, Bridge on 232, Bolton on 113, Cameron on 185, and Owen on 49, 177, and 281. The references to Owen are under 'Dr. O', but this is undoubtedly Owen given the context in each citation, especially the one on page 177, which is to Owen's Hebrews commentary. He also cited John Arrowsmith (1602-59) on page 224, and one 'Dr. C' on page 92, which may be a reference to Edmund Calamy, although it is not clear. For a reference to the *Heidelberg Catechism*, see *A Large Scriptural Catechism* (London, 1672), p. 20.

[21] See *Infant Baptism of Christ's Appointment* (London, 1687), pp. 29-30 where he refers to Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Cyprian in support of his case for infant baptism, and *Old and New Covenant*, p. 223 where he cites Augustine in support of his argument for sovereign grace, as well as the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas.

[22] The title page of *The Voice of the Spirit* describes the author as 'Samuel Petto, Preacher of the Gospell at Sandcroft in Suffolke'.

[23] "When God by his spirit is said to seale the promise in the heart of every particular believer, it signifieth that hee gives unto them evident assurance that the promise of life belongs to them." *A Discourse of Conscience* (1596) in *William Perkins 1558-1602, English Puritanist*, ed. T.F. Merrill (Nieukoop, 1966), pp. 50-51.

(1577-1635),[24] John Preston (1587-1628),[25] Thomas Goodwin (1600-80)[26] and Richard Baxter (1615-91),[27] Petto argued that the sealing of the Spirit was an activity *in addition* to the Spirit's indwelling of the believer. It was given for the purpose of assurance, 'a perswasion from the Spirit of Adoption that God is your Father'.[28] Like Owen, however, Petto subsequently seemed to have shifted in his position on the doctrine of assurance, as evidenced by his later work.[29]

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[24] Sibbes called the sealing of the Spirit God's 'superadded work' to the believer's faith. *A Fountain Sealed* (1637) as found in *The Works of Richard Sibbes*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, repr. 1981), p. 455. Joel Beeke makes the point that 'Sibbes turned the doctrine of the sealing of the Spirit in a direction that would gain prominence among the Puritans for several decades'. Beeke, *Quest*, p. 203

[25] Preston went one step further than Perkins and Sibbes by teaching that the sealing of the Spirit was not only a second blessing given for one's assurance, but that it was given to those who overcome. Preston said that this sealing was so extraordinary to the Christian life that it was beyond definition: 'You will say, what is the seale or witnesse of the Spirit? My beloved, it is a thing that we cannot expresse, it is a certain divine expression of light, a certain unexpressable assurance that we are the sonnes of *God*, a certain secret manifestation, that *God* hath received us, and put away sinnes: I say, it is such a thing, that no man knows, but they that have it.' J. Preston, *The New Covenant: or the Saints' Portion* (London, 1634), p. 416, in Sinclair Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987), p. 120.

[26] Goodwin called the sealing of the Spirit a 'light beyond the light of ordinary faith'. T. Goodwin, *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, eleven volumes (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1855), 1:236

[27] Baxter said, 'Here it is evident that it is such a gift of the spirit...that is given to men, after they believe...there is to be an eminent gift of the Holy Spirit to be expected after our first believing'. Richard Baxter, *Practical Works*, vol. 4 (London, repr.1847), p. 308.

[28] Samuel Petto, *The Voice of the Spirit* (London, 1654), A2 in the preface.

[29] Owen was not in step with Perkins, Sibbes, Preston, Goodwin and Baxter in his doctrine of the sealing of the Spirit. This became more evident toward the end of his life. As late as 1667, Owen made statements about the sealing that seem at least somewhat inclined toward the second blessing view. In *Of Communion with God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost* (1657), Owen said, 'We are sealed to the day of redemption, when, from the stamp, image, and character of the Spirit upon our souls, we have a fresh sense of the love of God given to us, with a comfortable persuasion of our acceptance with him.' Yet, in the same work Owen said, 'I am not very clear in the certain peculiar intendment of this metaphor.' See Owen's *Works*, 2:242-43. Some years later, however, he became very clear on the meaning of the seal. In *Pneumatologia*, published posthumously in 1693, Owen wrote a whole chapter on the 'The Spirit a seal,

In December of 1655, Petto's wife Mary died. A widower, Petto continued actively in his vocation, supporting his five children as a minister. In addition to his duties at Sandcroft, he also oversaw the neighboring parish of Homersfield and frequently delivered sermons there. In October 1657, Petto was selected to be an assistant to the Suffolk commission of Triers and Ejectors, a body appointed by Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) to examine ministers and their credentials.[30] On 4 May 1658, the Council of State recommended that his salary be increased to £50 per year.

INDEPENDENT CONVICTIONS

Like Owen and the 'Five Dissenting Brethren' of the Westminster Assembly, Thomas Goodwin (1600-79), Philip Nye (c.1596-1672), Sidrach Simpson (c.1600-55), William Bridge (1600-71) and Jeremiah Burroughs (c.1599-1646), Petto belonged to that ecclesiastical tradition which emerged rapidly in the 1640s known as Independency or, more narrowly, non-Separatist Congregationalism.[31] For the Independents, the notion of

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and how', in which he made an exegetical case from Ephesians 1.13-14 to show why he had became convinced that 'the common exposition' of the sealing among Puritans of his time was incorrect. For Owen, the sealing of the Spirit was a salvific norm granted to every Christian at the time he or she embraced the gospel with true faith. See *Works*, 4:399-405. On Petto's apparent shift, compare *The Voice of the Spirit* with *DBONC*, especially chapters 5, 12, 13, and 14.

30 See entry by E. Vernon in F. J. Bremer and T. Webster [eds.], *Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), pp. 200-1.

31 Bryan Spinks is correct when he states, 'while it is generally agreed among historians that the English Independent, or Congregational tradition did not emerge as a distinct ecclesiastical movement until the tumultuous years of the 1640s, it has long been a matter of controversy as to the movement's precise origin.' See B. D. Spinks, *Freedom or Order? The Eucharistic Liturgy in English Congregationalism 1645-1980* (Allison Park: Pickwick, 1984), 1. As B.R. White and S. Brachlow have shown, the separatists Robert Browne (c.1550-1633) and Henry Barrow (c.1550-93), and the semi-separatist Henry Jacob (1563-1624) were forerunners of the English Congregationalism which emerged in the 1640s. Jacob in particular was a major figure in this lineage, having founded in 1616 the first known Congregation of English Independents, that is, a Congregationalist church that, unlike the Separatists, did not view the Church of England as a false church and desire to cut off all communion with her. See B.R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) and S. Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints: Radical Puritan and Separatist Ecclesiology 1570-1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). Drawing upon the study of White, Michael Watts

a regional church, whether Episcopal or Presbyterian, was rejected on the grounds that a true church is a local, gathered congregation of willing believers and their children, governed by a body of elders within that local congregation.[32] As is evident from the Congregationalist confession *The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order* (1658), which is essentially the Westminster Confession of Faith modified to conform to Congregationalist ecclesiology, the Independents were at one with the Reformed churches of their day in nearly all matters of faith except church government.

Although Petto was an appointed assistant to the Suffolk commission of Triers and Ejectors and not a Separatist, his ecclesiological convictions led him to adopt a view of preaching which allowed for gifted laymen to preach in local congregations. In 1657 he joined with Independent ministers John Martin of Edgfield in Norfolk and Fredrick Woodal of Woodbridge in Suffolk to produce a work defending this view. Titled *The Preacher Sent, or a Vindication of the Liberty of Public Preaching by some men not Ordained*, this work was a response to two books, *Jus Divinum Ministerii Evangelici* by the Provincial Assembly of London and *Vindiciae Ministerii Evangelici* by John Collings of Norwich (1623-90), both of which defended the practice common to the Reformed churches of requiring ministers to receive an outward call from a true, ecclesiasti-

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shows that English Nonconformity springs from two different theological sources and flows in two distinct currents. The first, which he calls 'radical,' finds its roots in the Lollards of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century. The second, which he calls 'Calvinistic', comes from the sixteenth and seventeenth century Puritans within the Established Church. Watts makes the case that the Independents find their roots in the second source, not the first, having descended from Henry Jacob and later formed into two main camps: the Non-separating Congregationalists and the Separatist Independents. See M. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

32 This was in distinction from the separating "Brownists," who placed the power of church government with the hands of the congregation rather than the ministers and elders. For more on Independent ecclesiology, see H. Jacob, *Reasons Taken out of God's Word and the Best Humane Testimonies Proving a Necessitie of Reforming Our Churches in England* (1604); idem, *The Divine Beginning and Institution of Christ's True Visible and Ministeriall Church* (1610); J. Cotton, *The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Power Thereof* (1644); T. Goodwin, et al, *An Apologeticall Narration* (1643); idem, *A Copy of a Remonstrance Lately Delivered to the Assembly* (1645); J. Owen, *An Inquiry into the Original, Nature, Power, Order and Communion of Evangelical Churches* (1681) in *Works*, vol.15; and *The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order Owned and Practised in the Congregational Churches of England* (1658).

cal body and limiting the pulpit to ordained clergy. *In The Preacher Sent*, Petto and his coauthors challenged this practice by arguing that, in some cases, a gifted layman in a congregation could lawfully preach without approbation from an ecclesiastical body, since it is the duty of every gifted man to use his gifts in the congregation (whether or not he is ordained), and that gifts for public preaching should be used publicly.[33]

The Preacher Sent encountered immediate and fierce opposition from Presbyterians, who argued for the necessity of a presbytery's role in ordaining qualified men and restricting the pulpit to duly ordained clergy. In 1658, Collings responded with *Vindiciae Ministrii Evangelici Revindicate, or the Preacher (pretendly) Sent, sent back again*, and Matthew Poole (1624-79), by appointment of the Provincial Assembly of London, wrote *Quo Warranto; or, A Moderate Enquiry into the Warrantablenesse of the Preaching of Gifted and Unordained Persons*. The following year, Petto and Woodal responded to Poole and Collings in a subsequent work, *A Vindication of the Preacher Sent, or A Warrant for publick Preaching without Ordination* (1659).

With the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660, yet some time before the enforcement of the Clarendon Code, Petto was ejected from Sandcroft.[34]

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[33] J. Martin, S. Petto, and F. Woodal, *The Preacher Sent: or, A Vindication of the Liberty of Publick Preaching, By some men not Ordained* (London, 1657), pp. 20, 32, 47, etc.

[34] The 'Clarendon Code' was the name for a series of four legal statutes drafted by Edward Hyde, the Earl of Clarendon, and passed by an overwhelmingly Anglican Parliament. The first was the Corporation Act (1661), which excluded Non-Conformists from holding public office by requiring all municipal officials to be communicants in an Anglican church, subscribe a declaration that it was unlawful under any circumstances to take up arms against the king, and formally reject the Solemn League and Covenant. The second statute was the Act of Uniformity (1662), which required all ministers, under penalty of fines, imprisonment, and the forfeiture of their livings, to subscribe to everything in the *Book of Common Prayer*, renounce the Solemn League and Covenant, and be re-ordained if they had not received Episcopal ordination in the first place. All ministers were to fulfill these requirements by St. Bartholomew's Day on August 24, 1662. The result was 'The Great Ejection' with nearly 2000 ministers forced to resign their vocations and livings. The third statute was the Conventicle Act (1664), which made it illegal for five or more persons to gather at any religious assembly, conventicle, or meeting conducted in any other manner than what was prescribed by the *Book of Common Prayer*. The final statute was the Five-Mile Act (1665), which forbade all ministers who had not taken the oaths in the Act of Uniformity to come within five miles of the corporate town or parish where they had previ-

Records indicate that the manse was vacant by January 1661.[35] According to W. W. Hodson, Petto was replaced in Sandcroft by one Thomas Pye later that year.[36] He moved to nearby Wortwell-cum-Alburgh, Norfolk, and continued to labour in gospel ministry there throughout the 1660s.

Petto appears to have had some connection with the Fifth Monarchy men, a group who believed that the establishment of Christ's kingdom, a fifth kingdom following the four great empires represented in Nebuchadnezzar's dream from the book of Daniel (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome), would be inaugurated around the year 1666 through political measures. During the Interregnum and especially the Cromwell years, these desired measures amounted to 'the dissolution of the Rump [Parliament], the establishment of the rule of the saints, and the reform of the country's institutions in accordance with the precepts of the old and New Testaments.'[37] While it is unclear how committed Petto was to the views of the Fifth Monarchists, it is undeniable that he ran in their circles. His co-author Fredrick Woodal was a committed Fifth Monarchist, and in 1663, probably in preparation for the year 1666, he joined with Independent minister John Manning (d.1694) in publishing *Six Several Treatises of John Tillinghast*, one of the foremost members of the Fifth Monarchy Men. What is interesting, however, is that Petto's affiliation with this party did not seem to hinder his friendship with and support by one of the most prominent opponents of the Fifth Monarchists and England's leading Independent, John Owen.[38]

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ously served. For the background on the period of the Restoration see D. Ogg, *England in the Reign of Charles II* (Oxford: OUP, 1967).

35 Quoted from *State Papers*, Interregnum, Council Book I, 78, 589, in W.A. Shaw's entry on Petto in S. Lee [ed.], *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 45 (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1896), p. 111.

36 Hodson, *The Meeting House*, p. 53.

37 Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 135.

38 While Owen, like most of his English Reformed contemporaries, believed that Christ's kingdom would be inaugurated triumphantly on earth before the consummation, a view that we might to tempted to label anachronistically 'postmillennial', he believed that the kingdom would come by spiritual and not political means. See, for example, his many Parliamentary sermons in volume VIII of the Banner of Truth reprint edition of his *Works*. Watts is correct to point out that 'While Owen was content to wait on God to act in his own good time to bring in the kingdom of Christ, the Fifth Monarchists wanted to give God and history a shove. Owen and the conservative Independents were the Mensheviks of the English revolution; the Fifth Monarchy men were the Bolsheviks.' Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 135. Other Independent opponents of the Fifth Monarchists included Westminster Assembly divines Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, and Sidrach Simpson, who united with Pres-

By 1669, Petto was preaching regularly in Norfolk and also to a crowd in Gillingham reported to be over 300 in attendance. In 1672, under the Act of Indulgence issued by Charles II, he was licensed as a congregational teacher at his own house at Wortwell, as well as the house of John Wesgate at Redenhall. His time in Norfolk must have allowed him the opportunity to write, for in that same year he published two catechisms: *A Short Scriptural Catechism for Little Children* and *A Large Scriptural Catechism*. Both of these catechisms were unique in that the answers were essentially quotes from the Bible, encouraging the catechumen to memorize Scripture. The corresponding questions, however, do not indicate any sort of Biblicism, but reveal a theology in harmony with the Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms. They are Calvinistic and Reformed in doctrine, with an emphasis upon the covenant of grace.

PREACHER IN THE BARN

Petto's lengthiest charge as a pastor was to a congregation in the town of Sudbury, Suffolk, a borough long known for its staunch Puritanism. Nonconformist ministers such as William Jenkyn (d.1616), father of the zealous Presbyterian William Jenkyn the younger (1613-85), and John Wilson (1588-1667), the renowned preacher and later immigrant to New England with John Winthrop (1587-1649), had served Sudbury in the early seventeenth century. In 1645, Suffolk County was constituted an Ecclesiastical Province and divided into fourteen Precincts for Presbyteries, though the plan was never carried out. According to W.W. Hodson, 'It was not so easy a thing to rear a new Church Establishment on the ruins of the old one. Besides, the power of Presbyterianism was soon crippled by the progress of War, and other events marching on in strides.'[39] Consequently, seven Congregationalist churches were formed in Suffolk between 1640 and 1660, of which Sudbury was one.

After the Restoration and upon the enforcement of the Clarendon Code, the residents of Sudbury had for some time sought a minister. They protested in a town corporation document dated October 5, 1669 that 'there is no settled minister' in Sudbury and services depended 'upon the goodwill and benevolence of the people' of whom the majority 'meet in conventicles and absent themselves'.[40] They resolved to seek an act of par-

byterians in opposition to the radical movement. See T. Liu, *Discord in Zion: The Puritan Divines and the Puritan Revolution 1640-1660* (Springer, 1973), pp. 127, 100; and Barker, *Puritan Profiles*, pp. 90, 232.

39 Hodson, *The Meeting House*, p. 14.

40 C. Sperling [ed.], *A short history of the borough of Sudbury ... compiled from materials collected by W. W. Hodson* (Sudbury, 1896), pp. 152-3.

liament to provide proper maintenance for a minister. In 1672, however, when the King issued his Act of Indulgence, Sudbury dissenters applied for a license for Congregational worship to be held in a barn belonging to one Robert Sewell. The remnant of Friars' Street Church of Sudbury met in this barn for worship. Over the years, many notable Nonconformist ministers preached in 'the Barn', including the prolific writer Giles Firmin (1615-97) and the ejected principal of Magdalene Hall, Oxford, John Wilkinson (1616-90). The members of Friars' Street called Petto, however, to serve as their pastor.

Petto lived with his family in the vacant manse of All Saints' Church in Sudbury. Sometime after Mary's death 1655 he remarried, this time to a woman named Martha, who gave him seven children in addition to his previous five. Apparently, there was no settled minister at All Saints' for a number of years prior to Petto's call, and the church was essentially closed.[41] Since at least 1670, the manse was used to house visiting Nonconformist ministers, but later became the permanent residence of Petto. Local Tories, however, were not pleased with this arrangement. In 1681 and 1682, the Grand Jury made a case against Petto at Quarter Sessions for absenting himself from 'Common Prayer' at his parish church. In 1684, Tories complained to Parliament and accused John Catesby, the former mayor of Sudbury, of so favoring Nonconformists that 'Mr. Petto the Nonconformist preacher in the barn' had been allowed to minister there without any punishment and 'constantly lived within the said Corporation for ten years last past, in no more private place than in the Vicarage House belonging to All Saints Church'. [42] Complaint was also made that 'meetings were held once or twice a week in a Barn, or in private houses', and that these gatherings were 'unlawful, seditious assemblies, conventicles, or meetings, under colour or excuse of exercise of religion, unto which very great numbers of His Majesty's subjects did resort, both inhabitants and strangers'.[43] No punishment, however, resulted from these complaints; Petto continued to preach, teach, and write at Sudbury for the rest of his life.

COVENANT THEOLOGIAN

Though he became known as 'the preacher in the barn', Petto remained a competent theologian. In 1674, shortly after arriving in Sudbury, he

[41] Town records indicate, for example, that, in 1666, the building of All Saints' was used to confine Dutch prisoners captured in a battle in the sea port town of Harwich. See Hodson, *The Meeting House*, pp. 54-5.

[42] Hodson, *The Meeting House*, p. 54.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

wrote, as noted above, his sophisticated work on covenant theology, *The Difference Between the Old and New Covenant Stated and Explained.* This work demonstrated Petto's firm grasp of this complex subject as well as the hot debates surrounding it in his day. As the Reformed orthodox defended, clarified, and codified the doctrines and practices of the early Reformation and responded to challenges from Socinianism, Arminianism, and Roman Catholicism, as well as internal disputes concerning antinomianism and neo-nomianism, they wrestled with the question of how the old and new covenants relate within the *historia salutis.* Petto contributed to the dialogue by positing a nuanced view of the Mosaic covenant that upheld and defended the Reformation's doctrine of justification *sola fide.*

He argued that the Mosaic covenant was a republication of the covenant of works for Christ to fulfill as the condition of the covenant of grace. He held to a radical distinction between the covenants of works and grace, the former made with Adam and his seed, the latter with Christ and his seed. The Mosaic covenant, however, was not only an historical administration of the covenant of grace, but also the condition Christ had to fulfill to accomplish redemption for the elect. What the original covenant of works was to the first Adam, the Mosaic covenant was to the second Adam; it provided the temporal setting for the Federal Head to obtain eternal life for those whom he represented:

> The Covenant of Works being broken by us in the first Adam, it was of great concernment to us, that satisfaction should be given to it, for unless its righteousness were performed for us, the Promised Life was unattainable; and unless its penalty were undergone for us, the threatened Death (Gen. 2.17.) was unavoidable.[44]

In other words, Sinai gave the Son the opportunity to perform, through his active and passive obedience, the righteousness which the original covenant of works required.

His interpretation of the Mosaic covenant as a covenant of works for Christ and the condition he had to fulfill in the covenant of grace safeguarded the Reformed orthodox doctrine of the active obedience of Christ. That Sinai commanded of Christ 'Do this and live' as a covenant condition, and because Christ fulfilled that command for justification and life on behalf of the elect, the gospel is not merely that believers are forgiven, but that they also are reckoned as law keepers themselves by virtue of Christ's obedience imputed to them.

Secondly, Petto's covenant theology informed how he applied justification *sola fide* to the believer's assurance. It highlighted the new covenant

[44] Petto, *The Difference Between the Old and New Covenant*, p. 125.

promise that sinners are saved by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. It set forth Christ as the object of faith and the one in whom all the absolute promises of the new covenant are 'yes' and 'amen'.

LATER WORKS

In 1687, Petto published a work defending the Reformed doctrine of infant baptism, *Infant Baptism of Christ's Appointment, or A Discovery of Infants Interest in the Covenant with Abraham, shewing who are the Spiritual Seed and who the fleshly Seed.* This was an exegetical case for the inclusion of the children of believers into the covenant of grace. He revealed his commitment to the continuity of the Abrahamic covenant with the new covenant, as well as the Reformed distinction of the visible-invisible church. He followed this in 1691 by *Infant-Baptism Vindicated from the Exceptions of Mr. Thomas Grantham*, a short reply to certain objections made by the Baptist apologist Thomas Grantham.

In 1693, Petto published a book on eschatology, *Fulfilling of the Prophecies or Revelation Unveiled.* This displayed a historicist interpretation of the book of Revelation fairly typical among seventeenth-century English Puritans. One difference from many divines his day, however, was his argument that Papal Rome should not be interpreted as Babylon.

This same year he also published a work on witchcraft, a subject of growing interest in both New and Old England during the seventeenth century. Titled *A Faithful Narrative of the Wonderful and Extraordinary Fits which Mr. Tho. Spatchet (Late of Dunwich and Cookly) was under by Witchcraft or, A Mysterious Providence in his Unparallel'd Fits*, this work described the widely believed report that one Thomas Spatchet and a neighboring ejected Puritan minister, S. Manning, had been bewitched by a woman in Sudbury.[45]

Despite the demands of his ministry at Sudbury, Petto found time to reflect on subjects other than theology. He took a keen interest in science and, in 1699, published an article in the Royal Society journal *Philosophical Transactions* concerning parhelia, the phenomenon of mock suns or 'sundogs' visible at certain times on either side of the sun.[46]

[45] This work of Petto's is unquestionably his most frequently referenced work in modern secondary literature, typically by writers commenting on witchcraft in the seventeenth century.

[46] See *Philosophical Transactions*, 21, 1699, 107.

LAST DAYS

Evidence indicates that Petto remained highly esteemed by his own and other dissenting churches.[47] Even in to his late years, he was frequently in demand as a preacher at ordinations, funerals, and other occasions. In 1700, he preached the funeral sermon of Squire Baker of Wattisfield, a person of notable influence. In 1707, then over the age of 80, Petto was assisted by his son-in-law, Josais Maultby, who was installed as co-pastor. Maultby continued to serve the Independent congregation until 1719 when he emigrated to Rotterdam. Petto, however, died in 1711 and was buried in the churchyard of All Saints, Sudbury on September 21.

CONCLUSIONS

From this biographical sketch, we make two observations: First, Petto was a Puritan. He was part of that broad ecclesiastical movement in England, particularly during the seventeenth century, that sought further reformation in the areas of liturgy and polity. More narrowly defined, he was a dissenting Puritan of Independent and non-separating Congregationalist convictions, believing that a true Christian church is not a national or regional body (contra the Episcopalians and Presbyterians) but a local and gathered congregation of willing believers and their children. Yet, from his connection to the Fifth Monarchists and his clashes with Matthew Poole over the matter of ordination, we can conclude that Petto was an Independent of a more radical stripe then, say, John Owen. This may help explain why he is largely unknown today, for after the Restoration, Dissenting parties were largely written out of the intellectual history of England.[48]

Second, Petto was, like so many of his Puritan contemporaries, both a pastor and theologian. That is to say, he not only laboured in the weekly duties of preaching, teaching and visitation as a shepherd of a local flock, but also in the work of writing and publishing theological material for the broader church. He was a Cambridge-trained specialist and a sophisticated covenant theologian. As such, his works contributed to the development of post-Westminster Assembly British Reformed theology in the era known as high orthodoxy (c.1640-1725).

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[47] See, for example, E. Calamy and S. Palmer, *The Nonconformist's Memorial: Being an Account of the Ministers, who Were Ejected Or Silenced After the Restoration, Particularly by the Act of Uniformity, which Took Place on Bartholomew-day, Aug. 24, 1662* (London: W. Harris, 1775), pp. 435-6; Hodson, *The Meeting House*, pp. 61-2.

[48] See Trueman, *John Owen*, 1; Watts, *Dissenters*, pp. 208-62; H. Davies, *The English Free Churches* (London: OUP, 1952) pp. 91-118.